Experiencing urban change along Hamilton's LRT corridor: Resident experiences prior to construction

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Report Summary

Hamilton is about to embark on the construction of a new 14-kilometre light rail transit (LRT) line between McMaster University and the Eastgate Square shopping centre. In between, it will run through many different neighbourhoods, including some of the city's poorest. There are already signs that change is taking place. *The aim of this report is to better understand what kinds of urban changes are experienced by residents living along the LRT corridor even before construction begins.* We want to contribute to debates in the 4Ps: the planning, policy, political, and public spheres.

To do this, we engaged with residents to understand their observations and experiences of change. This kind of research helps us to see patterns, processes, and experiences at both a fine-grained and city-wide level. Much of this knowledge either does not show up in statistics, or is only evident in data such as the Canadian census after events have already happened.

Our research is based on the following:

- Experiences of 106 residents living within 1 km of the planned LRT route
    - 68% of participants are homeowners; 32% are renters
    - 18% live in Ward 1; 15.1% in Ward 2; 40.5% in Ward 3; 23.5% in Ward 4; 1.9% in Ward 5; 1% non-disclosed
    - Detailed transcriptions and notes were thematically analyzed into findings and recommendations

Major Findings

1. Housing Insecurity: *"Everyone is just one bad story away from homelessness."*

The most common story we heard was that living along the planned LRT corridor is increasingly unaffordable for many of the existing low- and middle-income residents. Renters in particular are concerned about rising rents, housing insecurity, and being evicted if their landlords want to renovate their apartments. Some of the homeowners interviewed had their homes passed down to them by family members. Like renters, they expressed concerns about increasing housing costs and their inability to afford their neighbourhood if they had to buy in the existing market. Many

properties along the route are currently vacant. Some of these vacant properties are those that have been purchased by Metrolinx. According to the local knowledge of our participants, many of these properties housed low-income residents before the buildings were acquired and demolished. As there were no new affordable units added to the supply when these buildings were demolished, this is one of the factors already contributing to an erosion of affordable housing along the proposed route.

2. LRT and Community Engagement: *"There is a real distrust in the establishment, so we need to build trust, not just check off a box."*
Participants overwhelmingly felt ignored and confused in the community engagement process for the LRT. The majority of participants thought there could be more transparency, and continued to question many aspects of the project, including: property acquisitions, where the stations will be and why, cost of travel, changes to the Hamilton Street Railway (HSR), intersection adaptation, construction impact on existing infrastructure, and parking and traffic flow. While many forms of communication have been used by the city, HSR, and Metrolinx, it was clear that much of this information was not reaching the residents we spoke with.

3. Future Challenges: *"There will be a lot of growing pains"; "Where will we go?"*
Residents stated that they are already experiencing growing pains associated with development and intensification along the LRT corridor. Some of the growing pains mentioned were a result of changes to the built environment, including approaches to transportation, travel patterns, and mode choice. Participants also expressed concerns about affordable housing for low- and middle-income residents along the corridor. The City of Hamilton will need to consider policies to protect renters from displacement, renovictions, and unfair/illegal practices by landlords.

Recommendations

- All levels of government, including the City of Hamilton, will need to take a proactive approach to shape housing development along the LRT corridor to prevent further displacement. This approach includes: using publicly owned land to build affordable housing, stronger rules to protect tenants from displacement, and better enforcement of the already-existing rules to ensure tenants' rights.

- The City of Hamilton should take a proactive approach to use its own land to construct new non-market, affordable housing, as well as working to acquire more sites within the LRT corridor that can be used for housing that the market is unwilling or unable to build.
- Land that Metrolinx has acquired for the construction of the LRT should be used to build genuinely affordable housing in conjunction with the City or non-profits once it is no longer needed for the LRT project.
- Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton need to better inform residents about changes, disruptions, plans, and construction at all stages of the LRT. A lack of clear communication about the development and operation of the LRT leads to confusion, misunderstanding, and mistrust.
- Continued research is needed to better understand the lived experiences and local knowledge that residents have about changes taking place. We caution against relying primarily on analysis from the census to monitor change along Hamilton's LRT corridor. Instead, we recommend regular and systematic research that engages meaningfully and respectfully with residents living along the proposed route, including working with researchers, non-profits, and community groups to engage with segments of the population that often feel excluded from mainstream modes of planning communication.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Building higher-order transit is one of the few transformational changes a city can make. New light rail transit (LRT), streetcars, subways, and metro lines have the potential to shape development patterns for decades. Throughout North America and beyond, investments in urban rail infrastructure are approved and built largely due to their ability to attract investment, curb sprawl, and intensify existing urban areas. In other words, these trains are vehicles for investment, growth, and intensification, as well as vehicles for moving people around the city (Baker and Lee, 2019; Culver, 2017; Olesen, 2020; Doucet, 2021; Jones and Ley, 2016). As many authors have noted, building transit to encourage denser, more compact growth and development is one of the most dominant models of planning in North America (Padeiro et al., 2019; Rayle, 2015).

With so much investment and change taking place along new and existing higher-order transit corridors, one of the biggest contemporary urban challenges is how to build and maintain affordable housing near good transit (see Doucet, 2022; Chapple and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2019). Both these aspects—building new affordable housing and protecting already-existing affordable housing for those on low- and moderate incomes—are equally important. However, in broader planning policy and political debates, we tend to focus much more on the former.

Related to this challenge is the *paradox of urban improvements*: when neighbourhoods see more and improved amenities, better parks, faster transit, enhanced public realm, and so on, it makes them more attractive places to live (Stein, 2019; Immergluck and Balan, 2018). In turn, they become more expensive places to live, as new housing is constructed for more affluent households and existing housing is 'repositioned' to appeal to a wealthier segment of society (see August, 2020). This makes them more exclusive, meaning the benefits of higher-order transit, or other public improvements, are out of reach for many segments of the population who could most benefit from them. Without direct and proactive policies, gentrification and displacement are common along new transit lines or in other areas that benefit from quality-of-life improvements (Zuk et al., 2018; Baker and Lee, 2019; Grube-Cavers and Patterson, 2015).

Herein lies the challenge in the City of Hamilton. It is about to embark on the construction of a new 14-kilometre LRT line between McMaster University and the Eastgate

Square shopping centre. In between, it will run through many different neighbourhoods, including some of the city's poorest. There are already signs that change is taking place. The challenge will be to ensure that neighbourhoods along the route remain affordable for people who already live there, and that the city's best-connected axis will be a place where people from all income classes who want and need to live near good transit will be able to find and afford appropriate housing.

There are many benefits of investing in higher-order transit. These include a faster, more efficient, and more reliable transit system that can carry more people than buses, as well as environmental improvements in air quality. High-quality transit is also essential to curbing automobile-dependent sprawl at the fringes of a city. Transit priority lanes and signaling that are common with LRT projects can dramatically speed up transit journeys and accessibility without the need to rely on a private automobile. Padeiro et al. (2019) note that encouraging development around station areas, often referred to as Transit Oriented Development (TOD), can lead to a modal shift away from private automobiles and toward transit, thereby reducing car dependency and resulting in shorter journeys. Additionally, they note how this form of development can create more pleasing, inclusive, opportunity-inducing, and meaningful neighbourhoods.

Waterloo Region is an example of how a new LRT can contribute to shifting development patterns, from one of predominantly greenfield sprawl to a context where, today, the majority of new housing takes place within the existing urban footprint, much of it along the region's LRT corridor (Region of Waterloo, 2019).

There are, however, many issues that also need to be addressed. Transit infrastructure sits at the crossroads of different sustainability goals: transit investment serves to both reduce automobile dependency and create dense, vibrant, and attractive communities (see Padeiro et al., 2019). In other words, higher-order transit is both a transportation tool and a city-building tool. However, if these sustainability goals result in more pleasing (and, consequently, more expensive urban spaces), then the question of who will benefit (and who will be excluded) must be central to all phases of the project. Cities such as Hamilton already have highly unequal social and spatial structures (Harris, 2020), and therefore the questions of who is included, excluded, and displaced from these spaces need to be addressed, even before construction begins.

The illumination of these issues should lead to discussions about what kind of proactive interventions should take place already, even if there are not yet clear statistical indications that

gentrification and displacement are already taking place. As we discuss below, there are many ways of looking at urban change; in this report, we engage with residents themselves to understand their observations and experiences of change. It is important to stress that residents will observe and experience things within their neighbourhood long before they appear in any census analysis. Instead of examining numbers, therefore, we analyze residents' experiences and knowledge of their communities, and how they are changing. Doing this in a detailed and rigorous way helps to move beyond anecdotes to see bigger trends, patterns, and processes, many of which are not yet visible within data such as the census.

This document is the first of two reports written by researchers at the University of Waterloo and supported by the Hamilton Community Foundation. ***These reports are intended to provide insights, examples, experiences, and analysis to enhance debates within the '4Ps': planning, policy, political, and public debates about how the LRT corridor in Hamilton should develop over the coming years and decades.*** While we are focused on the City of Hamilton, much of the information in these reports will be useful to decision-makers, non-profits, advocates, and the wider public in other cities across Canada and beyond that are investing in new, higher-order transit infrastructure.

The aim of this report is to better understand what kinds of urban change residents living along the LRT corridor are already experiencing even before construction begins. In this first report, we analyze interviews with more than one hundred residents living up to one kilometre from the proposed LRT line. Importantly, these interviews took place more than a year before any construction was planned to begin. This timeline makes our study unique: no major research project has conducted in-depth interviews with residents so early in the process of building a new LRT line. In this report, we discuss and analyze four themes: housing, amenities, mobility/transportation, and future challenges. For each of these themes, we also focus on different spatial scales: the level of the individual (i.e., one's own housing situation), the neighbourhood, and the city as a whole.

As we discuss in the next section, using qualitative interviews rather than statistical analysis through the census or surveys is less common in empirical studies of neighbourhood change along new transit corridors. However, this approach gives us an opportunity to provide rich detail about residents' lived experiences, and to analyze fine-grained patterns that may not (yet) be rendered visible by other research methods. Throughout the course of the LRT project,

we will conduct subsequent rounds of interviews to understand how resident experiences change over time.

The remainder of this report is structured as follows. Chapter 2 examines some of the most important literature on new rail transit lines, including what we already know about the relationship between transit and gentrification, and the shortcomings of some of this research. Chapter 3 discusses our research design and methods, and introduces the Hamilton context. Chapter 4 focuses on our analysis of how people perceive housing changes and challenges along the corridor. Specific attention will be paid to how renters and homeowners view different housing challenges. Chapter 5 turns to a variety of issues related to community health and safety. In chapter 6, we explore perceptions about transportation, including how people expect to use the LRT once it is up and running. Finally, in chapter 7, we outline some future challenges and suggest key recommendations in order to ensure that spaces along the LRT corridor are accessible and affordable, as well as how all agencies and organizations involved in the project can better inform local residents in the years ahead.

As experts in housing, neighbourhood change, and transportation, we believe in the benefits of investing in higher-order transit infrastructure, including Hamilton's light rail transit. We support the development of LRTs because of the environmental, social, and transportation benefits they bring to communities, as well as their ability to prioritize more sustainable modes of transport. However, to build new transit in a way that creates equitable, just, and socially-sustainable communities requires *proactive* approaches, measures, and engagement throughout the entirety of the process, and from all levels of government, in order to ensure that the benefits of light rail—both in terms of transportation and communities—can be enjoyed by everyone. In other words, we need good transit and additional proactive measures to ensure that the communities along that good transit are affordable and accessible. This report will outline some of the challenges ahead, as told to us by members of the community. The second report will provide some solutions and pathways that can create inclusive and equitable spaces along the line.

Chapter 2 The Relationship Between Transit and Neighbourhood Change

Understanding the relationship between transit investment and neighbourhood change is a growing field of research within planning, geography, and urban studies. Of course, neighbourhood changes such as new condominium development, upgrading, gentrification, and displacement can take place without the benefit of a new, higher-order transit line. Much of the literature on gentrification in particular focuses on the role of capital investment, residential demand, and government policy rather than mobility. However, there is a growing realization that good transit can anchor investment and intensify the pace and scale of change. And, as we mentioned in the previous chapter, a new streetcar or LRT line can make a neighbourhood a more attractive and better-connected place to live, which in turn can make it more expensive; many of the new streetcar lines in the United States were built with these planning goals in mind (see Culver, 2017). This section will provide an overview of some of the key literature on the role that transit can play in shaping trajectories of neighbourhood change, including housing, amenities, and mobility patterns.

2.1 Transit and Gentrification

Most studies on the relationship between transit and gentrification, sometimes referred to as 'transit-induced gentrification,' point toward transit proximity resulting in higher property prices and higher land values (see Revington, 2015; Kahn, 2007). The literature generally finds that this relationship is greater in stronger markets, both at the level of the city or region, as well as at the local station or neighbourhood level (see Delmelle and Nilsson, 2020). In a review of the literature, Padeiro et al. (2019) ask the question of whether there is evidence that Transit Oriented Developments (TODs) contribute to neighbourhood ascent (gentrification) and the displacement of low-income groups. They reviewed thirty-five quantitative studies and found that proximity to transit is likely to contribute to gentrification. However, they are keen to stress that there are very few reliable quantitative studies, and that most of this research is very recent, as concerns have arisen only over the past decade or so about the unintended consequences of TODs.

As noted in the review by Padeiro et al. (2019), the most common way of assessing the relationship between transit and gentrification is through quantitative statistical modelling. Relying on official statistics from a census or other data source, complex hedonic models measure changes in housing and socioeconomic data over time, and compare changes between neighbourhoods within a transit corridor and neighbourhoods outside this corridor. If variables such as average income, the percentage of a population with a university degree, property values, or other similar variables rise faster within the transit corridor than outside it, and if neighbourhoods (census tracts) had below-average levels to begin with, researchers will conclude that gentrification is taking place (see Grube-Cavers and Patterson, 2015).

This approach can be beneficial in mapping broader trends and seeing the bigger picture of change, particularly after it has occurred. Walks and Maaranen (2008) used data between 1971 and 2001 to map patterns of gentrification in Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. They looked at how gentrification impacted social mix, income polarization, and ethnic diversity within neighbourhoods. They found that gentrifying areas become less socially and ethnically mixed over time, and neighbourhoods become more economically unequal and polarized (see also Grant et al., 2020). Immergluck and Balan (2018) examined changes in property values within half a mile of Atlanta's Beltline, a circular park (and future streetcar line) orbiting the city along an abandoned railway corridor. They found that property values rose by between 17.9 percent and 26.6 percent compared to properties elsewhere, stressing the implications for housing affordability and gentrification in areas with significant quality-of-life improvements. Karen Chapple and colleagues in California and Toronto have created the Urban Displacement Project, focusing on using data-driven, community-centred, and applied research to understand how gentrification develops and spreads. They created a typology of neighbourhoods based on the presence or risk of gentrification.[1] Tools such as this can help pick up early warning signs of gentrification, which can be useful if policymakers utilize this information to develop mitigation policies.

While statistical analysis can reveal many important trends and patterns, it has shortcomings. First, census data can overlook highly localized patterns, such as fine-grained changes or displacement within a census tract. For example, it is difficult to measure if someone

[1] K. Chapple, T. Thomas, and M. Zuk, Urban Displacement Project website (Berkeley, CA: Urban Displacement Project, 2021), https://www.urbandisplacement.org/.

has been displaced within their census tract. Second, it operationalizes processes such as gentrification as an event, a single moment in time that either does or does not show up in a census. Displacement is therefore conceptualized as a one-time process of outmigration from a spatially delineated area, such as a census tract. Using this approach, much of the quantitative analysis of change around station areas finds little statistical evidence indicating that low-income residents are disproportionately more likely to move after a transit line opens (see Rodnyansky, 2018; Delmelle and Nilsson, 2020).

