

LIVING on the Streets

THE ROLE OF THE CHURCH IN URBAN RENEWAL

A Work Research Foundation White Paper

By Michael Van Pelt and Richard Greydanus

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PREFACE

In our individualized society, an institution tends to be viewed as the collection of individuals who compose it. For example, the church is seen as a group of like-minded individuals who meet together to fulfill their religious needs.

However, there is more to any institution than the benefits and services it provides for its members. The role institutions play in society reaches beyond its own members, and influences the broader community. Understanding the impact institutions have within communities is particularly important for urban renewal. *Living on the Streets* examines the particular impact of the Church, and its relationship to the renewal of the City.

This White Paper is designed for at least two audiences:

- 1) Municipal, community and business leaders. We want to challenge you to understand how important the institution of the church is to the social and economic health of your cities; and
- 2) Leaders in faith communities. We want to challenge you as well to see far-reaching opportunities for mission in the context of economic and cultural vibrancy.

We hope to spur further interest, discussion and research into the relationship of the church to urban renewal. We believe the institution of the church is a vast and untapped resource for the academy, business and government spheres to explore in their shared goal of restoring their urban landscapes.

We hope you enjoy and find value in *Living on the Streets*, and we welcome your feedback. As a think tank, our task is to provoke conversation and discussion, with a view to developing new solutions to existing problems. I am confident that this document will accomplish that mission.

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Argument

1. INTRODUCTION: POSING THE CONTEMPORARY PROBLEM

Will Wright, one of the founding partners of the Walnut Creek, California-based Maxis Software, helped to rewrite the manual on how to make computer games. His highly-successful “Sims” franchise – including the hit game *SimCity*, and the recent best-seller spin-off *The Sims* – doesn’t quite fit the orthodox computer gaming mould. In *SimCity* a player spends all his time continually tending to the needs of a growing city. There is no actual criterion for victory; the game could go on forever.

When Wright originally pitched his idea, game publishing executives did not anticipate a significant market for such a unique gaming concept. They doubted Wright could produce a viable, sellable product. Yet, the simulation games proved successful, and *The Sims* franchise has established a popular gaming genre. Gamers evidently enjoyed the opportunity to create and care for virtual populations.

The game is designed on the premise that the economic strength of a city is contingent upon balancing the demands of citizen’s residential, commercial, and industrial interests, as well as providing good access to basic civil services. Schools, police stations, water towers, and hydro lines all need to be built, and land needs to be zoned. A player’s zoning decisions influences the buildings spontaneously generated by the game, and learning how to zone areas is vital to making sure the city remains economically vibrant—in a word, healthy.

The original game, *SimCity Classic*, does not include churches among the buildings spontaneously generated in response to the player’s zoning decisions. In the game’s substantially-improved second edition, *SimCity 2000*, a nondescript church is included among the residential building set. Yet, in the third installment, *SimCity 3000*, churches are once again eliminated churches from game play.

Trying to grant their gamers as much control and playability as possible, the *SimCity* production team allows users to design their own buildings for in-game use. There are internet communities devoted to sharing thousands of user-developed buildings, a few of which are churches. But a problem arises for intrepid designers when they have to categorize their church in one of *SimCity*’s predefined categories. They can be defined either as “Residential,” or under the generic category, “Other,” neither of which are satisfying.

The clear implication in “Sim Cities” is that the presence of churches matters very little to the city, and even if it does, it cannot be clearly defined. In the overall structure of game play, the spiritual or religious concerns of the simulated citizens have no role to play. The question that begs to be asked is this: Do churches, or established religious communities, have a role to play in actual human cities?

Today’s urban planning departments, business development communities, and city governments are uncertain as to what to do with churches.

The same shortsighted urban planning language can be seen in current economic development and urban renewal trends. The language of civil and business leadership fails to express adequately the important functions served by church communities.