Likewise, statistical analysis is only able to capture some of the many forms and experiences of urban change, including but not limited to displacement. Zuk et al. (2018) and Newman and Wyly (2006) both argue that displacement modelling significantly undercounts the number of people directly or indirectly displaced from gentrifying neighbourhoods because statistical modelling cannot capture all types of spatial displacement (when one is forced to leave their dwelling), let alone exclusionary or experiential forms of displacement (see also Slater, 2009; Easton et al., 2020). Rayle (2015) notes how these methodological shortcomings can mask the full extent of displacement. She states succinctly that "even the most rigorous [quantitative] studies fail to actually measure displacement, mainly because of a lack of appropriate data" (Rayle, 2015, p. 538).

Indirect forms of displacement were first outlined by Marcuse (1985), and are impossible to analyze using conventional statistics. These occur when the development of a new housing unit, or redevelopment of an existing one, is priced too high for much of the existing local population; this means that they are *excluded* from being able to reside within these dwellings in their community. Along Waterloo's LRT corridor, recent research has identified many sites where housing that was affordable to low-income residents was demolished to make way for new condominiums. Even though these developments constitute a net increase in the total number of housing units, the supply of housing for low-income residents decreases. This is a triple blow to these communities: existing affordable housing is lost (direct displacement), new housing is too expensive (exclusionary displacement), and people who rely on transit will have few housing options along routes (see Doucet et al., 2022).

Renovictions—when landlords evict tenants in order to renovate their units and lease them at higher rates to more affluent households—are both a form of direct displacement (the sitting tenant is evicted) and indirect displacement (the renovated unit is too expensive for the

former tenant, or others on similar incomes). Renovictions do not show up very easily in statistics, and may also result in misleading statistics. For example, if a low-income tenant is paying more than 30% of their income on rent and is evicted, and if the new tenant pays higher rents but earns much more, thereby meaning they pay less than 30% of their income on rent, the data will show that affordability has improved because there is one additional dwelling where tenants pay less than 30% of their income on rent (see Doucet, 2021). In the Canadian census, a household paying more than 30% of before-tax income on rent is considered to be in core housing need; this is one of the most important data metrics used to measure the housing crisis. However, in this case, neither the displacement of the previous tenant nor the rent increases are visible within this data, which statistically improves despite displacement and renoviction.

Many scholars have also noted how statistical analysis alone often underestimates urban processes such as displacement. Newman and Wyly (2006) note that doubling up with another household is one of the most common strategies for displaced households. However, these households would not show up as 'displaced' in any data analysis, and might even indicate gentrification if a new, doubled-up 'household' has a higher combined income. In other words, if one person with a $30,000 income is displaced and moves in with a friend who makes $50,000 a year, the census will record this household as having an income of $80,000.

Despite this, planners and policymakers too often rely primarily on this statistical analysis to guide their decision-making. Data such as the census can provide concrete numbers and statistically-significant answers to their questions. Meanwhile, other approaches, such as qualitative interviews, are considered to be too time- and cost-intensive, too 'political,' or too 'common sense' (see Gaber, 2020). Relying on statistical data alone has led the Region of Waterloo (2019) to conclude that while gentrification is taking place along its LRT corridor (as evidenced by rising household incomes), displacement is not a major trend, as it finds little statistical data to indicate that lower-income households are being pushed out. Instead, their analysis suggests that rising incomes are due to new housing units being built, rather than significantly altering the rents of existing units. However, Doucet (2021), Doucet et al. (2022), Diwan et al. (2021), and McDougall et al. (2022) all found significant instances of displacement, such as renovictions, when using qualitative methods and engaging meaningfully with local residents, particularly from marginalized communities.

Considering the issues regarding data collection, this reliance primarily on official statistics to understand the relationship between transit and neighbourhood change is problematic. To be clear, we are not arguing against the use of any data analysis to understand urban change. As we have outlined, it can be very useful in many ways. But we must also be aware of its limitations, and must also utilize approaches and methods that can render visible what quantitative data analysis cannot. Therefore, we want to stress the importance of multiple sources of information, and the value of moving beyond statistics to incorporate the knowledge, perceptions, and experiences that residents have as a key source of information for planning and policymaking, especially along new transit corridors.

When we incorporate a range of approaches and methods, we start to see the bigger picture, not just about the potential for ridership growth or aspects of neighbourhood change but also of the planning, political, and policy rationales and visions that underpin investments in higher-order transit. Revington (2015) notes how the political economy of transit infrastructure, such as neoliberal and urban entrepreneurial policies and management, play a major role in shaping where transit gets built and what kinds of developments follow suit.

The clear benefits and limitations of different research methods are why a group of California-based scholars used a mixed-methods approach to understand gentrification around several rail stations in Los Angeles (Loukaitou-Sideris et al., 2019; see also Chapple and Loukaitou-Sideris, 2019). Their study involved statistical analysis, key stakeholder interviews, and observations of change taking place near these stations, outlining what each method renders visible or invisible. Statistical data showed that areas around new transit stations were experiencing greater levels of development than non-station areas. They also saw greater increases in the socioeconomic variables normally associated with gentrification, such as average household income and the percentage of the population with college degrees. However, when they visited these areas, observed what was taking place, and interviewed local experts and community leaders, they found more evidence of gentrification than what was showing up in their data models. Notably, this included some neighbourhoods with no statistical evidence of gentrification, but which their qualitative research clearly demonstrated was already happening. In a similar vein, Newman and Wyly (2006) also found greater evidence of displacement in their follow-up interviews and complementary data analysis than in their initial assessment of New York's Housing and Vacancy Survey.

As Moore (2015, p. 474) stresses, there is a growing need to understand the "day-to-day and long-term impacts [of rapid transit implementation] on residents." However, very little empirical work has analyzed what the development of new transit lines means for urban residents. Ellis-Young and Doucet (2021) examined perceptions of change along Waterloo's LRT corridor, interviewing sixty-five residents in the period after the route had been constructed but prior to the commencement of LRT service. They found complex and sometimes contradictory feelings that often reinforced the urban nature of the communities along the line (in contrast to more suburban parts of the region). Residents welcomed the arrival of the LRT while also being wary of the many ways in which it was reshaping their communities. In particular, these changes were shifting the subtle and not-so-subtle experiences of who was perceived to be included and excluded from neighbourhoods along the line.

One of the most important qualitative studies of gentrification and transit was conducted in Vancouver by Jones and Ley (2016). They interviewed tenants in low-rise apartment buildings near SkyTrain stations that housed predominantly lower-income households. Their focus groups found a high level of neighbourhood satisfaction due in no small part to their proximity to good transit. However, residents also felt threatened by zoning changes that permitted much taller buildings to be constructed where their apartments stood. They felt that this upzoning would ultimately lead to their displacement as their apartments were knocked down to make way for taller buildings where units would rent at much higher prices.

In Waterloo Region, Doucet (2021) and Doucet et al. (2022) found similar responses, as both demolition and renoviction resulted in the erosion of housing affordable to those on low and moderate incomes within core urban areas along the LRT corridor. When referring to a new condominium development along the LRT corridor, one low-income respondent succinctly stated: "They knocked down eight or nine houses for that. And then they'll put up condos that the people in the houses couldn't possibly afford" (Doucet et al., 2022, p. 73). This research has expanded to cover neighbourhoods within Kitchener's inner suburbs (constructed after World War II); McDougall et al. (2022) also found similar experiences of displacement from low-income tenants living further out along the LRT line.

In general, studies that use qualitative methods and engage meaningfully with residents living along new transit lines find that low-income households experience persistent and increasing vulnerability toward displacement (Jones, 2020; Ellis-Young and Doucet, 2021;

Moore, 2015). This displacement occurs because station areas are redeveloped into more affluent and higher-density neighbourhoods; housing stock that remains is also subject to gentrification pressures, particularly as rooming houses are renovated and single-family houses that were converted into apartments are deconverted back to large, single-family dwellings.

These pressures are often most intense within existing areas of multi-family dwellings; in Ontario and elsewhere, large parts of cities are zoned almost exclusively for detached, single-family dwellings. Therefore, one of the few areas where new development can occur without encountering significant NIMBYism—'not in my backyard' opposition against new development by residents (predominantly homeowners)—is in spaces already zoned for apartments. Jones (2020) demonstrated how TOD policies can contribute to gentrification by redevelopment of low-income apartments near rapid transit stations in Greater Vancouver. Importantly, Jones's study focused on an inner-suburban neighbourhood that was home to Syrian refugees, many of whom were displaced as their small apartment buildings were demolished to make way for greater density near a transit station. His research demonstrates that the "tendency for transit stations to be located in areas of marginalized renters creates space for local government officials to argue that renters' displacement is inevitable, buttressed by environmental sustainability and smart growth imperatives" (Jones, 2020, p. 2). He also noted how elected officials and planners considered it 'stupid' not to intensify these areas, and part of the region's natural progression, while excluding many streets with single-family houses near stations from the same rezoning.

Zoning rules make it easier to demolish a low- or mid-rise apartment (housing that tends to be inhabited by lower-income households) and build new high-rise condos or luxury apartments than to build similar developments on streets with single-family homes. In other words, the easiest sites along an LRT line to redevelop are the ones already zoned for higher densities, which today tend to house some of the poorest residents living along the route.

2.2 Transit Ridership and New Light Rail Transit

In general, low-income households use transit more frequently than higher-income households. However, considerable literature suggests that rail-based transit can attract new and higher-income riders compared with buses. Given the gentrification and displacement trends

noted above, it is worth providing a brief overview of the literature on how attitudes toward new rapid transit relate to ridership habits and the potential to generate new transit ridership.

Conventional transportation research outlines two types of riders, both defined by income and access to an automobile. Captive riders tend to have one mode of travel open (transit), do not have access to a car, and are low-income. Choice riders have different transportation options (such as access to an automobile), and have chosen transit as the best mode for that journey. This decision can be based on time, comfort, convenience, cost, and quality of the service (see Krizek and El-Geneidy, 2007; van Lierop and El-Geneidy, 2017; Dent et al., 2021). Importantly, frequency of service is seen as a key determinant of transit use (Abenoza et al., 2017), and Beimborn et al. (2003) suggest that easy walking access to transit stations has a major impact on whether people will use it. Other types of riders have also been identified, such as 'captive by choice' (van Lierop and El-Geneidy, 2017): higher-income riders who do not own personal automobiles, which is increasingly common in downtowns and denser, walkable, and transit-rich urban neighbourhoods.

Both Brown et al. (2019) and Blainey et al. (2012) outline barriers that can prevent residents from taking advantage of new transit in their communities. These include hard barriers, such as no stops near where they want to go or slow/unreliable service. There are also soft barriers, including poor perceptions or images of transit, fear of crime, and a car-oriented culture, that result in difficulty in changing behaviour.

In Los Angeles, researchers used car odometer data and travel logs to understand how residents' travel behaviour changed before and after the opening of the E Line (formerly the Expo light rail line). They found that residents living within 1 kilometre of the LRT (i.e., walking distance to a station) drove on average 10 miles less and used the rail system three times more than participants who lived more than 1 kilometre away (Spears et al., 2017)

One of the most important recent studies about how a new LRT line impacts changes in transit ridership was conducted in Salt Lake City by Brown et al. (2019). They looked at local residents' expectations before the LRT opened (T1) and compared this with transit use after the line opened (T2). Starting with 910 participants at T1, they still had 536 a year later at T2. They asked people at T1 if they expected to ride, and looked at their ridership habits after the line opened. In general, the group of respondents that expected to ride, then rode the system, were generally more positive about the overall changes to the neighbourhood (including the LRT,

enhanced public realm, neighbourhood reputation, access to healthy food, and complete streets) than the group who did not expect to ride and didn't ride the LRT. Significantly, 36 percent of respondents expected to ride the LRT but did not once it opened, although they were optimistic about the changes in their neighbourhood. As the authors of the study note, automobile habits can be notoriously difficult to break, even when new transit is opened (see also Bamberg and Schmidt, 2003). The authors stress the importance of conceptualizing the decision to use rail-based transit as 'embedded within the entire neighbourhood' (Brown et al., 2019, p. 142).

Finally, a recent study in Montreal by Dent et al. (2021) examined the future and potential uses of the Réseau Express Métropolitain (REM) light rail project. During the construction phase of the REM in 2019, they surveyed more than 3,600 residents to measure perceptions of the new rail system. They found four clusters of responses, ranging from least likely to most likely to use the system. These groups were: car-friendly non-users, urban core potential users, transit-friendly users, and leisure and airport users. As with other studies, they found a positive relationship between respondents who were likely to use the new system and those who saw the REM bringing benefits to their neighbourhood. However, one major difference compared with other studies is that their sample size included people from across Greater Montreal. At the same time, they targeted recruitment along the REM corridor and did not exclude participants who resided much further away. However, with a direct link to the city's main airport, it is also expected that the REM will attract riders (particularly leisure and airport users) who reside far from its stations.

This section has provided an overview of key literature about the impacts of light rail transit, how residents perceive new transit investment and the changes it brings to their communities, and what factors influence the ridership of a new transit system. This literature is essential to provide context and understanding of the results of our qualitative research. In the next chapter, we will provide an overview of our research methods before turning to a robust discussion of what we heard during our interviews with Hamiltonians living along the proposed LRT corridor.

Chapter 3 Methodology and Context

3.1 A Brief History of the LRT Project

There has been discussion of some form of higher-order, rail-based transit in Hamilton for many decades. The current plan is for a 14-kilometre route, with seventeen stations running between McMaster University and the Eastgate Square shopping centre. The route is proposed to run along Main Street from McMaster to Highway 403, then along King Street through downtown and neighbourhoods east of downtown. At the Delta, it will switch back to Main Street and continue along Main Street and Queenston Road to the line's eastern terminus.

The current LRT project is part of a network of rapid transit lines proposed for Hamilton in the city's 2007 transportation master plan. Called BLAST, it encompasses five routes and a combination of bus rapid transit (BRT) and light rail transit (LRT). While no BRT lines have been built, there are two express bus routes that form part of the legacy of this proposed network: the A-Line express on James and Upper James Streets between the waterfront and Hamilton International Airport, and the B-Line express bus, which travels the same east-west route as the proposed LRT.

Hamilton's LRT has had a tumultuous political history. A benefits case analysis and environmental report were conducted in the early 2010s. In 2015, the provincial government announced funding for a shorter route, running only as far east as the Queenston Road traffic circle, but also including a short line to the West Harbour GO Station. The route to West Harbour was later dropped in favour of bus rapid transit along the A-line, freeing up funds to extend the line to Eastgate Square, changes that were approved by the Ontario Ministry of the Environment and Climate Change in August 2017. The LRT played a major role in the 2018 Hamilton municipal elections, with pro-LRT incumbent mayor Fred Eisenberger defeating Vito Sgro, who campaigned on a platform of scrapping the B-Line LRT project entirely.

The project began to move forward, with some initial procurement and acquisition of properties necessary for the construction and operation of the LRT by Metrolinx, the provincial agency responsible for the project. However, in November 2019, the Ontario government abruptly announced that the project would be terminated immediately due to rising costs. The initial projected cost of the line was $1 billion; in 2019, the projected capital costs of the line had

risen to $2.85 billion. By the time the provincial government halted the project, the province had already spent over $165 million on the project and acquired 84 properties.

A year later, there was talk of a revival, although it was made clear by the Ontario government that this could only come about with the assistance of federal funding. In November 2020, the federal Minister of Infrastructure and Communities, Catherine McKenna, indicated that the federal government would support the project, subject to approval by the province and the submission of a business case. In February 2021, the province indicated its support of a shorter line, extending only as far east as Gage Avenue, with the entire route subject to federal funding. In May 2021, the federal government announced $1.7 billion for the Hamilton LRT project, with capital costs split evenly between the province and the federal government. Operational costs for the LRT would be covered by the City of Hamilton. In June 2021, the Ontario Ministry of Transportation, Metrolinx, and the City reached a memorandum of understanding, which City Council subsequently approved by a vote of 9–6.

The construction project will be far more complex than just building the light rail tracks, overhead, and stations. Also included in the project is the replacement of sewers, water mains, and gas mains, new hydro and telecommunications lines, and new sidewalks and roads. This complexity means a lot of construction work needs to happen before any of the LRT infrastructure is put in place. Construction is anticipated to start in 2023; at the time of writing, there has been no anticipated start date for the commencement of light rail service.

The exact details of the operation are still to be determined; however, the 14-kilometre route will consist of seventeen stops spaced between 600 and 800 metres apart. Thirty metre-long light rail transit vehicles will operate along the route, and a new operations, maintenance, and storage facility (OMSF) will be constructed near Frid Street and Longwood Road.

3.2 Research Methods

As discussed in the previous chapter, there is an urgent need to understand the lived experiences of people residing along a proposed transit line. Illuminating residents' experiences helps to render visible aspects of change that do not (yet) show up within statistical analysis, as well as outline trends, patterns, and experiences of local residents. This information can then be used by planners, policymakers, advocates, and non-profits to help develop policies, programs, and projects that help create inclusive and equitable spaces along the route.

Most studies of transit-induced gentrification, both qualitative and quantitative, conduct their research after a line has opened or is well into the construction phase. Our study is unique in that we have undertaken a large, qualitative research project about change along an LRT corridor more than a year before any construction begins.

The qualitative research methodology was based on gathering information about the lived experiences and knowledge of urban and neighbourhood change from residents living within 1 kilometre of the proposed light rail transit (LRT) route. The purpose was to understand how neighbourhoods and communities are changing, even before the construction of the LRT begins. Data collection centred on understanding key trends, patterns, and experiences related to housing, amenities, and transportation. Participants were recruited using a variety of methods. An article in the *Hamilton Spectator* on June 18, 2022 (Buist, 2022), explained what our research entailed, who resided within the catchment areas of our project, and how participants could get in touch with the research team if they wanted to know more about the study or participate in it. A website (www.uwaterloo.ca/hamilton-neighbourhood-change-research) was created for this project, enabling potential participants to find out more and fill out a contact form. Social media and other recruitment communication also directed people to this website. In addition, we circulated information through various non-profits within the city, including the Hamilton Community Benefits Network and Hamilton ACORN. Several of the tenants we interviewed were members of ACORN.

More than 400 people contacted us using this form. Each of these contacts was then emailed an explanation of the project and asked if they wanted to participate. Many people did not reply, were unavailable, lived too far from the LRT corridor, or were no longer interested. However, we conducted interviews with 106 people, all of whom fit the criteria for inclusion in the study. Each participant received a $40 gift card to thank them for their time. Voluntary participation stemming from the social media posts and newspaper article drove the inclusion of participants rather than the researchers using a stratified sample of the population to target and recruit. As a result, the participants may not reflect a randomized sample of the population along the LRT. For example, while we spoke with people from a variety of socioeconomic, demographic, and ethnic/racial backgrounds, the majority of participants identified as white and highly educated (see Table 3.1 for an overview of our participants). Residents with socio-

economic disadvantages, including many newcomers to Hamilton who might also face language barriers, were attempted to be recruited for the study by reaching out to local non-profits.

Interviews ranged from thirty minutes to three hours. Detailed notes were taken during each interview, and computer-generated transcripts were produced. These notes and transcripts helped the research team thematically analyze the interviews with the help of NVivo software. Below is some information about the participants.

Figure 3.1: Hamilton Ward Boundaries with LRT Stations Mapped

Overview of Participants

Total Number of Participants: 106

Total Number of Homeowners: 72

Total Number of Renters: 34

Percentage of Homeowners: 68%

Percentage of Renters: 32%

Figure 3.2: Representation by Ward

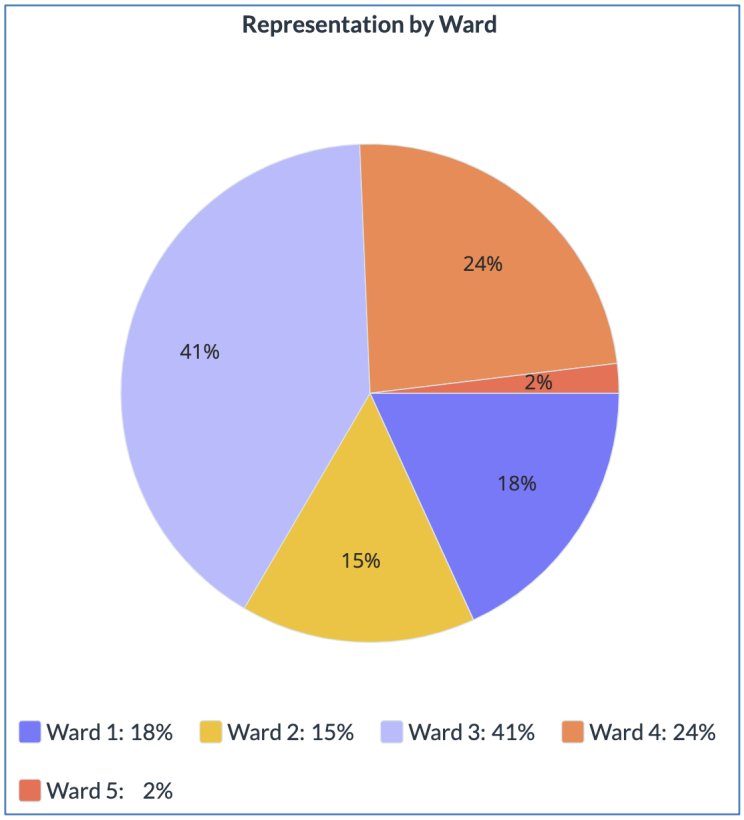


Table 3.1: Number and Percent of Participants by Ward

	Ward 1	Ward 2	Ward 3	Ward 4	Ward 5	Non-Disclosed
Number of Participants from each Ward	19	16	43	25	2	1
Percentage of Participants from each Ward	18%	15.1%	40.5%	23.5%	1.9%	1%

Table 3.2: Key Socioeconomic and Demographic Information

Participant Socioeconomic and Geographic Information	Number of Participants	Percentage of Participants	Average Household
Education level			
High School	16	15.09%	
Trade Certificate	4	3.77%	
College Diploma	23	21.69%	
Undergraduate Degree	33	31%	
Masters or Post-Graduate Degree	25	23.58%	
PhD	5	4.71%	
Gender			
Female	68	64%	
Male	35	33%	
Non-Binary	2	1.88%	
Non-Disclosed	1	.94%	
Identify with having a Disability			
Yes	23	22%	
No	83	78%	
Household Income			
0–25k	13	12.15%	
25–50k	11	10.28%	
50–75k	18	16.8%	
75–100k	16	14.9%	
100–150k	23	21.5%	
150k+	19	17.7%	
Non-Disclosed	6	5.6%	
Ethnicity and Race			
White/Caucasian	78	73.58%	
Indigenous Descent	4	3.77%	
Latinx	2	1.88%	

Black	3	2.83%	
European	15	14.15%	
Non-Disclosed	4	3.77%	
Average Household Size			2.2 persons
Average Home Duration			5.4 years
Average Hamilton Duration			14 years

Chapter 4 Experiences of Housing Changes: *"What will happen to us?"*

Overview

- *Most participants remarked on a lack of affordable housing, and felt that Hamilton is experiencing an affordability crisis*
- *Residents noted that housing speculation continues to grow in their neighbourhoods through the quick flipping of older homes*
- *Home conversions are putting pressure on ageing municipal infrastructure and neighbourhood amenities*
- *The overall rising cost of living and the lack of adequate social support have prompted higher rates of housing insecurity and housing precarity*
- *The number of vacant homes in neighbourhoods along the LRT line (some of which are the result of Metrolinx acquiring and demolishing properties in preparation for LRT construction) left participants feeling frustrated, with many expressing wishes for an empty homes tax or the repurposing of vacant homes and lots as interim housing or community gardens*
- *Residents emphasized the need for more alternative forms of affordable housing, such as tiny homes, laneway homes, and co-ops*

4.1 General Housing Trends, Observations, and Concerns

In this chapter, we will examine what was by far the most significant theme raised by interview participants: housing. In particular, our interviews demonstrated a growing affordability crisis impacting low- and middle-income households along the planned LRT route. In this section, we will outline and analyze some general trends, observations, and concerns that came up throughout our interviews. Later in the chapter, we will articulate some clear differences in experiences between renters and owners. Stories shared by our interviewees demonstrate how renters, in particular, are acutely feeling affordability pressures and displacement from real estate speculation and development along the planned LRT route.

4.1.1 Affordability

Both new residents and lifelong Hamiltonians we interviewed expressed concerns over the increasing lack of affordable housing in neighbourhoods along the proposed LRT route. However, there were varying and layered reasons why residents felt there was an affordability crisis in the city. Some noted the overall increase in the cost of living and the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, while others mentioned the real estate speculation prompted by the LRT. Many felt that the in-migration of families from places such as Toronto was why property prices had soared, and that neighbourhoods across the Lower City and along the proposed LRT route were experiencing gentrification as a result (for more on Toronto to Hamilton migration, see Doucet and Wilson, 2022).

In data released by the Realtors Association of Hamilton-Burlington, the real estate boom spurred by the pandemic was shown to slow as "[n]ew listings and average home prices in the city fell for the fourth consecutive month in August [2022], part of a broader trend that's also seen properties take a lot longer to sell" (Bron, 2022). Despite the recent decline in the housing market from the pandemic boom, Hamilton's real estate prices remain high. As of September 2022, the average price of a home sold in Hamilton was $792,767. The largest increase was for detached homes, with an average price of $877,000, while semi-detached/townhouses and condo apartments slightly decreased from last year's market report to $697,000 and $465,000, respectively (WOWA, 2022a). Comparatively, the nearby City of London in southern Ontario, with a similar population of 404,699, has lower prices for home ownership, whereas the average price of a detached home is $683,509 (WOWA, 2022b).

One of the many interviewee stories discussing the lack of affordability was from a young homeowner in Ward 4, who stated: *"The biggest issue is affordable housing and higher costs of rent and living. We're ranked the fourth least affordable city in North America! Th belief that people are attracted Hamilton because of affordability just keeps getting farther and farther from the truth. My friends have moved to buy homes in Brantford and St. Catharines. Affordability has had a ripple effect."* In a similar vein to what Newman and Wyly (2006) observed in terms of households doubling up with others if they were displaced, some participants remained or moved back into family homes with their parents. The parents we spoke to empathize with their adult children and the state of the housing market. Many mentioned that without family help, they would be at a disadvantage. As an example, a middle-aged homeowner

from Ward 4 states, *"Our two kids will end up staying in our place forever."* Others worried that their children would never have the financial capacity to rent or own their own houses. Another retired homeowner explained, *"I have willed our home to our daughter. Otherwise, she would never be able to afford a home. Others already need multiple jobs to afford their mortgage. Maintaining [homes] and taxes also cost money."*

In the past several decades, very little purpose-built rental housing has been built, and some existing purpose-built housing has been lost through conversions to condominiums or due to demolition (Pham, 2022). This reduction in purpose-built rental housing has further exacerbated affordability for low-income residents. According to the City of Hamilton, affordable rental housing means: (1) a unit for which the rent does not exceed 30 percent of gross annual household income for low- and moderate-income households, and/or (2) a unit for which the rent is at or below the average market rent of a unit in the City of Hamilton (City of Hamilton, 2022g). As Whitzman (2022) notes, these two definitions can lead to very different interpretations of what is considered to be affordable housing, with the former definition based on a tenant's ability to pay, while the latter is a slightly lower level than the going market rate for that type of dwelling.

To illustrate the growing concern over affordability, a retired single senior renter living in Ward 2 spoke about the housing affordability crisis affecting community health: *"I know more people who have committed suicide in the past six months than in the past forty years."* They went on to state that the shortage of affordable housing stock is *"not only creating bidding wars for properties, but also among rental units. Landlords are now accepting renters based on the highest bid."* The City recognizes the importance of creating new affordable housing and addressing renovictions, but it is not currently within the scope of new policy implementation (City of Hamilton, 2022g).

Several participants who were seniors, lived alone, were lower income, or on Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) called for more rent-geared-to-income housing, which fits under the first definition of affordable housing mentioned above. One of the many participants who spoke about rising rents was a senior female renter living in Ward 2 on a single income, who mentioned that *"rents go up $100/month with no change! ... I can't get any city housing because I work. It would be nice to get assistance or cheaper rent that's more geared to [my] income."* A young mother and homeowner living in Ward 3 remarks: *"Hamilton*

was already at the edge of affordability and was the place where people went for cheaper housing, but where will they go now? Hamilton is a hub for services, but the rest of the province should share this load. We need a housing strategy!" Another participant who reflected on the rising costs of rent was a homeowner from Ward 4 who felt that *"inflation and greed"* were key culprits for the lack of affordable housing in the city.

Others commented on the LRT plans and the adverse effects on affordability. A common observation raised by interviewees was about the blatantly vacant homes and buildings along the LRT route during an affordability crisis. For example, a retired senior renter living in Ward 3 commented on Metrolinx property procurement and LRT development, stating, *"Everything is bought, boarded up, or still boarded years later. There are major evictions, and tent cities popping up everywhere during an affordability crisis."* It is important to note that even among interviewees who had secure forms of housing, many were also acutely aware of the affordability crisis emerging along the proposed LRT route. They were also frustrated with the vacant buildings and lack of affordable rental housing.

4.1.2 Speculation and Home Flipping

Many participants noticed that homes recently sold in their neighbourhoods were subject to quick 'curb appeal' renovations and other forms of home flipping. They also believe that the LRT route has increased property speculation, making once affordable and older housing stock now inaccessible to middle- and lower-income families as both investors and Metrolinx buy up properties. There are currently dozens of 'how to' YouTube videos that have garnered thousands of views about house flipping in Hamilton, particularly in neighbourhoods in the Lower City.[2] Statistically, within the Hamilton Census Metropolitan Area (CMA), 41.6% of all condominium apartments are owned by investors. This rises to 53.4% for condo units constructed between 2016 and 2020.[3]

Participants mentioned how, overall, Hamilton has become the site of major speculation and investment, with one low-income homeowner from Ward 4 stating: *"It seems like Hamilton has been discovered, resulting in more developers, building needs, and speculation."*

[2] See the YouTube channel Property Hustlers: https://www.youtube.com/@PropertyHustlers.
[3] For Statistics Canada data, see https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/t1/tbl1/en/cv.action?pid=4610007001.

Some homeowners explained how they receive multiple calls from developers to sell their homes, with investors and realtors eager to take advantage of the real estate market. Others worried about what the influx of investment will do to Hamilton, such as a low-income homeowner in Ward 4 who commented on the LRT proposal's impact on their neighbourhood: *"The city is in trouble and the chaos will further deteriorate the city. What will happen to us? It may increase activities we don't want. It won't hurt real estate because people will dive in for the cash grab."* A recent op-ed in the *Hamilton Spectator*, titled "House flipper, beware," outlines the proposed changes in the federal budget update stating that as of January 1, 2023, anyone who sells a property which they owned for less than twelve months will be considered to have "flipped" the house. Any profits from the deal will be taxed as business income (Convery, 2022). It is too early to tell if this new policy will deter or slow down the real estate market and property flipping in neighbourhoods along the proposed LRT.

Participants felt that some homes had been bought in disrepair, and that some homes had sat vacant for years, perhaps made as investments by people who don't live in Hamilton. Many participants commented on the number of vacant homes along the corridor coinciding with the rise of homeless encampments in the Lower City of Hamilton. One of the many comments was from a young renter in Ward 2 who was frustrated by property speculation in the face of an affordability crisis: *"People have been buying properties, and they sit vacant for years. It's striking. In a city with an affordability crisis. Lots of the new units were built on parking lots rather than demolished homes."* Others mentioned the renovations they saw in their neighbourhood, including a homeowner from Ward 4 who noticed *"Lots of house flipping where sellers are doing the bare minimum of renovations that look pretty but that are actually of very bad quality… You always know it's a flip with the grey, fake bordering and the grey walls."*

A middle-aged homeowner living in Ward 3 explained that the renovations he noticed on his street were *"Mostly single-family homes, with some homes chopped up into multiple dwellings like triplexes, and another into an apartment."* Participants often held the perspective that outsider investment in these homes was solely to maximize profit because they could get away with it. An example of this perspective was from a low-income senior renter who disparagingly viewed some of the house flipping and conversions as being *"carved up to rent to more people,"* but not necessarily meeting low-income renters' needs.