This does not imply that businesses and governments have no dealings with churches. As we will show, this is demonstrably false. Yet, not enough care has been taken in choosing language to classify urban landscapes. The language of citing planning defines the way cities are perceived, but it also has the ability to hide the reality of what makes living, healthy cities. Contemporary urban planning language fails to comprehend the vital role churches play in urban centres. Even when attempts are made to classify established religious communities, their descriptions are impoverished and

VISION 2020, THE CITY OF HAMILTON’S LONG-TERM DEVELOPMENT PLAN, INCLUDES ALMOST NO REFERENCES TO CHURCHES.

their public roles reduced to “limited social services providers.” We miss significant opportunities to better understand the realities of urban life when we reduce the church’s public role through language that does not express its true character. We also lose the ability to better serve our cities when we dismiss the church’s role in urban renewal.

Using the city of Hamilton, Ontario, we will begin to probe and question the role the church is playing as the city seeks renewal. The case study of Hamilton will specifically study the region from provincial Highway 403 to the west, the brow of the Niagara Escarpment to the south, the shores of Burlington Bay to the north and the city boundaries of Stoney Creek to the east. This area is typically described as the urban core of Hamilton—the downtown. Within these boundaries are more than 140 active churches, synagogues, mosques, and temples, and the risk of ignoring such a significant presence in Hamilton’s long-range urban development plans is considerable.

The vulnerabilities and inadequacies of language more become apparent in the context of grand visions and strategies. The city of Hamilton’s long-term development plan, *VISION 2020*, includes almost no references to churches. In a document prepared for Hamilton’s city planning, “Vibrant, Healthy, Sustainable Hamilton,” there is only a single sentence referring to the “need to support the role of spirituality and morality in embracing and supporting *VISION 2020*” (*Planning and Development Department*, 2003, 18.). This reference to faith communities is oblique, and uses the language of privatized faith—faith that is left on the kitchen counter before leaving for work in the morning. *VISION 2020* gives us no reason to think about faith communities as institutions that have a vital, ongoing role to play in the city’s health. We will challenge such assumptions by proposing that an accurate understanding of the city depends on broader and more reflective language.

In this introduction, the terms “church” and “established religious community” have been used interchangeably. While the focus of this report will be on churches, it is important to consider faith communities generally. Indeed, the many incarnations of the Christian church in Canada, as an aggregate, claim a much longer history than any other established religious community. Jewish communities have also had a historic presence in, but their numbers have always been relatively small. Contemporary immigration trends have caused other faiths, including Islam and Hinduism, to establish themselves. Keeping these general considerations in mind, this report contends that churches and the communities of faith in Canada’s religious fabric. The communities which form around synagogues, mosques and other places of worship organically create the ideals city planners try so hard to capture through meticulous planning—they create community.

2. CHANGING HORIZONS IN SCHOLARSHIP

In recent years various scholars are rediscovering the importance of community and understanding human life from street level. They are continually finding a place for faith and spirituality in public life. Economists are investigating social, human and, recently, spiritual forms of capital. And, urban planning is experiencing a shift from within as it begins to revisit how it plans and zones neighborhoods. However, the place of faith and spirituality remains absent in this shift in urban planning. Within this context, the church possesses the unique capacity to draw these two different modes of thought together into a productive relationship.

A. NEW URBANISM

New Urbanism is the movement within urban planning which challenges contemporary urban design, calling for a return to more traditional, mixed-use neighbourhoods. Suburban sprawl is blamed for many social ills, including the degradation of many cities’ downtown cores. It is a classic tale: those with the money to invest got out. They go to the suburbs to fulfill the dream of owning a home, complete with backyard, barbeque, and white picket fence. Yet, New Urbanists don’t eagerly join in this middle- and upper-class flight to the suburbs and call others to join their plan for renewing cities.

NEW URBANISTS RETHOUGHT HOW NEIGHBOURHOODS COULD BE DESIGNED TO ENCOURAGE THE DEVELOPMENT OF WHAT THEY BELIEVED THE SUBURBS HAD LOST.

New Urbanism is a recent movement, which gained its popularity in the 1980s and early 1990s. It continues to affect today’s cities—some artificially, some intentionally. Proponents of this new way of thinking about urban planning fear that the very structure of sprawling suburbs, with its forced reliance on the automobile, is undermining the formation of community. New Urbanism rethinks how neighbourhoods can be designed to encourage the development of what they believed the suburbs had lost.