Similarly, a homeowner from Ward 3 shared a story about their neighbour who was renting out a freshly renovated secondary unit in their home but couldn't find tenants because the rent was set too high at $2,200/month for one bedroom. Reflecting on their own mortgage of $1,200/month, they stated that *"rent prices are simply unattainable for many."* Another homeowner in Ward 3 shared similar sentiments, stating, *"Some homeless people are [living] in Gage Park but rent prices in nearby converted homes are crazy."*

4.1.3 Deconversion, Airbnb, and the Loss of Existing Affordable Rental Units

Another common trend noted by respondents was the deconversion of houses back to single-family homes. Many houses originally built as single-family homes in Lower Hamilton have been converted and divided into apartments and rooming houses over the past several decades. The units within these houses are rented out and provide some more affordable housing stock to people on low and fixed incomes. A recent trend, common in gentrifying neighbourhoods across Canada, is to revert or deconvert these houses back to single-family dwellings. The process of deconversion often results in evicting or removing tenants, renovating the houses (removing extra kitchens, bathrooms, etc.), and upgrading them to be sold or rented as a single-family dwelling. One of the participants who mentioned this type of conversion in their neighbourhood, a senior homeowner from Ward 3, shares: *"My home was built in 1904, and the others on my street are single-family homes. Lots had been separated out into apartments with bad landlords, but now they're being bought up and made back into one unit again. Some have in-law suites."*

Some participants also spoke about long-term rental units being turned into Airbnbs, and other short-term rental units affecting housing stock and rental affordability in their neighbourhoods. The link between short-term holiday rentals such as Airbnb and gentrification has been well developed in the literature (Wachsmuth and Weisler, 2018; Sigler and Wachsmuth, 2020). An example of this shift came from a renter living in Ward 2, who mentioned that *"The house beside the building I live in was sold. It used to be three rental units, but now it's three Airbnbs."* The Airbnbs were a concern for some homeowners, including a homeowner in Ward 1, who stated, *"I'm concerned that the people who own the homes as investments and just Airbnb them will divest from the area or sell, which will change the neighbourhood."* According to a recent report, Hamilton had 898 active short-term rental hosts, 92 percent of whom posted on Airbnb pre-pandemic. A typical local host is 45 years old and rents out their space for fewer than

three nights per booking; 61 percent of listings are entire homes or apartments (Moro, 2022b). While there have been discussions by the municipal government around capping short-term rentals, no formal policy has been put in place.

4.1.4 Housing Precarity, Unhoused Residents, and Homelessness

The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness defines homelessness as "the situation of an individual, family, or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it" (Homeless Hub, 2021). This definition includes individuals or families who are unsheltered, in emergency shelters, provisionally accommodated, and at risk of losing their housing. Following the federal government's goal of cutting down on rates of Canadian homelessness by 50 percent, the City of Hamilton has committed to the provincial goal of ending homelessness by 2025. According to a 2019 report prepared for the City of Hamilton titled "Coming Together to End Homelessness," more than 820 Hamilton residents experience chronic homelessness, 1,900 residents experience short-term homelessness, and close to 16,500 individuals are at risk of homelessness (Turner, 2019, p. 12). As of 2019, the City of Hamilton's Housing Services Division invests $32 million annually in the homeless-serving system.

Many participants commented about high rates of visible homelessness across the Lower City. Participants who had moved to Hamilton in the past five years said they were shocked by the visible income disparity across some wards. To illustrate this theme, a homeowner from Ward 3 who has lived in their current home and in Hamilton for two years remarked, *"The poverty level is unacceptable considering the manufacturing capacity of the city and the industry."* Other participants commented on the lack of available social housing resources, and that they are also fearful of becoming homeless in the future. One of the low-income participants remarked on how precarious their housing situation felt. This female renter living on ODSP in Ward 1 states, *"I don't know how others who are disabled do it. Everyone is just one bad story away from homelessness."*

A complex interplay of structural factors, system failures, and individual circumstances has led to homelessness in Hamilton. It is important to note that low-income individuals living with disabilities, and Indigenous community members, experience higher rates of homelessness compared to other Hamilton residents. In our interviews, residents discussed some of the factors

that they believe contribute to homelessness, as well as the increasing challenges of keeping a roof over one's head during the COVID-19 pandemic. Participants mentioned a variety of issues relating to homelessness and housing insecurity, such as renovictions, rent increases, growing competition for rental units, unemployment or being laid off due to businesses cutting work hours, and increases in domestic violence. To demonstrate the dire state of housing precarity, one of the participants who works in the non-profit sector stated: *"In the pandemic alone, there were 700 unique women who used the emergency drop-in program who had never needed these services before."*

Both renters and homeowners expressed empathy and sympathy with Hamilton residents currently experiencing homelessness or living in tent communities in places like Gage Park. Some renter participants felt particularly empathetic to the precariousness felt by the unhoused, sharing their stories about landlords who do many things to try to push them out of their rental units. There were stories about landlords doing things such as neglecting to make necessary repairs to appliances or laundry in both communal and private apartment spaces in an attempt to push residents out. Two examples given by one low-income renter were that their landlord turned off the heat in the middle of winter and that they had to live with bedbugs for months before the landlord hired an exterminator to fumigate. Another low-income renter who was evicted from their previous home because the landlord wanted to sell and now rents a new home with their young child remarked, *"No family should end up homeless because people with double incomes can move in and be a better tenant."* Stories like these reflect both the need for greater regulation, protection, and development of affordable rental units by the City, and the need for more accessible information about tenants' rights. Further, Kinsella (2022) demonstrates that many of the lowest-income Hamiltonians do not have formal rental contracts, or are unaware of their tenant rights.

There was overwhelming support by participants for increasing social housing for those in need, with many commenting on how homelessness is perceived and treated. One of the responses included that of a low-income senior renter who has lived in Hamilton for twenty-two years in Ward 2, and states, *"I count the unhoused as my neighbours and the police are clearing them out, which puts them in an even more desperate state."* Another low-income renter living in Ward 3 said they *"want more support for the unhoused, and I want poverty to stop being criminalized."* As a reflection on current municipal policy and practices, a low-income renter

from Ward 2 remarked, with frustration, that *"City Hall seems deadlocked on these issues and the experiences of the people seem to be lost. Why spend money on a Hamilton sign when people go hungry? Why board up a warm grate when homeless people are sleeping on it? Why not use the many houses we have vacant to solve this issue? What is going to happen when this is all turned into condos?"*

4.1.5 Inclusionary Zoning

The Hamilton Community Benefits Network, Hamilton ACORN, and Environment Hamilton all advocate for the development of affordable housing along the LRT corridor, and are asking the City to move forward with an inclusionary zoning strategy. Inclusionary zoning is a tool under provincial legislation that municipalities can use to oblige private developers to include affordable housing near major transit stations. Hamilton's general manager of planning and economic development, Jason Thorne, has stated that the City intends to have an inclusionary zoning policy in place before LRT construction (CBC News, 2022).

Some participants expressed concerns around affordable housing policy and LRT construction, with one homeowner living in Ward 3 stating, *"inclusionary zoning is only one tool and not a panacea."* Coupled with other tools for affordable housing, another homeowner from Ward 3 wants to see *"25 percent of development as inclusionary zoning, more RGI (rent-geared-to-income) programs, rent control, and fixed prices even for ownership. Housing is too expensive for welfare."*

4.1.6 Vacant Homes

In June 2022, City Council approved the implementation of the Vacant Unit Tax in Hamilton. Starting in 2024, residential properties that have been unoccupied for six months during the previous year will have to pay an additional tax. The City's website states that the tax "is intended to encourage owners to rent out empty properties in order to increase the supply and affordability of housing in the city" (City of Hamilton, 2022i). The implementation of an empty home tax was raised by interview participants when discussing issues around housing affordability. One homeowner from Ward 4, who has lived in Hamilton for the last twenty-five years and has seen the evolution of investment in Hamilton, commented, *"Vacant land [and homes] should be taxed heavily because they're not servicing anyone."*

Some residents mentioned that there have been vacant homes on their neighbourhood block for years. Others speculated whether investors and developers had purchased homes once they received news of the LRT and purposely left them vacant. Along these lines, a senior homeowner living in Ward 4 remarked about her neighbourhood, *"Nowadays, everything is gone, closed up, or burnt down."* Many others mentioned their dismay at the sight of vacant homes, including a homeowner from Ward 3 who has lived in Hamilton for one year, saying,*"it looks like a horror movie."* Likewise, a senior renter who has lived in Hamilton for the past sixty years in Ward 3 was saddened by the changes in Hamilton, commenting that *"everything on King Street has been demolished or vacant, and it's so depressing. I avoid going there."*

Participants also expressed confusion about Metrolinx's procurement process, and felt that the LRT development was partly responsible for the growing rate of vacant properties and homes. Several participants felt as though the purchasing and subsequent neglect of these homes was terrible. Of those who mentioned this feeling, a homeowner living in Hamilton for the past 55 years in Ward 3, asked, *"Why is the city allowing boarded-up houses to sit for two decades? Are they speculators? Why does the LRT need to buy 96 properties to put in a system? There needs to be a policy in place to stop houses from sitting dormant, and more regulation around speculation."* Another homeowner from Ward 4, who was recently renovicted from the house she was living in with her family, felt there was an overall lack of community awareness about LRT development that creates a feeling of a lack of democracy and community control about what is happening in the neighbourhood: *"The buildings being demolished or left empty are concerning. Seeing the buildings empty and blank spots everywhere and with no community engagement about what's happening feels like a cash grab."* Another participant stated, *"Two buildings down the street were bought by Metrolinx and are now empty lots. They used to be mixed commercial-residential buildings with a laundromat, bank, and apartments."* As of May 2022, the Hamilton Community Benefits Network noted that Metrolinx had acquired properties for the construction of the LRT that have resulted in the displacement of 150 people and the loss of 61 units of deeply affordable or market-rate rentals (Taekema, 2022). As of May 2022, Metrolinx had acquired 60 of the approximately 90 properties it requires for the LRT project, demolishing around 30.

4.1.7 Condo Development

A recent study by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) (2022) confirmed that Ontario condominiums are 35 percent smaller on average than they were 25 years ago, while the average detached home is 25 percent larger. Hamilton is below the provincial average, with the median condo size shrinking 40 percent over 25 years from 1,231 square feet to 744 square feet. MPAC's vice-president and chief valuation and standards officer states that "As land values have increased … more units are being built on a single property or a single parcel of land…This has meant that those individual units have gotten smaller" (Mitchell, 2022a). While some contractors have cited the drop in condo sizes as a function of affordability, others have noted that despite the shrinking size of units, "There's really no such thing as a starter home anymore throughout Southern Ontario" (Mitchell, 2022a). While condos may have historically been perceived as an accessible way for residents to enter the housing market, many participants felt that the recent condo development in Hamilton contributes to the affordability crisis.

A renter living in Ward 3 proclaimed that the City needs to *"Stop flipping low-income housing into luxury condos!"* A low-income renter living in Ward 3 commented on a recent condo development in their neighbourhood where *"people were being renovicted for these luxury condos. There were separate doors and elevators for the lower-income units in the building, furthering the segregation of people."* A senior renter living in Ward 2 noted that condos *"are all bought and rented, rather than owner-occupied. It's just more renters who are gouged with higher costs of rent."*

Some participants felt that the City was ignoring the concerns of residents who own homes surrounding proposed condo developments. A retired homeowner living in Ward 2 expressed concern about the character of their neighbourhood: *"McMaster has encroached onto the neighbourhood because they couldn't supply enough housing. I'm concerned about the [condo] shadows, noise, students, and cars."* Other participants referred to a blog called the Strathcona Shadow Dwellers (https://strathconashadowdwellers.wordpress.com/). Speaking in an op-ed about a condo proposal by the company Vrancor at Queen and Napier Streets, Shadow Dwellers founder Wayne MacPhail states:

> Vrancor will … get an obscenely dense development that will drastically affect Strathcona's traffic, wind, sunlight, esthetics and infrastructure, while offering nothing positive in return. … I have no illusions that I nor my neighbours will get the well-

> considered, community-centric and esthetic higher-density development we want on that site. (MacPhail, 2022a)

Some participants mentioned a preference for the gradual densification of the lower city, rather than quick condo developments. A young homeowner living in Ward 1 said they were *"frustrated that the city and Metrolinx have gone with a ToC1 (transit-oriented corridor mixed use medium density zone) development along the corridor rather than a radial plan where the density slowly increases, rather than it being single-family homes and then luxury condos."* Others suggested the need for low-rises, mixed-use development, and the development of more public amenities to help foster community along the LRT corridor. A renter living in Ward 2 commented on new condo developments along the LRT corridor, stating, *"I don't think new condos are for people like me. They are to attract people from other neighbourhoods."*

4.1.8 Addressing the "Missing Middle" in Hamilton Housing

Participants stated that there was an overall lack of available and affordable homes; they expressed the wish for more alternatives to large, detached single-family homes to purchase or rent. architect and urban planner Daniel Parolek has long been advocating for these very alternatives, coining the phrase "Missing Middle Housing" and expanding on this concept in his book on the subject (Parolek, 2020). A U.S. organization that champions walkable, well-designed neighbourhoods describes this type of housing as follows:

> Missing Middle is a range of multi-unit or clustered housing types compatible in scale with single-family homes that help meet the growing demand for walkable urban living. These types provide diverse housing options along a spectrum of affordability, including duplexes, fourplexes, and bungalow courts, to support walkable communities, locally-serving retail, and public transportation options.

One of the many respondents eager to have available alternatives to large detached single-family homes was an older renter, living on her own and paying a significant amount of money in rent, who wishes Hamilton had *"more different types of housing like townhomes or tiny homes so single income people can afford them."* Owners alike mentioned the need for alternatives that

span between the size of detached single-family homes and the taller condos. A retired planner and homeowner articulated, *"the problem is that lots are priced out of buying and there's a shortage of lower-middle income housing that's suitable. We need more varied housing that is sympathetically built."*

4.2 Tenant Concerns

While the section above discussed some more general housing concerns and observations from our participants living along the proposed LRT route, it is important to stress that the most prominent housing divide is between those who own and those who rent. Therefore, we also analyzed the different experiences, challenges, and observations between participants who were owners and those who were renters. These differences are reflected in participants' attitudes toward housing, and are greatly influenced by housing tenure. In this section, we will discuss some of the main concerns voiced by tenants living along the LRT corridor.

4.2.1 Rent Increases

Rent increases were a significant factor cited by participants as a reason to remain in their current rental units. In Ontario, sitting tenants enjoy some degree of rent control. However, in one of its first pieces of legislation in 2018, Doug Ford's provincial government changed rent control regulations to apply only to rental units created or occupied before November 15, 2018, meaning that any new units constructed after that point are not subject to any rent control. There are also no rent controls when a unit becomes vacant, meaning many long-term tenants pay below market rents for their units. The ability to charge much higher rents once the unit is vacant creates an incentive for landlords to remove tenants who are subject to rent control. There are annual guideline rent increases which landlords can charge (in 2023, this will be 2.5 percent), and landlords can (and regularly do) apply for above-guideline rent increases, which are often far more than low-income tenants can afford (Bsat, 2022; Moro, 2019; Zigman and August, 2021).

Prompted by the pandemic, the Government of Ontario passed legislation to freeze rents at 2020 levels and to not increase rents at the majority of rented units covered under the *Residential Tenancies Act* until December 31, 2021. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) report on Hamilton housing and rentals announced that Ontario's

temporary rent freeze legislation was fair to existing renters, but generally did little for those who need a new place: "The discrepancy here … was about 20 per cent difference between the rents of someone who's looking for a new unit versus someone who's already renting" (Anthony Passarelli of the CMHC, cited in Mitchell, 2022b). The CMHC's January 2022 rental market report demonstrated that vacant one-bedroom units were offered at an average of about 9 percent higher than the rent paid for occupied units during the time the legislation was in effect. CMHC currently estimates that only one of every seven vacant units in the primary Hamilton market is affordable to renters at the 40th income percentile, and virtually no units are available to low-income renters making in the range of $25,000 (Mitchell, 2022b).

Most renters interviewed were acutely aware of the rising costs of rent in Hamilton. Interviewees shared their experience with the rising cost of rent, with some choosing to remain in inadequate or substandard living conditions to avoid paying much higher rent if they tried to improve their housing situation. One example of substandard living conditions came from a low-income renter who has been living in their unit for twelve years in Ward 2: *"There have been some bad things in the apartment such as having bedbugs for a year, which was a nightmare."* This participant did not mention whether they had signed a contract with their landlord. Although they felt that what had happened to them was (and is) illegal, it is uncertain whether they felt empowered to exercise their tenant rights; in any event, they stated that they couldn't afford to move because it would entail paying at least an extra $500 per month in rent.

In other instances, the gap between what a landlord can charge for a sitting tenant and what a landlord can charge a new tenant has led to instances of harassment and intimidation to push tenants out. One of the many examples of this was when a local activist was pressured to move by his landlord due to being protected by rent control. The new price for a comparable unit within their same building is now $1,400 a month, nearly triple the cost of monthly rent from when they moved in twenty-two years ago. Staying in place and resisting renovictions cannot always shield tenants from rent increases, as one senior renter living in Ward 2 attests: *"The price of rent just keeps going up and it's very unaffordable. Some rents go up $100/month, with no change!"*

4.2.3 Landlord Misconduct and Absentee Landlords

Over the past decade, several news stories and academic articles have highlighted the issue of absentee landlords in Hamilton (Buist, 2014; Patterson and Harris, 2017). A large proportion of Hamilton's rental stock is owned by resident landlords, local absentee landlords, and property owners living outside Hamilton. Another big segment is owned by large, financialized landlords such as real estate investment trusts (REITs). Lastly, as Kinsella (2022) demonstrates in their study of low-cost rental units in Hamilton, a proportion of resident landlords fall into an "amateur" landlord category and engage in informal rental arrangements. Based on our interviews, each segment of ownership represented a different level of care and attention to the tenants. Through an online questionnaire survey of Hamilton tenants with follow-up interviews, Patterson and Harris (2017) suggest that tenants of smaller properties owned by resident landlords were more satisfied with their living situation than those who live in properties owned by absentee landlords or owners living outside of Hamilton. Kinsella (2022) found that in Hamilton, tenants with low incomes often do not have rental contracts or are ignorant about their rights, leading to greater power-dynamic issues and insecure tenure.

A prevalent theme among renters interviewed was the importance of a healthy tenant-landlord relationship in addressing the upkeep of rental units. Some participants felt that some landlords deliberately failed to respond to tenant needs. Many landlord tactics were spoken about during the interviews, including by a low-income senior renter from Ward 3 who felt that their landlord actively ignored their requests for help as a deliberate abdication of responsibility: *"If you're a tenant, they don't answer the phone."*

Some tenants attributed a lack of responsiveness to the impersonal organizational structure of rent-seeking corporate management companies. It was only through energy-intensive tenant organizing and mentioning the words *"paper trail"* that a cockroach problem was resolved in one renter's apartment building in Ward 2. These landlord practices could lead to a sense of abandonment when staff who are said to live on-site are never seen. One of the tactics of the apartment management to gain trust was explained by a renter from Ward 2, who stated, *"The company never does anything for tenants… they had a doughnut day."* Tenants sometimes feared the uneven power dynamics between themselves and the landlord. This dynamic meant that organizing for better conditions would put their tenure at risk (see also Lothian-McLean, 2022). Some renters wished there was more enforcement ensuring property maintenance, with a

renter living in Ward 2 stating: *"Enforce the maintenance of rental spaces to avoid slumlords who only do the bare minimum."*

4.2.3 Renoviction and Evictions

Eviction was a problem faced or feared by the vast majority of renters we interviewed. As a broad trend among participants, renoviction was more likely to be faced by those living in apartment buildings or rental suites than those living in single detached housing. Renoviction was not solely achieved through improvement, but caused by deteriorating living conditions and cutting utilities for prolonged periods in what one resident dubbed *"renoviction by attrition."* Renovictions or evictions would often follow changes in building ownership, hinting at changes in management practices. In 2020, the Hamilton ACORN tenant advocacy group called upon City Council to implement strong legislation against renovictions, citing the New Westminster, BC city by-law that threatens landlords with the loss of their business licence and fines of up to $1,000 per day if they are caught renovicting tenants. This City of Hamilton is currently reviewing whether a by-law similar to the one in New Westminster is feasible to implement in Hamilton.

There was a sense among those interviewed that Hamilton had historically been a friendlier place toward renters, but that the problems now faced by renters more closely mirrored the affordability crisis in Toronto. Of the many participants reflecting on how expensive Hamilton has become, a renter from Ward 2 who has lived in Hamilton for the past twenty years states, *"My friend from Toronto moved to Hamilton after getting renovicted three times, but now it seems that, housing-wise, Hamilton is becoming more like Toronto."* Anecdotally, their friend noticed renoviction becoming more common in Hamilton. Another resident from Ward 3 reflects on the city's housing history, saying, *"At least Hamilton was a place you could rent."*

Tenants who were renting single detached homes mentioned that their fear of eviction was under the pretext that the owner might have relatives moving in. Often these accounts came from homeowners whose neighbours were renters, such as this account from one homeowner in Ward 3 who has owned their home for the past eight years and who knows of this happening to their neighbours: *"Next-door neighbours got the boot out of their old apartment because the landlord claims he has a family member moving in."* Findings from Toronto show a sharp increase in 'own use' evictions—where landlords force tenants to move out so the unit can be

used by themselves, an immediate member of their family, a caregiver, or a new homeowner. Between January and October 2022, the Ontario Landlord and Tenant Board received 1,269 'own use' eviction filings, a dramatic increase from 762 in 2021 and close to the all-time annual high of 1,274 in 2019 (Gibson, 2022).

Of those renovicted, many had to move on without filing a claim, mentioning that they had a lot to deal with, including finding another rental and moving in on short notice or not knowing they could. One of those renovicted was a homeowner from Ward 4 who was able to file a claim but took the settlement because she had inherited a family home to which she could move her family. She explained in detail: *"I was renovicted from my place in Westdale, where my family of four and I lived for twelve years. I was living there forever, with my kids having gone to school nearby and everything being close to them, when my landlord, out of nowhere, told me he was going to increase the rent by $500/month, which we could not afford. He then told me that he was moving in so we had to leave. I fought it in the tribunal for nine months, when I finally gave up and took the settlement. Mainly because I then had a home become open for my family to move into on the other side of the city for free. I know the Landlord [and] Tenant Act very well. When we moved out, the landlord renovated the place and sold it within less than a year, which was illegal. I didn't bother suing because it was such a pain."*

Stories such as this were common in our research. They help us to move beyond treating these as anecdotes and instead see the broader patterns and experiences that are common throughout the city. Even if a landlord broke the law, tenants often felt powerless to respond, or lacked the capacity to access appropriate social services (see also McDougall et al., 2022). Another renter interviewed was evicted from their home rental after their new Toronto-based landlords purchased the home. The home then remained empty for eight months before being rented out to another tenant at a higher price. Similarly, a senior renter living in Ward 2 who had previously lived in Burlington had to move after being forced out of the home she was renting with her older son. They could find a small rental unit for herself, and her son had to find a cheap rental with roommates. She had sent in twenty applications to landlords, noting fierce competition in the Hamilton rental market: *"there were fifty applications for that rental alone!"* They felt disadvantaged in the competition compared to those who were younger and with two incomes.

Absentee and negligent landlords also played a central role in eviction stories shared by participants. To illustrate this neglect, a middle-aged renter from Ward 2 discussed how their apartment building's roof collapsed, causing leaks in the upstairs units. The landlord also failed to maintain the hallways and laundry rooms, and there were instances where the landlord would cut off utilities for extended periods in the middle of the winter: *"People were being pushed out one by one due to deteriorating conditions until we were the last ones left."*

The renter above and other tenants in the building hired a lawyer to take the landlord to court over willful neglect, and eventually settled to cover the moving costs for the tenants. After moving, the renter was not satisfied with the condition of their new apartment, stating that they did not have water for eleven days and still did not have heat. Their neighbour does not have a proper fire escape, yet is fearful of raising the issue with the landlord since it could be an issue that pushes their family out: *"They keep displacing people without building anything, that's why I live in a 120-year-old apartment."* Again, such fears of antagonizing a landlord because of a routine maintenance issue are typical for tenants, even those who otherwise have a good relationship with their landlord (Lothian-McLean, 2022)

Renters who live in cheaper, older, and poorer quality dwellings often stated that they could afford to live there because they have lived in the apartment for an extended time, yet would have nowhere else to go if evicted or renovicted because the other rents are higher (see also Jones, 2020). One of the many responses in this vein was from a low-income senior renter in Ward 3 who had been renting his current unit for six years; he referred to his apartment as "a dump," but it was the only place he could afford: *"They sold the building and they want to push everyone out and renovict … they've made everyone's lives terrible on purpose to push us to leave. They are actually selling the building because they're fed up with dealing with kicking out the tenants … I hope my time runs out [on earth] before this building evicts me."* They fear the heat may be shut off just to push them and other tenants out. If evicted, they have nowhere to go, and would be unhoused because their cost of rent is over half of their monthly income from their pension.

Even within rent-geared-to-income (RGI) buildings, residents can be evicted for what is deemed to be poor behaviour. One RGI tenant knew of three tenants who were evicted from their building, run by the Hamilton Christian charity Indwell: *"One couple put cat litter down the drain, causing major issues. The other was given an eviction notice due to drug use but*

committed suicide before moving out." This account suggests that the capacity of some RGI housing providers to accommodate those facing mental health or drug addiction issues is limited. These renovictions are concerning and cause mental anguish to those who experience them, leaving tenants with no alternative place to go.

4.2.4 Affordable Housing Waiting Times

There are approximately 14,000 social housing units in Hamilton, including CityHouse Hamilton and other housing providers. As of 2018, there were 1,166 tenants waiting to be transferred from one social housing unit to another, and an addition 5,500 applicants on waitlists for subsidized units (Moro, 2020). A major concern relating to subsidized housing units in Hamilton is the upkeep of older buildings. Of the many people frustrated by the lack of housing, one low-income renter from Ward 3 couldn't understand why the City was *"Tearing down housing we desperately need."* One senior citizen interviewed was fortunate enough to be assigned to a rent-subsidized unit in a privately-owned building after an eight-year wait. Despite knowing the building would be eventually torn down and turned into a luxury condo development, they still chose to accept the offer and move in. Another family felt fortunate to have found a non-profit housing provider that offered them a unit after one year on the waitlist. One interviewee claimed they would have needed to wait years longer had it not been for knowing someone in the housing sector to help with their application. In another case, a disabled senior man on an affordable housing waitlist said the wait time had doubled from five to ten years. Even among those who didn't reside in affordable housing, reducing wait times was seen as a pressing need. Many participants called not only for new subsidized housing but also for more financial support for tenants and for inclusionary zoning to be used as leverage with developers.

4.2.5 AGI Renovations

As we noted previously, above guideline increases (AGIs) can, with the approval of the Landlord and Tenant Board, allow landlords to raise rents to rates above the maximum permitted by rent control if doing major renovations. Residents of buildings facing proposed AGIs would like to see a higher standard of maintenance in their buildings, but don't see the AGIs as necessary since the maintenance is often thought of as essential rather than an upgrade. Many tenants mentioned well-known real estate investment trusts (REITs) when commenting about AGIs. Examples

include a tenant who told us that the laundry machines were often out of commission in their apartment building, and that the balconies needed repair. Another noted that, despite their unit being recently renovated, a young renter living in a REIT-owned building thought the apartment wasn't worth what they were paying due to multiple issues with the building, including bedbugs, broken laundry machines, and poor hallway maintenance. Other tenants felt that AGIs were being used as loopholes, since the last time an AGI had been allowed was due to the hallways in their apartment building receiving a new paint job (see also Moro, 2019). Their building has had upward pressure on rent for as long as some tenants have lived there.

4.3 Homeowner Concerns

In this section, we will turn our attention to concerns raised by homeowners. These were very different from the issues that tenants were facing. In general, they had less to do with the price and affordability of housing, and more with how the area looked, the ability to remain in their homes for the long term, and infrastructure.

4.3.1 Neighbourhood Maintenance

Owners expressed concern over the lack of maintenance to neighbouring rental properties. Most thought landlords were at fault for not maintaining the properties. An example of this perspective came from a homeowner from Ward 3 who was frustrated by the lack of care in neighbouring rental properties, and felt that *"They [the city] should have a policy on making infractions with landlords, and they'd make a fortune. They will only go if a complaint has been generated. There's garbage everywhere!"* There was a sense among homeowners interviewed that they bore an unequal responsibility in maintaining their local streets. Likewise, a homeowner living in Ward 1 noticed that the homes on their street rented out to students often had unkempt yards, garbage piling up, and too many renters "piled in" to one unit. One of the new homeowners who moved to Hamilton with their growing family from Toronto was shocked by the lack of maintenance in the neighbourhood by both the City and homeowners, explaining, *"There is an alleyway behind my house, and it is filled with transient folks and sex workers. There is also a ton of illegal [garbage] dumping that happens back there. From construction crews dumping to folks dumping drug paraphernalia."* Reflecting on these changes was a retired homeowner who

has lived in Hamilton for sixty-five years; living in Ward 2, he reflected on the changes they have noticed in their neighbourhood over the past several years, reminiscing that, *"We used to be a much more caring society, and now that seems to be lost."*

4.3.2 Aging in Place

One of the needs articulated by aging homeowners and renters was the availability of smaller and more accessible housing. An example of this was one senior homeowner from Ward 3 who stated that *"many [of us] would like to downsize."* A 2020 report by the Social Planning and Research Council (SPRC) of Hamilton, titled "Changing Older Adult Population," highlights that there is an increasingly aging population among the former municipalities that ring the downtown core of Hamilton:

> Most of the housing in these former municipalities were built on the suburban model; single-family houses on large lots on crescent-type street design. However, the assumptions underlying this design, young families and car-dependent, are no longer valid. An older population, with a diminishing number of people per household and not wanting to be completely car-dependent, needs a different type of housing that offers easy access to shopping and services. (Mayo, 2020)

It is important for Hamilton to consider the trend of an aging population for future development, and to offer diverse types of housing with reasonable access to work, shopping, and services using a variety of transportation modes. The needs of seniors aging in place extend to the public sphere, with some residents calling for more active community spaces and grocery co-ops. Of the many senior homeowners wishing to downsize, one of the homeowners living in Ward 1 for the past twenty years states: *"The city invests too much in keeping people over-housed, like keeping seniors in large houses. People need viable options and alternatives to give up on space because right now, there are too many empty bedrooms and we need to facilitate 'right-sizing.' Smaller housing, a seniors' complex, but with things like community gardens for people to still do the things they love (a much more EU model)."*

Some residents took it upon themselves to retrofit their homes, and refused to sell or move, such as one interviewee who was receiving offers of over a million dollars three times a

week from realtors during the height of the housing boom. The importance of living in a neighbourhood with other neighbouring seniors was raised several times as a reason to stay in a neighbourhood. Aging in place was also a common theme for those who could afford to retrofit their homes, such as a retired homeowner from Ward 3 who stated, *"Most of my long-term neighbours are retirees and couples. Some are adapting their homes to fit their needs as seniors."* What is clear from these interviews is that different housing needs arise when aging, and the new developments and infrastructure throughout the city need to be built with that in mind.

4.3.3 Illegal Units

A recent report states that there are "an untold number of Victorian homes in Hamilton which are illegal multiplexes. They were converted in recent decades while the old City of Hamilton turned a blind eye" (Coleman, 2021). Over the past several years, ownership of these homes has changed with the rise in popularity of the Hamilton housing market. The City is urging new owners to legalize existing illegal multiplexes and bring them up to both building and fire codes. There are significant concerns about the safety of illegal multiplexes. To complicate the matter, the City could punish those who illegally converted homes, but "[e]nforcing zoning laws would remove thousands of rental units at a time when Hamilton is experiencing a shortage of available units" (Coleman, 2021).