Through this desire to create community, New Urbanism recovers many ideas lost or forgotten in suburbs. Perhaps the most important feature of their reconceived neighbourhood is “walkability.” Within New Urbanist communities, every home should be within a five minute walk of the community’s centre, where people can access the public transit system, shops, and other

a DOWNTOWN Foothold

A decade ago, Hughson Street Baptist Church was dying. Most of its members drove downtown each Sunday morning to attend church; few lived closed by. Their community impact: small. The membership seriously considered closing its doors, possibly relocating to Hamilton's suburbs.

Ten years have restored life to the church. When Pastor Dwayne Cline was brought in as pastor in 1994, he and the church leadership made a conscious decision to focus their energies on serving the wider Hughson Street neighbourhood. That decision has revitalized the congregation, and given it new profile in the neighbourhood.

Today, Hughson Street claims 150 regular attendees, with approximately 70% living within walking distance of the church. Much of their growth has come from a surrounding community impressed with the church's many outreach programs.

Ten to fifteen hours per week of community service are required of Hughson staffers, many of which are spent volunteering at Benetto Public Elementary School across the street. When the school is in need of people to oversee a track and field day, the church often receives a call. A program flyer published by the church lists more than two dozen outreach programs.

Cline also has involved himself at City Hall, particularly in the discussion surrounding the development of Hamilton's North End. He fights for displaced lower-income households, and helps policymakers find ways to keep downtown housing affordable.

gathering places. This feature is meant to encourage the development of a shared community spirit between residents who encounter one another on the sidewalks. Furthermore, the New Urbanist vision favours mixed-use communities. Unlike modern zoning, in New Urbanism, residential and commercial are zoned to share the same space. These ideas all recover "human-scale" community, and claim to be a way to revitalize urban centres, making them attractive, healthy, and vibrant communities.

New Urbanism has successfully challenged the reigning orthodoxy among professional urban planners. Today's planners are interested; they like what they see, and they are willing to spend the money to participate. And there is evidence around North America that downtowns are experiencing economic revitalization because of an influx of people searching for a fuller experience of community. As author Eric Jacobsen points out, "From a strictly economic perspective, New Urbanism is a trend that city planners and municipal governments must be aware of simply for its economic impact and its potential for revitalizing formerly problematic areas" (Jacobsen, *Sidewalks in the Kingdom*, 2003 pg.157).

Appealing as this picture might be, the vision of New Urbanism is also criticized by many urban planners. Critics are quick to point out that aesthetics are emphasized over practicality. Moreover, New Urbanism fails to account for the importance of faith in human life. As a movement driven by an essentially secularized vision, one is very hard-pressed to find a place for the church.

Eric Jacobsen points out this oversight. Author of *Sidewalks in the Kingdom: New Urbanism and the Christian Faith*, Jacobsen applauds New Urbanism's efforts to rethink and redesign more "human-scale" communities, but he claims that New Urbanism's failure to incorporate the church could doom it to being a brand of elitist urban fashion. New Urbanism wants to create community; however, as Jacobsen argues, the cohesive bonds of community are not in walk-able concrete but in the institutions we participate in—particularly the church.

Consider the question of “mixed-use” land. For New Urbanists, this means integrating not only residential and commercial property together, but also \$500,000 and \$120,000 homes together—that is, those of mixed income living in close proximity to each other. Yet, one of the most profound criticisms leveled against model New Urbanist communities was that they are simply unaffordable to lower classes. Towns designed on novel principles quickly go beyond the means of a large proportion of the population. By its very novelty, New Urbanism created bedroom or cottage communities visited by the wealthy on weekends and holidays. The community it seeks cannot be gained if it remains a vacant neighborhood during the weekdays. When this happens, New Urbanist communities become product of market controls. As the physical structure of communities is given over to market controls, the problem of “gentrification”—the displacement of lower income residents—cannot be avoided.