Participants who expressed the greatest concern over illegal units were most often homeowners. Many spoke about the poor curb appeal of these properties and an overall lack of maintenance, as well as a concern for the tenants. An example of the illegal units that participants noticed was one mentioned by a homeowner living in Ward 3, who reflects on an illegal unit in their neighborhood: *"They put bricks up in the window or spray paint the front and then rent it out to multiple people with no window, and offer cheap rents in the basement."* Many participants also raised the possibility of commercial spaces (particularly along Barton Street) being converted into legal rental units.

4.3.4 Aging Infrastructure and LRT Construction

Like other cities across Southern Ontario, Hamilton faces structural and environmental challenges from aging public infrastructure, such as bumpy and torn-up streets, and aging

sewage, power, and water systems. Some view the LRT as a way to address the City's aging infrastructure, with $700 million of the proposed development budget set aside to replace aging infrastructure along the LRT route. Speaking about Hamilton, the former planning director for the City of Stoney Creek has noted that "each and every year since amalgamation, the vast majority of the City's capital budget has been consumed by the Public Works Department in its efforts to meet the challenges of aging infrastructure and a changing environment" (Marini, 2017). Along with aging public infrastructure, many of the homes within the Lower City of Hamilton are aging too.

Although many participants were pleased to live in older homes, some of which had heritage significance, there were concerns surrounding both personal and neighbourhood maintenance and upkeep. For example, a middle-aged, low-income homeowner living in Ward 4 characterized her older home as *"a money pit."* In anticipation of LRT construction, some residents expressed concerns over what would happen to the foundations of their older homes, and if construction and the shaking of ground and sediment would exacerbate existing issues such as basement flooding. Others worried about their home maintenance in light of the new construction, such as a homeowner in Ward 3 who stated, *"Will Metrolinx be paying for my pipes that burst or crack in my foundation as a result of construction? I'll probably move out of Hamilton if the LRT is actually built."* Another middle-aged homeowner living in Ward 1 commented, *"My house was built in 1949. I received an email about the LRT from Metrolinx, and I might not want to stay in the neighbourhood if construction starts. I won't be able to take it. Neither will my house."*

4.4 Final Thoughts on Housing along the Planned LRT Route

As we have shown in this chapter, there are significant concerns and challenges, particularly faced by renters living along the proposed LRT route. While these challenges are not unique to higher-order transit routes, evidence from elsewhere suggests that they will intensify, especially once the LRT is up and running (see Doucet, 2021, for an example from Waterloo). Notably, many of these experiences, particularly how tenants interact with landlords in a hot rental market with minimal rent controls, do not show up in the statistical analysis of what is taking place along the LRT corridor. While it is challenging to ascribe what role, if any, the LRT is playing in

shaping these experiences, it is clear that there are already signs of capital reinvestment, displacement, financialization of housing, and other aspects of gentrification that, without proactive measures to protect tenants in particular, are likely to accelerate in the coming years. Left unchecked, this will reduce the affordable housing supply for those of low and even moderate incomes along the city's LRT corridor.

Chapter 5 Community, Health, and Safety:

"Immediate needs are so dire"

Overview

- *Participants raised concerns over personal and community safety and welfare.*
- *Issues of safety were relevant to participants' travel patterns, such as fear of car traffic and inadequate safety for pedestrians and cyclists.*
- *There was an overall positive perception of the plans for converting Main and King Streets from one-way to two-way streets.*
- *Personal and community safety regarding minor offences and violent crime were of great concern.*
- *Pollution was a major issue, as were growing concerns about health in relation to the natural environment.*
- *Food (in)security, accessible and affordable groceries, and the lack of community garden spaces were ongoing issues.*
- *Residents expressed a need for equitable access to green spaces and public parks.*

In this chapter, we highlight important issues raised by participants about community health and safety. In connection with the growing housing affordability crisis discussed above, residents expressed concern about the overall cost of living. Issues around food (in)security, equitable access to parks, community gardens, and green spaces, and community health were raised by many interviewed. While many of these issues existed prior to discussions about the LRT, residents feel that the development of the LRT and the increasing investment along the corridor may exacerbate the disparities between wealthy and poorer neighbourhoods and intensify processes of neighbourhood gentrification and displacement. Residents also felt that neighbourhood-specific issues of health and safety correlated with the overall trends and patterns in wards where they resided. These sentiments echo the *Hamilton Spectator's* 2010 Code Red series, which demonstrated the disparity of living conditions between wealthy and poorer neighbourhoods right down to life expectancy. While it is too early to say what specific impacts

the LRT will have on community health and safety, residents are already concerned about how LRT development might exacerbate existing issues.

5.1 Safety in the Built and Social Environment

5.1.1 Traffic Safety

In a survey completed by the City of Hamilton through their Vision Zero Plan, more than 90 percent of Hamilton residents agree or strongly agree that Hamilton's roads could be safer (City of Hamilton, 2019c). Between 2013 and 2017, there were more than 8,200 road collisions, with a majority being vehicle-only collisions (ibid., 2019c). The 2021 Hamilton collision report, however, noted a 10-year high for pedestrian fatalities (Day and Hawash, 2022, p. 1). Further, the report demonstrates that between 2017 and 2021 there was a collision involving a cyclist every 2.5 days (ibid., p. 2). Increases in all road collisions and fatalities have been linked to high-speed limits, driver recklessness, and poor infrastructure.

Participants interviewed were greatly concerned for their own well-being while near or on Hamilton roads, and encouraged more safety measures so they could feel comfortable driving, walking, and cycling in their city. For example, a young woman homeowner from Ward 3 stated, *"Traffic has been really bad recently, so the city needs better-designed streets where people don't speed. The city can make better road safety, and traffic calming."* Others welcomed the traffic calming measures taken by the City: *"The city could work on speeding issues and dangerous driving. I'm happy with the proposed traffic calming. Happy [the] City took it seriously."*

Through the ongoing implementation of the Vision Zero Plan, the City of Hamilton has started to: (1) develop a neighbourhood speed limit reduction program, reducing neighbourhood roadway speed limits to 40 km/h, and 30 km/h in school zones; (2) implement Complete Streets reviews for Ward 3, and the Beasley neighbourhood; (3) develop a citywide Complete Streets Guideline; and (4) create education campaigns with a focus on themes such as speeding, distracted driving, community safety zones, bike safety, and pedestrian safety (Day and Hawash, 2022, p. 5). The City of Hamilton describes Vision Zero as "a Swedish approach to road safety thinking. The Vision Zero concept makes human error part of the road safety equation, and has

an ultimate goal of no deaths or serious injuries on roadways. … [It] uses a data-based approach to road safety" (City of Hamilton, 2022j).

5.1.2 Pedestrian Safety

From 2016 to 2020, there were 1,124 pedestrian collisions on Hamilton roads, with 90.7 percent resulting in bodily injury (Chandler, 2022). Many streets are currently underserving pedestrians, and are not facilitating walking. Facilitating pedestrian safety and walkability is of utmost importance to residents, as explained by a female homeowner from Ward 1: *"More pedestrian traffic makes it nicer to walk. It encourages people to walk more than take other modes of transportation. It alleviates city streets of traffic when shorter distance trips are pedestrian friendly."*

Other participants stated that they did not feel safe walking in their neighbourhood, and instead chose to drive to go and walk in "safer areas." Perceptions of pedestrian safety were often linked to road traffic and having adequate infrastructure such as crosswalks, sidewalks, and street lights. For example, a homeowner who recently moved to Ward 3 from Toronto states, *"Walking is important for me and my family and our two dogs, so we drive out of our neighbourhood to go for walks because of street, park, and road safety concerns."* Another homeowner from Ward 3 lamented the transportation environment, stating, *"Our city is car-centric, there are no crosswalks on my street. It's unmanaged and dangerous with a train track near my neighbourhood playground."* To help increase the safety of the transportation environment, others applaud the installation of speed bumps. One participant, who lives at the Good Shepherd retirement building and experiences people speeding down the street, calls the speed bumps "sleeping policemen" that encourage slower speeds and more walkability.

The City of Hamilton is beginning to make incremental changes to its street networks by implementing the Complete Streets Design Manual, passed by council on July 6, 2022. The executive summary states:

> The complete streets approach is about considering the needs of road users of all ages and abilities and building streets that meet their needs, whether they are walking, cycling, taking transit, driving a private automobile, or delivering goods. The approach prioritizes

> road safety for everyone and aims to enhance the public realm and complement the adjacent land uses. (Jenkins and Topalovic, 2022, p. 2)

While changes are taking place, it is evident through listening to participants that many are still very concerned about pedestrian safety.

5.1.3 Cycling Safety

Cycling behaviours in Hamilton are impacted by road safety and cycling infrastructure. When cyclists feel unsafe, they choose not to bike. The perception of an unsafe cycling environment can be detrimental to city plans that encourage active transportation. The City of Hamilton's 2009 Cycling Master Plan, *Shifting Gears*, has been recently updated, and emphasizes the importance of safe and convenient bike parking facilities, uninterrupted cycling infrastructure, and the maintenance and safety of on-street cycling infrastructure for promoting more active transportation users (City of Hamilton, 2022b). So far, twenty implementation projects have been completed, such as bicycle boulevards, multi-use paths, connection enhancements, buffer enhancements, and bicycle paths and lanes. Despite municipal commitments toward active transportation and safety, however, a 52-year-old man was struck by a vehicle and died while cycling on the Upper Wentworth bridge in July 2022. While he was the first cyclist fatality since 2018, the 2021 Annual Collision Report highlights that 77.4 percent of collisions involving cyclists result in bodily injuries: "Most of these vulnerable road user injury collisions occurred at intersections, specifically signalized intersections" (Day and Hawash, 2022).

David Shellnutt, a Toronto personal injury lawyer and cyclist known as "the Biking Lawyer," believes that "The [cyclist injury] numbers are astounding, and the fact that we don't have broad, collective action from the municipal to the provincial level on this is mind boggling" (Rosas, 2022). The residents we spoke with echoed these concerns about cyclist safety. For example, a female owner in Ward 3, aged 30–39, stated, *"I used to cycle a lot in Hamilton, but stopped because of bad infrastructure and aggressive car culture."* Similarly, a female renter from Ward 2, aged 30–39, noted, *"I would love to bike to do errands and to go to work, but I feel unsafe on the roads. Even as a pedestrian, I've heard of a lot of traffic fatalities recently and I'm on edge."*

Despite the fear that some cyclists feel, others who cycle regularly would still like to see more dedicated cycling infrastructure. The city's infrastructure has helped them feel safe when cycling, but there is still a lot of room for improvement. Of the many participants who wanted to see more dedicated cycling infrastructure, a senior male homeowner living in Ward 4 mentions that he *"bikes almost everywhere and I love the protected cycleways. I consider buying local so I only have to bike, and will drive for longer distance trips, and for taking my elderly mom to appointments."* A young homeowner from Ward 1 mentioned that they want *"protected bike lanes,"* while a female homeowner mentioned biking to local parks with her two children: *"I wish there was better infrastructure so I could do more trips with my kids."*

E-bikes are a growing form of active transportation and are popular among residents with mobility issues. The City of Hamilton is seeking public input on an E-Cargo Bike Pilot Program to equitably increase active transportation (City of Hamilton, 2022d). There were some e-bike users in our participant group who mentioned how beneficial the bike had been thus far. One of the female renters from Ward 3 uses an e-bike as her primary mode of transportation. She stated, *"I am worried that the potholes and poor road conditions will break my e-bike, and I can't afford to repair it."* She likes her e-bike for grocery shopping because it can carry heavy items, and she prefers the freedom and reliability of it over taking the bus. A low-income senior in Ward 3 who lives with a disability uses his e-bike as his main mode of transportation: *"The e-bike is better than walking for my disability. It's faster and cheaper with less pain."* Another low-income male renter from Ward 3 living with a disability stated, *"I am in so much pain [from my disability] that I can't even walk down my block. I can't afford public transit, but I have been able to use an e-bike for 90 percent of my trips to get groceries and make it to doctor's appointments."*

5.1.4 One-way to Two-way Streets

In a 2013 editorial on Hamilton's one-way streets, Ryan McGreal states:

> Hamilton's one-way streets have been remarkably successful at carrying traffic at high speeds across the lower city. Unfortunately, they have paid for that success at the devastating cost of neighbourhood vitality in large swaths of the lower city. … Storefronts can barely survive on a narrow ribbon sidewalk next to three, four or five

> lanes of fast, one-way automobile traffic. Families suffer when their homes open onto de facto expressways with transport trucks barreling past. (McGreal, 2013)

Major streets like Main and King were initially converted into one-way streets in 1956 by the Hamilton traffic committee to increase the ease of transportation through the City to the surrounding suburbs. Many residents are aware of the upcoming conversions of major one-way streets such as Main and King back to two-way streets, prompted by LRT development. We found mixed emotions about the upcoming conversions, with some residents concerned about increasing traffic and commute times. However, the majority of discussions relating to road conversions centred on safety. One of the many respondents who were in favour of this conversion was one of the homeowners from Ward 4, who felt the road speeds are currently too high and that drivers treat Main Street *"as a super highway."* Another retired participant from Ward 3 mentioned that her husband was too afraid to drive on the one-way streets and that a two-way conversion would ultimately make driving safer.

Some participants concerned about the changes cited construction *"chaos"* and increases in traffic. However, the majority of participants cited benefits such as increased road safety, pedestrian safety, and improvements to the local economy. Two business owners and homeowners from Ward 3 mentioned that they are *"very much looking forward to King Street being two-way again because that's what a healthy commercial district looks like."* Another homeowner from Ward 3 suggested that the change would create a safer environment *"because one-way streets ruin everything possible for a pedestrian-friendly city."*

5.1.5 Personal and Community Safety

The perceptions of personal and community safety, or the lack thereof, impacted participants' feelings about neighbourhood security across Hamilton. There were mentions of petty crime in neighbourhoods across almost all wards, including packages being stolen from front porches, bikes stolen from backyards, car "smash and grabs," and home break-ins. Participants also mentioned businesses targeted by petty crimes, including a Jamaican restaurant, Vibez, which was vandalized in 2018 (Grillo, 2018).

The perceived increase in theft and violence influenced participants' feelings of security. Many female participants mentioned feeling unsafe or afraid to go outside after dark. These

comments were commonplace among participants who lived near Barton Street. For example, a low-income female homeowner moved to the east end of Hamilton after being renovicted from her home in Westdale. She stated, *"normally I walk everywhere, but now it's really scary because I've heard of people being shot… a woman was attacked in an alley and she was raped, and she's still in a coma. There was a perceived sense of safety in Westdale, but not here. I won't let my kids go out by themselves."*

It is important to note that women participants most commonly cited issues around personal and community safety, which reflects and connects to larger systemic issues of gender-based violence in Canada. To illustrate this theme, a young mother and homeowner from Ward 3 mentioned, *"I don't always feel the safest"* when walking during nighttime. According to Hamilton's Woman Abuse Working Group (WAWG), "Half of Canadian women have experienced at least one incident of physical or sexual violence since the age of 16" (WAWG, 2021). Further, there continue to be high rates of domestic violence reported in Hamilton, and low-income females and their children are disproportionally affected. Ministry of Community and Social Services data shows that in 2013–2014 women were turned away 4,541 times from four domestic abuse shelters in Hamilton because they were at capacity (SPRC of Hamilton, 2016, p. 6). Several participants living along or near Ottawa Street applauded the development of the new YWCA building, which created fifty affordable housing units for women and children—with fifteen of those units designated for women living with developmental disabilities. One of our interview participants recently moved into the new YWCA with their child, saying that *"domestic violence was the reason for my relocation. My son's father, who is now incarcerated, was threatening me and stalking me."*

Along the lines of crime in the neighbourhood, a female homeowner from Ward 1 mentioned that being a part of a Facebook neighbourhood watch group, where neighbours post about thefts and petty crimes, was beneficial. She also mentioned that her son and husband had witnessed a murder at the end of their street. When asked if she feels safe, she answered, *"We keep our eyes about us, but it hasn't stopped us from walking around the neighbourhood. But I won't walk north of Barton Street."* Recent Toronto transplants to Hamilton's east end are second-guessing their decision to buy a home in the city because of the high levels of abject poverty and safety issues they see within their neighbourhood: *"We didn't think it would be this bad. Witnessing the poverty affects our daily mindset and we are looking for a way to sell."*

Security within apartment buildings was also an issue among renters. For example, a young male renter from Ward 2 recalled an account of his friend who was beaten up by a group of men trying to get into his apartment building: *"My friend had a broken bone, but had to initiate the violence to stop the men from entering ... There's a problem with stuff being stolen from cars or mirrors being smashed. Sometimes you'll see blood on doors or on floors within the building. People getting into the building has definitely been an issue."*

5.2 Environmental Health and Safety

5.2.1 Pollution

Environmental pollution and the health and safety of residents in relation to the natural environment were issues raised by many interviewees. Concerns about the natural environment were often expressed in terms of Hamilton's industrial manufacturing past, equitable access to parks and green spaces, pollution from vehicle traffic along busy one-way streets, and climate change. Some residents expressed concerns about long-term personal health while living close to manufacturing areas. One of the responses in this regard was from a senior homeowner living in Ward 3 for the past twelve years, who cited ongoing problems with pollution from nearby factories, stating, *"The smell is overwhelming. It comes through, and you can smell it in the whole house. We called Environment Canada when there were bad smells to come to test the air."* Another homeowner from Ward 3 who moved there two years ago stated, *"Industry pollutes the air, and you can literally smell it and see it."* A lifelong Hamiltonian and homeowner in Ward 1 mentioned their concerns about living near Dofasco and the vehicle traffic from Main Street and King Street, citing the sobering statistic that *"184 Hamiltonians die each year from air pollution."*

Compared to nearby cities, Hamilton has the highest levels of super fine particulate matter of nitrogen dioxide, sulphur dioxide, benzene, and benzo(a)pyrene (Hristova, 2022). These pollutants are known for several respiratory and vascular health issues. In 2016, the director of population health and prevention at Cancer Care Ontario stated, "Downtown Hamilton has the highest rate of air pollution in the province" (Frketich, 2016). When the *Hamilton Spectator* revisited its Code Red series in 2019 with updated census information, one article stated that "the 27 most unequal neighbourhoods are all located in the lower part of the

former City of Hamilton, where incomes are the lowest, poverty is the highest and health outcomes are generally poorer" (Buist, 2019).

With improvements to the built environment, like the development of the LRT, traditionally lower-income Hamilton neighbourhoods are now attracting higher-income families and investors. As the manufacturing sector in the city also transforms, environmental health and safety can sometimes come at the cost of environmental gentrification. Urban studies scholars Trina Hamilton and Winifred Curran (2022) state that new developments and upgraded waterfront parks, for example, have become popular conceptions among planners of what green cities should look like: "Environmental gentrification naturalizes the disappearance of manufacturing and the working class. It makes deindustrialization seem both inevitable and desirable" (2022, n.p.).

In conversations with residents along the proposed LRT corridor, there were many concerns about their communities' long-term environmental health and safety. For example, a homeowner from Ward 1 stated, *"As densification happens, I hope planners keep in mind urban heat bubbles and the negative use of concrete and that the City considers its waterfront spaces and parks as important public assets."* In relation to increasing temperatures, a homeowner living in Ward 3 stated that *"poor [residents] can't afford air conditioning, so things will get quite dire."* They continued by discussing the City's need for addressing climate change through retrofitting buildings, creating social programs for residents to learn how to adapt to climate change, and addressing ongoing environmental pollution: *"I don't see Hamilton making carbon emissions a part of civic discussions."*

5.2.2 Food (In)security

The City of Hamilton and the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction have reported that as of 2016, nearly 20,000 Hamiltonians access food banks every month, and nearly 12 percent of Hamilton households report food insecurity due to income (Hamilton Family Health Team, 2016). These numbers continue to rise in correlation with the rise in national food prices, which have risen by 9.7 percent in the past year, with inflation rates at a 31-year high (Statistics Canada, 2022). As expressed by our interview participants, food insecurity impacts a diverse spectrum of Hamilton residents across ages, genders, incomes, and cultures. The overall rising

costs of living have altered the frequency of residents' patronage habits to local restaurants and have changed the ways individuals and families shop for groceries.

Some participants raised concerns over the need for more food banks and alternative food sources outside of large grocery chains. An example of this concern was from a retired homeowner from Ward 1, who mentioned their frustration with the closure of the Mustard Seed Co-op:*"it was unable to survive the economic upheaval from the pandemic."* The Co-op declared bankruptcy in August 2021, citing declining sales that started in 2019, and COVID-19 adding more financial difficulties (Taekema, 2021). One low-income renter from Ward 3 mentioned, *"I have noticed an increase in my neighbours having to access hot breakfast and lunch programs from non-profits like Living Rock."* Also feeling the pressure was a retired homeowner from Ward 4, worried about the rising costs of their weekly groceries, saying, *"We've had to cut back because of the rising costs of food."* A single parent and low-income renter from Ward 4 also highlighted the compounded nature of unaffordability and poverty in Hamilton by stating, *"When people can't afford groceries, they also can't afford bus fare."*

Most existing neighbourhoods along the LRT route have easy and walkable access to convenience stores. However, many residents stated that they had to travel outside of their local neighbourhood to buy affordable groceries. Many lower-income participants walk, ride their bikes/e-bikes, or take the HSR to the grocery store, but will order a cab to drive them home. Families with children mentioned travelling to big box stores like Wal-Mart and Costco to do larger and more affordable grocery hauls. Residents who live in close proximity to Ottawa Street said they were more likely to shop locally at family-owned specialty stores, restaurants, and cafés. However, they also noted that smaller boutique shops were more expensive than going to grocery chains. Some middle- to high-income homeowners and renters noted that they enjoy the Ottawa Street Farmers' Market and the Hamilton Farmers' Market, but that they feel they are not necessarily affordable options for many.

To illustrate the frustration and link to subsequent travel behaviour of residents, a retired male homeowner living off 20 to 50k per year near Gage Park explained, *"I'm upset that the No Frills nearby closed, because that was the only cheaper grocery store in the area and there are only Metros left. Now we take the car to the No Frills— a 10-minute drive away—instead."* Some participants also mentioned that culturally specific grocery stores are important and that they shaped their shopping habits around going to the downtown core, where most specialty

shops are located. Several residents mentioned the Centre on Barton as an example of the most affordable shopping in the east end, but that it was not pedestrian friendly and harder to access without a private vehicle.

5.2.3 Community Gardens

While there is growing enthusiasm by Hamilton residents to participate in community gardens, there is inequitable access to gardening spaces, and long waitlists. Almost all of the participants who spoke about community gardens said there were not enough garden plots. For instance, a low-income renter from Ward 2 noted the challenges of accessing a gardening plot: *"Victoria Park community garden has a waitlist of 50 people. If it has that much demand, then you know the types of people who get there first are those already well established in the neighbourhood."* Outraged, a homeowner from Ward 4 states that in their neighbourhood, *"The waitlist for a community garden is two years long!"* According to the 2019 Hamilton Community Gardener Survey, based on 119 respondents from 22 gardens located across the City, only 12 percent of lower-income respondents had a community garden within a five-minute commute of their home (Harvey, 2019). Longer commutes and long waitlists remain a problem for equitable access to garden spaces.

5.2.4 Green Spaces and Public Parks

Hamilton has almost 3,500 acres of municipally owned parkland, 49 kilometres of city-owned trails, and eight public beaches (City of Hamilton, 2022f). In 2022, the federal government invested $3.6 million in six Hamilton public infrastructure projects, including the redevelopment of both Beasley Park and Victoria Park. It also improved public washroom accessibility across various Hamilton recreation centres (To, 2022). This news is important because a large majority of participants told us that access to green spaces and public parks was critical for personal and community health and well-being. One of the many respondents who valued access to green space was a homeowner in Ward 1, who stated, *"I frequently use the Bruce Trail for exercise,"* and a renter from Ward 3 who said they and their partner *"use the Pipeline Trail for commuting to work and for recreation."*

A significant number of residents from Ward 3 stated that parks and green spaces were not adequately taken care of by the City. An example of this theme was mentioned by a low-

income renter from Ward 3, who stated how *"Beasley Park turned into a tent city last year."* Another low-income renter from Ward 3 felt like the parks in their neighbourhood were not maintained compared to those in other Hamilton neighbourhoods: *"The slide in my neighbourhood park has been broken for two years."* Upset about the inequality of green space and park access close to home was a homeowner from Ward 3 who stated that they had noticed *"a significant loss of organized sports, ice rinks, and baseball diamonds."* Similarly, a low-income renter from Ward 2 felt like they had *"to travel outside of my immediate neighbourhood to access public community spaces and parks, and even then, I feel like the parks are only welcoming for those who live close by."*

Chapter 6 Transportation Issues:

"How much of Metrolinx is going to own our streets?"

Overview

- *Poor community engagement on behalf of Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton regarding the LRT left participants feeling in a state of "LRT purgatory."*
- *There were general concerns about the construction and development of the LRT.*
- *Grouped by current transit use and intended LRT usage, participants had mixed feelings about how the LRT would impact their travel patterns.*
- *Apprehension to change was salient among private vehicle owners who do not currently utilize public transit.*
- *There were concerns that the LRT development would affect road traffic.*
- *Many residents felt their private vehicle was essential for work and everyday travel.*
- *Residents who already utilized GO Transit and the HSR felt that the LRT was not necessarily going to save them time if they had to add an extra stop along the commute.*

Table 6.1: Perceived Concerns and Benefits Mentioned in Relation to the LRT

Concerns	**Tenants**	**Owners**
Poor Community Engagement	29%	43%
Associated Traffic (navigation, parking)	50%	79%
Construction Disturbances (Noise, Dust, Pests, Closures, Housing Maintenance)	32%	17%
Rising Cost of Living along the Corridor	35%	17%
Unnecessary for their Travel Patterns	8%	21%
Increased Travel Expense for LRT	9%	1%
Not Serviced Well (will not benefit them due to stop location)	0%	4%
Financial Burden to the City	0%	3%
Heritage Concerns	3%	13%

Overall Mentions	167%	197%
Benefits		
Economic Growth and Popularity of the Area and Increased Distribution of People Throughout Hamilton	35%	52%
Positive Impact on their Commute (faster or more enjoyable)	12%	14%
Environmentally Friendly Alternative to Private Vehicle Ownership	3%	15%
Increase in Home Values	0%	19%
Overall Mentions	50%	101%

*Note: 106 total participants; 34 renters and 72 owners

Up to this point, our report has focused on the non-transportation impacts and experiences of change along the LRT corridor. As we have stressed throughout this report, many of these challenges are not unique to the LRT corridor. However, evidence from elsewhere suggests that certain processes, such as displacement and the erosion of affordable housing, can be magnified and intensified along new transit corridors (see Jones, 2020; Doucet, 2021). In this section, we turn our attention to some of the unique transportation changes and challenges already being faced, as well as issues that residents are concerned about in the future. As seen in Table 6.1, there was more mention of concerns about the LRT rather than the benefits, and this was seen with both tenants and homeowners. There were different issues of concern for the tenants and owners, yet some issues were experienced across both groups. Since it is not yet possible to analyze transportation behaviour changes and the impact of construction, we focus on two issues in this section: communication about the construction and development of the LRT, and residents' anticipated uses of the LRT, and how this relates to their current transportation behaviour.

6.1 Communication about LRT Construction and Operation

On September 15, 2021, Hamilton City Council ratified a memorandum of understanding with Metrolinx and the Ministry of Transportation to move forward with the 14-kilometre Hamilton Light Rail Transit project. A joint funding announcement was made by the provincial and federal governments committing $3.4 billion to the capital cost of the project, making the Hamilton LRT one of the largest infrastructure investments in the City's history. The City's 2016–2025 Strategic Plan identifies and prioritizes community engagement and participation so that "citizens are consulted and involved in making the decisions that impact them." The plan further states that the City's desired outcome is that "Hamilton has an open, transparent and accessible approach to City government that engages with and empowers all citizens to be involved in their community" (City of Hamilton, 2022h). The City launched an LRT Community Connectors program, in partnership with Metrolinx, in May 2016. The program committed to visiting the 1,400 affected properties along the LRT corridor twice per year for the duration of the project, hoping to "inform, educate and engage property owners and also gather feedback" (City of Hamilton, 2022e).

Despite public outreach efforts by the City and Metrolinx, a large majority of participants interviewed felt uninformed about the details of the LRT project. Many stated that they felt their concerns had not been properly addressed, and that they have a high level of mistrust and confusion about the LRT development process. Many of the people we spoke with who live along the LRT corridor had questions that have remained unanswered. These include:

- *"How much is Metrolinx going to own our streets?"*
- *"Along King Street, there are lots of empty lots that have signs that say they're securely monitored. I assume they're for the LRT, but are they?"*
- *"What will the pedestrian and car crossings be? What about people with mobility issues during construction? How will they know their bus stop has been re-routed?"*
- *"Will the LRT be more money than HSR? The engagement on the details has been poor."*
- *"Will it be faster than a bus? Why does so much road need to be demolished? How many roads will it take up?"*

Providing answers to questions such as these is essential, even at this early phase of the project. Nevertheless, residents feel uninformed and detached from the project that is going on within their community. Commenting on communication efforts by the City and Metrolinx, a

renter from Ward 3 states, *"They started off strong, but then it became unclear with what they were doing … council just keeps saying people will adjust, but not telling us how or understanding the needs."* A low-income student with disabilities living with their parent in Ward 3 stated, *"It's already more than $3 [for bus fare] and the bus routes may change and I won't know where to go."*

When asked how participants kept informed about the LRT, many stated they had to be proactive in reading local newspapers or watching City Council live streams. Some received information about LRT development through word-of-mouth or posts on social media sites like Facebook and Twitter. Others suggested that there should be regular LRT updates mailed to them by their local councillor. A young homeowner from Ward 3 stated that they signed up for a Metrolinx newsletter to stay informed: *"if it wasn't for the newsletter, it's hard for the public to really know what's happening."*

In addition to feeling uninformed, many participants stated that they felt they had little control or input in the decision-making process. Homeowners living in Ward 3 who also run a small business stated, *"There is a real distrust in the establishment, so we need to build trust, not just check off a box."* Another example of this mistrust is from a renter living in Ward 3 who is active in Hamilton's architectural heritage advocacy and said that their interactions with Metrolinx *"have left a bitter taste in my mouth."* They are concerned about what they feel is a lack of oversight with Metrolinx development regarding heritage impact assessment processes, stating, *"Since Metrolinx is a Crown company, it can bypass municipal processes, so I think that buildings are being bought, hoarded, and demolished without enough community engagement … It's not just Metrolinx but developers in general. Hamilton and the Ontario government are rushing for the sake of building."*

Citizens interviewed felt that the main challenges with community outreach about LRT development are: (1) the lack of clear and transparent communication about the procurement of properties by Metrolinx; (2) the need for increased updates on LRT construction processes and dates through media releases, door-to-door outreach, neighbourhood signage, and social media; and (3) clearer communication as to how the LRT will transform the existing transit with the HSR (routes; fares; transit stops).

6.1.1 Construction, Development, and Traffic

Future LRT construction and redevelopment along the corridor are perceived by many participants as having a significant effect on the day-to-day livability of surrounding neighbourhoods. For instance, one of the many respondents who resented the disturbance was a retired homeowner living in Ward 3, who, despite being generally in support of the LRT, explained that because of their age, they *"don't want to live through potentially a decade of disturbances, changes to traffic on my side street, parking issues, and overall growing pains."* Yet some think the disturbances are worth the end result, such as a renter from Ward 4 who states that the biggest challenges facing Hamilton in the next five years are *"LRT construction slowing down the roads, and impacting small local businesses. But I think it's worth it."*

Some participants had a future-oriented perspective on the LRT, including a retired homeowner living in Ward 3 who thought that *"One of the biggest challenges in the City's quest for intensification, density, and affordable homes is the way the culture and the aesthetics of neighbourhoods will change. I think younger families will be able to endure the construction of the LRT more comfortably than older couples."* Some residents were fine with the upcoming construction, knowing they would be happy once the LRT was completed, and others felt the LRT could potentially negatively affect their neighbourhoods. As highlighted above, communication regarding construction and disruptions was mentioned as integral in helping residents plan ahead for the upcoming years.