Now consider how the church could alleviate this perennial problem for New Urbanist planners. While non-religious institutions like governments sponsor programs that are capable of helping those with lower incomes find and maintain affordable housing. These institutions lack personal touch, critical to serving people’s needs. The church, however, is personal by its very nature. Within the church, people gather together, forging community through networks of personal relationships., The church is uniquely capable of bringing together people of diverse socio-economics statuses. Its ability to form diverse community, allows the church a voice in addressing gentrification.

B. THE CREATIVE CLASS

Richard Florida identifies the people buying into New Urbanism as the creative class: “a fast-growing, highly educated, and well-paid segment of the workforce on whose efforts corporate profits and economic growth increasingly depend” (Florida, 2002, p. 17). In his work studying various factors of economic success, Florida develops a series of indexes to measure the economic performance of North American cities such as: the Creative Index measures a city’s overall economic potential; the High-Tech Index analyzes the performance of the high-tech industry; the Innovation Index records the number of patents per capita; and the Gay Index reflects the city’s openness to different kinds of people and ideas.

If Florida is right, the Creative Index, in conjunction with the sub-indices, can show urban planners the populations their development plans should be geared to in order to have vibrant economic growth in the region.

Again, it is difficult to miss the fact that no reference to established religious communities can be found. Certainly, Florida accounts for a general sort of spirituality under the inclusive Gay Index. But the church as an institution is much more than a general brand of spirituality; indeed, it could be argued that established religious communities are creative classes in their own right.

C. SPIRITUAL CAPITAL

Working in association with the Templeton Foundation, Dr. Theodore Malloch promotes the concept of spiritual capital. In his words, “Spiritual capital is founded on an understanding that all resources are entrusted to people, and both individual persons and groups are called to preserve and develop a wealth of resources for which they are accountable here and later, and which endowments must

be managed” (Malloch, “Social, Human, and Spiritual Capital in Economic Perspective,” 2003, pg. 7). Spiritual Capital understands resources as being developed by those with a faith commitment.. Or, as Robert Woodberry describes, spiritual capital defines the “resources that are created or people have access to when people invest in religion as religion” (Woodberry, “Researching Spiritual Capital: Promises and Pitfalls,” 2003, pg. 1). What Malloch and Woodberry contend here is that living one’s faith brings with it a dramatic effect on how life is lived and how money is spent. Faith holds significant economic and cultural implications.

Much of the work currently pursued on spiritual capital is inspired by Max Weber, the late 19th century sociologist and author of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. Weber’s basic thesis was that religious fear inspired hard work. For Weber, this fear motivated believers to work hard in order to “prove” that they were among God’s chosen people. While Weber’s conclusions are contested, the importance of Weber’s contribution was to draw a concrete connection between faith and economics. By doing so, he helped to ask the questions that the study of spiritual capital now seeks to address.

D. RESTLESS GODS.

Once known as “Bad News Bibby,” University of Lethbridge sociologist of religion in Canada Reginald Bibby had nothing but depressing reports to offer concerning the state of religious observance in Canada. By all appearances, theories of secularization were right—religion’s influence as a culture-shaper no longer existed. Bibby’s message was clear: organized religion was dying and churches could do nothing to stop it.

However, Bibby’s 2002 study, *Restless Gods: The Renaissance of Religion in Canada*, suggests that there are some questions about life’s purpose and meaning that only the “gods” can answer. In the last decade, Bibby has pointed to a revitalization of religion which he traces in part to the reality that “the overwhelming majority of Canadians acknowledge that they do raise these so-called ‘ultimate questions’ in the course of living out their lives” (Bibby, 2002, p. 93).

INSTITUTIONALIZED EXPRESSIONS OF RELIGIOUS FAITH ARE POISED TO MAKE A COMEBACK, PRECISELY BECAUSE THEIR INSTITUTIONAL EXPRESSION LENDS THEM A MEASURE OF CREDIBILITY.

In the words of the American sociologist Peter Berger, “I think what I and most other sociologists of religion wrote in the 1960s about secularization was a mistake. It wasn’t a crazy theory. There was some evidence for it. But I think it was basically wrong. Most of the world today is certainly not secular” (Bibby, 2002, 61). Even during the decline of late 20th century, established Canadian churches preserved a core of dedicated members. Today Bibby’s research indicates that the

gods are restless. Organized forms of Christianity—churches—stand to gain the most. In the current, religiously plural environment, those institutionalized expressions of religious faith are poised to regain their influence in the public square.

While Bibby’s research extends beyond the Church, it is not an act of favouritism that causes the church to be highlighted. The importance of Christian churches in Canada is a historic reality. Among European immigrant groups coming to North America, Christianity dominated in its various ecclesial expressions. Thus, *Living on the Streets* seeks to understand the contemporary influence of this historical institution.

One of the most compelling evidences of a renaissance of religion in Canada is the growing number of teenagers attending weekly services. Between 1992 and 2000, the national attendance average increased 4%, reaching levels that had not been seen since the early 1980s. At the same time, however, research indicates that overall identification with religious groups in general among teenagers has declined nationwide. Bibby offers an additional consideration to take into account when comparing these numbers: "Fewer identify, but those who do show signs of being more involved and more committed. Here again, we see signs of vitality and life in almost all groups" (Bibby, 2002, pp. 88-9).

CITY GOVERNMENTS AND BUSINESS COMMUNITIES NEED NEW LANGUAGE TO COME TO GRIPS WITH THE IMPACT OF THE INSTITUTIONAL CHURCH.

Churches are consolidating and strengthening their social resources, and becoming important cultural and economic agents. According to Bibby, the change is apparent and churches stand poised to take a significant place in the public square. Ultimately, this means city governments and business communities need new language to come to grips with the impact of the institutional church.



Looking at Hamilton

1. BUILDING INSTITUTIONS: THE NEW CASE FOR THE CHURCH

In part one we discussed the institutional nature of the church and, more broadly, of religious communities. However, before proceeding, the term “institution” needs a more precise definition, as a social environment in which people come together for some purpose. The structure of an institution transcends the particular characters of the individuals who operate within it. Institutions—government (at any level), schools, businesses, and churches—are more than the sum of the individuals that comprise them. Institutions transcend the individual and take on a life of their own. But simply coming together for a common purpose is not enough to distinguish institutions from less-developed forms of organization. What sets institutions apart is their strong connection to the past—a form of historical continuity, or rootedness.

What follows are pictures of the historically rooted institution of the church as it is found in Hamilton. These are not intended to be perfect pictures of faith communities, but depictions of the church living on the streets. During some of the interviews that were conducted, it was apparent that churches failed to live up to the expectations people had for them. One of the interviewees stopped

THE CHURCH IS AN INCREDIBLY SOPHISTICATED INSTITUTION CAPABLE OF DELIVERING THE VISIONS LAID OUT BY CITY LEADERS FOR URBAN RENEWAL.

attending church because of some bad experiences with mismanagement by church leadership. Pastors also expressed frustration over unfinished and seemingly impossible business. Without a doubt, churches have failed to live up to their potential, and they continue to fail. Yet, the pictures also reveal what churches have achieved. These stories of renewal and restoration told by the church institutions demand attention—particularly by urban planners.

Among the many different types of institutions that could be mentioned, the rest of this report will consider evidence that indicates the church is an incredibly sophisticated institution capable of delivering the visions laid out by city leaders for urban renewal.

The church as an institution is organized around the worship of God. Far from being “too heavenly minded to be any earthly good”—the old criticism brought against so-called “high-minded” religious groups—the church was and still is a very strong force for “earthly good.” While worship focuses on God, worship does not exclude deeds. Faith without deeds, they say, is dead—a belief widely shared, especially among monotheistic faiths. For example, Islam has among its five pillars of faith

Parenting a COMMUNITY: A Tuned-In MOTHER CHURCH

zakat, or alms-giving. Jewish communities are also known for their generosity. These brief examples reveal that structures for seeking the welfare of the wider community are built into institutional faith communities.