6.2 Travel Habits and Intended Transit Use

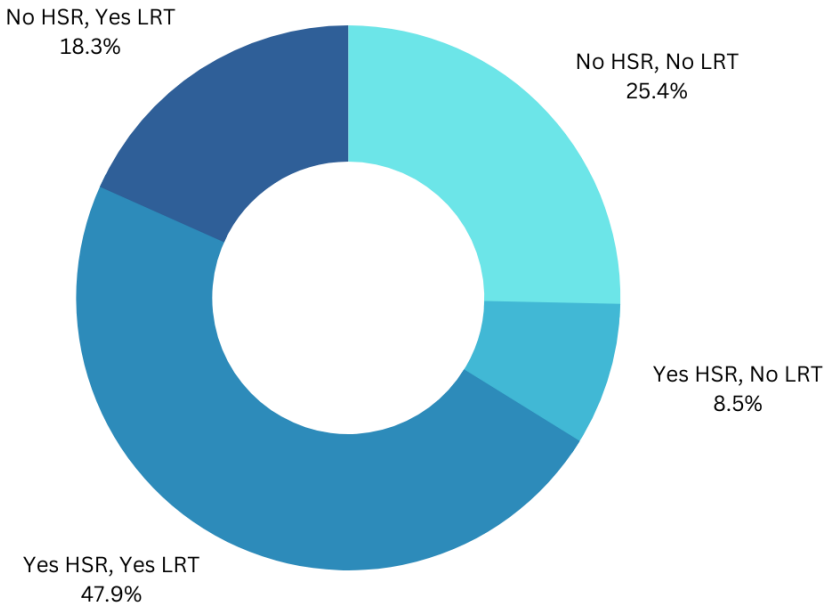
According to 2016 census data, Hamilton has the highest proportion of commuters using sustainable transportation (27.8 percent) and the highest use of public transit (9.8 percent) among other midsized cities within Southern Ontario (Statistics Canada, 2017). At the same time, however, car ownership rates are above the national average (0.62 vs 0.54), and higher than in neighbouring cities such as Kitchener-Waterloo, London, and Toronto (Potoglou and Kanaroglou, 2008, p. 46). Transportation patterns and choices were discussed at length with participants living along the LRT corridor. In general, most participants felt uncomfortable changing their current transportation patterns, especially before there were any visible signs of the LRT.

Some researchers have managed to survey residents about their travel behaviour before and after the opening of an LRT line (Spears et al., 2017; Brown et al., 2019) or about their anticipated use of a line where construction is well underway (Dent et al., 2021) (see chapter 2). In our case, we have asked residents about their intended or expected use of the LRT many years before the line becomes a reality and more than one year before construction begins. That means we need to err on the side of caution when interpreting respondents' expectations of how they will use a transit system that is years away from being operational. However, the LRT is a very large topic of conversation. Understanding why people expect or do not expect to use the system, even at this stage, can provide useful insights into how to keep existing riders and attract new ones.

Currently, urban transit in Hamilton is provided by a fleet of city-owned buses operated by the Hamilton Street Railway (HSR). In our interviews, respondents could be divided into two baseline transit patterns: those who currently use HSR and those who do not currently use HSR. Likewise, we could divide respondents into two categories based on their answers to their anticipated or expected use of the LRT: those who anticipated using it and those who did not. From that, there are four possible combinations and current and anticipated transportation behaviour patterns:

- (1) those who currently do not use the HSR and do not expect to use the LRT;
- (2) those who currently use the HSR but do not anticipate utilizing the LRT;
- (3) those who currently use HSR buses and expect to use the LRT;
- (4) those who currently do not use the HSR but intend to use the LRT (i.e., new transit riders).

Figure 6.1: Percentage of Current and Intended Behaviour



*Note: A total of 71 participants commented on their current and intended behaviour regarding the LRT.

Not every respondent had clear responses to these questions about mobility behaviour, and were unsure about future transit use. Out of the 106 participants, 71 have strong opinions relating to LRT and their transit patterns, and fit into one of the four categories mentioned above. The remaining participants did not have strong feelings about transit behaviours, and stated they would like to see the LRT operating before they decide.

6.2.1 No HSR, No LRT (18 participants)

This category comprises people who primarily drive, and expect to do so once the LRT is up and running. A recurring perspective emerging from the group of participants who do not utilize public transportation was that since there is already an HSR express bus servicing the route of the proposed LRT, why build something new? This has been a common critique of the LRT for many years. They expressed concerns that the LRT will affect commute times, and their overall ability to travel across the City efficiently. One of the many participants complaining about the commute times was a homeowner living in Ward 4 who stated, *"The traffic will be a nightmare and this will have spillover into residential areas."* Another renter from Ward 4 who uses a private vehicle for most of their travel remarked that *"Hamilton has been called the '20-minute*

city' because it's relatively quick and easy to drive across town." Although they appreciate the ease of driving, they also think that the conversion of some one-way streets downtown is positive for local businesses. Others mentioned that they think LRT construction will affect the already limited supply of street parking in residential and business areas. Some participants who don't use the HSR see public transit as limiting, find that bus stops are too far from their homes, or are afraid of taking a bus for safety reasons.

Several participants noted health concerns about travelling on public transportation during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that the pandemic has altered their perspective on future public transit use. An example of this concern was a homeowner from Ward 4 who used to utilize public transportation but now only walks or drives their private vehicle, and who commented on the pandemic changing commute patterns: *"If you don't have to use it [public transportation], what's the incentive? Being on an enclosed bus is not something you really want to do."*

6.2.2 Yes HSR, No LRT (6 participants)

Some participants mentioned that they had no plans to take the LRT once it was up and running despite using the HSR buses on a regular basis. Many participants from this group felt that the LRT route was too limited, and that funding should be allocated to improving the existing infrastructure of the HSR and increasing rider accessibility through bus stops and bus upgrades. For example, one low-income senior renter from Ward 3 felt that the current HSR system is already *"Very expensive and inaccessible with Presto because you need a Presto card to ride. People are unable to buy a single bus ticket from a local convenience store."* Another renter from Ward 2, who regularly uses the HSR to commute to work, stated that the LRT *"Is more trouble than it's worth … the HSR is already working. Instead of doing the LRT project, let's upgrade the HSR."* Tempering the excitement for the LRT by some was a retired steelworker and a homeowner from Ward 5 who commented that over their thirty years working at Stelco, they frequently commuted using the HSR, and that they still enjoy riding the HSR, taking the B-Line to travel downtown. When asked about whether they will use the LRT they stated, *"Everyone is pushing the LRT without thinking about the negative effects it had on cities like Ottawa. Where will people who want to go shopping park their cars? We need to fix our sewage and road maintenance before thinking about large endeavours like the LRT. The City should fix*

the buses before building an LRT." And a renter from Ward 1 who uses the HSR to get everywhere in the City believes that *"The LRT isn't necessary. We already have buses that work. I'm worried about the traffic the LRT will cause and how it might cause delays with buses."*

6.2.3 Yes HSR, Yes LRT (34 participants)

For those participants who use the HSR regularly and plan to use the LRT, a majority mentioned benefits of the LRT for their travel time, reliability, comfort, and experience. Those who intend to use the LRT say they think it will encourage them to use transit more than taking their car because it is more appealing than the bus. An example of this perspective came from a low-income female renter from Ward 4 who recalled the buses being at capacity most times she rides, and that she is excited for the LRT because it will make riding more comfortable. Another participant, a retired female renter living in Ward 2, explained why she intends to use the LRT and is looking forward to it, hoping it will change perspectives on public transportation. She emphasized: *"There is a huge issue with parking in the City. There isn't enough, and the City doesn't have space for every resident to be a vehicle owner."* Others who intend to use the LRT plan on using it despite the route not necessarily being the most convenient mode. For example, a renter from Ward 4 whose children utilize the HSR for their commutes to school believes that HSR is good for main roads but is not convenient for getting to all areas of the City. They are excited about the LRT for both themselves and their children, stating that they plan to utilize the LRT *"On principle."*

Another benefit of the LRT that was mentioned by participants centred on the new economic opportunities posed by public transit. Many viewed the LRT as a cleaner and more inviting mode of public transportation; participants mentioned the ease of getting on and off the LRT, and how it would encourage them to stop and shop on the way home from work. Many appreciated that they wouldn't have to worry about parking. Many rejoiced in the future development for this reason, such as a retired homeowner from Ward 3 who said they *"Hope that the LRT will encourage people to stop and shop in my area rather than just driving past it."* Likewise, another participant living in Ward 3 mentioned how they felt the LRT will *"beautify"* their neighbourhood, transforming its existing reputation as *"the sketchy neighbourhood."*

Some participants decided to move to the area they are now residing in because of the construction of the LRT, and plan to utilize it for their daily commute. They noted that being

close to public transit has potentially increased their home value. Of the many respondents who owned a home, a new homeowner living in Ward 3 stated, *"I moved to my neighbourhood because of the plans to build the LRT, and I plan to use it with my daughter."*

6.2.4 No HSR, Yes LRT (13 participants)

This group of participants poses an interesting opportunity for the City of Hamilton and Metrolinx, as they are a group who would like to utilize public transit but currently do not because they feel there is a lack of quality, safety, ease, and accessibility with the HSR. Participants in this group said they would use the LRT because they think it will be enjoyable, safer, and more convenient. They also think the LRT provides environmental and economic benefits compared to existing modes of public transportation.

Illustrating this theme and the rationale behind some of the participants' perspectives was a homeowner living in Ward 3, who stated: *"I don't like taking the bus because it smells, and it sways too much … I'll use the LRT because it's cleaner and will get me to where I want to go without having to worry about parking."* For other reasons, a homeowner from Ward 1 explained how they stopped using public transit *"because of the amount of racism I experienced. But the LRT will hopefully provide a safer and more comfortable ride."* An example of those who said it will be easier was a homeowner from Ward 3 who currently has to drive their daughter with a disability to McMaster regularly; they are excited for their daughter being able to utilize the LRT when it is completed because *"it will simplify things and make things faster."* Overall, there is a common perception among participants who currently don't utilize the HSR that the LRT will modernize Hamilton public transit and increase the enjoyability of ridership.

Overall, residents felt that those responsible for carrying the LRT project through need to provide better communication with the public, including greater transparency, better communication around timelines, and clear messaging around the benefits of having higher-order transit. Cao and Ermagun (2017), studying the Hiawatha LRT in Minneapolis, note that the LRT development in that city created transit improvement, which increased transit use and reduced car use but did little to change car ownership.

Chapter 7 Future Challenges and Recommendations:

"There will be a lot of growing pains…"

7.1 Future Challenges

What became clear from the interviews was that a large majority of Hamiltonians want both the City and the provincial government to do more toward protecting existing affordable housing and also creating more accessible housing along the LRT route for low- and middle-income residents. They want to be assured by the City and Metrolinx that the development of the LRT will not displace them from their current homes and communities. They also stressed the need for better communication as to what is happening, what will happen, and what may still be unknown. It will be up to the City to be proactive in creating the types of accessible and affordable housing that the market is unwilling or unable to build.

7.2 Most Important Findings

Here are the three most important findings from our research:

Housing Insecurity: *"Everyone is just one bad story away from homelessness"*
Despite being in some of the most affordable neighbourhoods in the city, living along the planned LRT corridor is increasingly unaffordable for many of the neighbourhoods' existing low- and even middle-income residents. Many properties along the route are currently vacant. Some of these vacant properties are those that Metrolinx has bought, and a large majority of them used to be low-income rental units. Many renters are experiencing housing insecurity, renovictions, and fear of displacement.

LRT and Community Engagement: *"There is a real distrust in the establishment, so we need to build trust, not just check off a box"*
Participants overwhelmingly felt ignored and confused in the community engagement process for the LRT. The majority of participants thought there could be more transparency, and continued to question many aspects of the project, including: property acquisitions, where the

stations will be and why, cost of travel, changes to the HSR, intersection adaptation, construction impact on existing infrastructure, and parking and traffic flow.

Future Challenges: *"There will be a lot of growing pains"; "Where will we go?"*
Residents stated that they are already experiencing growing pains associated with development and intensification along the LRT corridor. Some of the growing pains mentioned as a result of changes to the built environment include approaches to transportation, travel patterns, and mode choice. Participants also expressed concerns about affordable housing for low- and middle-income residents along the corridor. The City of Hamilton will need to consider policies to protect renters from displacement, renovictions, and unfair/illegal practices by landlords.

7.3 Recommendations

- All levels of government, including the City of Hamilton, will need to take a proactive approach to shaping housing development along the LRT corridor in order to prevent further displacement. Proactive approaches include using publicly owned land to build affordable housing, enhanced rent controls (such as when a unit becomes vacant), stronger rules to protect tenants from displacement, and better enforcement of the existing rules to ensure tenants' rights.
- The City of Hamilton should take a proactive approach to use its own land for the construction of new non-market, affordable housing, as well as work to acquire more sites within the LRT corridor that can be used for housing that the market is unwilling or unable to build.
- The City of Hamilton should implement an inclusionary zoning strategy along the LRT corridor. This is one tool that can help create new affordable housing along the route, and ensure that some of the housing built by private developers meets the needs of local communities.
- Land that Metrolinx has acquired for the construction of the LRT should be used to build genuinely affordable housing in conjunction with the City and non-profits once it is no longer needed for the LRT project. It should be retained in public ownership, where much more ambitious approaches to affordable housing are possible than on privately-owned

land. Currently, Metrolinx sells surplus land on the open market, as per Ontario's Realty Directive. Changing this will require a new policy from the Minister of Transportation or the Premier.

- The City of Hamilton should explore a rental replacement bylaw. Currently, Toronto and Mississauga have these bylaws in place, stipulating that tenants in units that are demolished due to redevelopment will have the right to return to a similarly-priced unit within the new development. In Toronto, many tenants have the right to return to new units after the redevelopment has taken place. The unit has the same number of bedrooms as the previous one and is leased at the same rent, plus a one-time 'new building allowance' increase of 4 percent. During the demolition and construction process, tenants may be given the option of moving into an alternative unit at a different property owned by the same landlord.[4] Currently, the provincial rules only require landlords to provide one month's rent to tenants in buildings with less than five units, or three months' rent (or another acceptable unit) to tenants in buildings with more than five units, when their buildings are demolished. Bill 23 (the *More Homes Built Faster Act*) may make it more difficult for municipalities to introduce rental replacement bylaws, but the City of Kitchener is now exploring the issue (Davis, 2023).
- Metrolinx and the City of Hamilton need to better inform residents about changes, disruptions, plans, and construction at all stages of the LRT. A lack of clear communication about the development and operation of the LRT has led to confusion, misunderstanding, and mistrust.
- Continued research must be done into the lived experiences and local knowledge that residents have about changes taking place. We caution against relying primarily on analysis from the census to monitor change along Hamilton's LRT corridor. Instead, we recommend regular and systematic research that engages meaningfully and respectfully with residents along the proposed route.

[4] See the City of Toronto's Housing page, at https://www.toronto.ca/city-government/planning-development/official-plan-guidelines/housing/, for information on the demolition and replacement of private market rental housing.

In this first of two reports by the University of Waterloo, supported by the Hamilton Community Foundation, we have outlined and analyzed the major experiences and perceptions of change along Hamilton's proposed LRT corridor. In our second report, we will focus on some innovative ways to create and maintain affordable housing for people on low and moderate incomes. The examples we cite provide solutions to the housing challenges identified within this report, especially from the perspective of low-income renters. In addition, rather than speculating on yet-to-be-implemented ideas, the solutions we will draw upon are existing projects, policies, and regulations from across Canada. This means that we can draw on our knowledge of the solutions that will bring about transformative changes for communities under threat of gentrification, displacement, and eviction.

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