Claiming that the church possesses significant resources for urban renewal as a sophisticated institution, requires comparing its success with other institutions within cities. The Saturday, September 11, 2004 edition of the *Hamilton Spectator* featured a startling front-page headline: *“We’re tired, apathetic, Godless and cynical. And we don’t trust our neighbours. How did we end up here? Do you vote? Do you watch the news? Do you volunteer? Do you care?”* The article appeared as the first in a five-part series titled *“The Great Disconnect”*, which called residents of Hamilton to take seriously the lack of civic spirit in the community. Judith Maxwell, head of leading Canadian think tank the Canadian Policy Research Network, reflected in the same article how community might best be built:

“If I had to make a list of the attributes (that built a close knit-community), it would be communities that have true community schools. Not just a school that kids go to from 9 a.m. until 3 p.m. and then a custodian locks the door or gate to the playground at 4 p.m., but a school which is open from 7:30 a.m. so kids can be dropped off if necessary and there’s supervision and maybe breakfast served.

“There are afternoon and after-school homework clubs and activities. Then community meetings take place in the evening. Maybe the library is situated next door or in the school. Festivals, school events and the equivalent of church socials—all of those things build community.

Maxwell suggests that schools build a sense of community critically important to human life, and in doing so fulfill the role that once belonged to the church.

First Hamilton Christian Reformed Church got off to a shaky start in its role as a home church for newly-arrived Dutch immigrants in 1925. Economically and culturally, new members were unsure of themselves in a new country. Pastors had to be dispatched twice from a supporting Grand Rapids, Michigan congregation. But their passion for helping immigrants never wavered.

The church grew into a major hub for arriving immigrants. Following the Second World War, when Canada opened its doors to a huge wave of Dutch people escaping the impoverished conditions of their homeland, First Hamilton served both as a gateway to Western Canada, and simply as a place to rest.

As a result, First Hamilton CRC was directly responsible for planting at least eight other churches in southern Ontario. Tim Sheridan, Outreach Coordinator at the church, could only speculate as to how many other churches across the country have been helped indirectly by the First Hamilton “mother church.”

But what was to be done when their mission as a welcoming enclave for Dutch immigrants had, by the late 1990s, been essentially completed? Facing dwindling attendance and a clouded future, some thought it might be time to close the doors and move the church out to the suburbs, where a majority of the congregation was living.

Instead, the leadership decided to stay and to redefine the church as an outward-looking congregation, a light to its surrounding Durand and Kirkendall neighbourhoods.

The result? Church membership rose, while average age declined significantly. Sheridan believes that intentionally refocusing the church's mission is a huge factor in growth. In addition to offering small community services like food baskets, meals, and ministry to people suffering from severe mental disabilities, First Hamilton CRC is currently building on a recent Community Opportunity Scan (COS), keeping its ears open to the church's opportunities for service among Hamilton's residents and businesses.

Schools do have vital roles to play in society, but school communities represent a very distinct portion of the larger population: families with young children living at home. Relatively few people—only those that earn their right to stay as teachers or administrators—remain in the education system their whole lives. Thus, schools fall far short of the goal of integrating a wide variety of people for long periods of time.

It is perhaps better to define a school community as a community of limited scope. Students attend school to become educated. While they attend, they are primarily called to be a student. And when they finish being a student, the usual course of action is to move on. By comparison, there is

a process of becoming a member of a church community, but the process is superseded by the purpose of coming together in community to worship God. Churches do not lack social boundaries; however, the boundaries are not as limited as one might expect. Membership requires certain commitments, but membership is not a necessary requirement for attending and being part of the church community. Surprisingly, neither is conformity of belief, though various processes exist to bring new believers in step with the larger body. Moreover, a member may cut ties with a specific church, yet remain in the broader church community which transcends denominational boundaries.

Churches draw people of all ages together, thus bettering Maxwell's community schools at the game of inclusivity. Yet, the case might be made that schools better represent the population in terms of ethnic diversity than individual churches or parishes. In some churches, the lack of ethnic diversity is a historical reality because immigrant church communities often maintain strong ethnic ties. Taking a broad overview of churches in Hamilton, it is evident that many churches still remain a home for many different cultural groups: Ukrainian, Greek, British, Slovak, Dutch, Chinese, and many more. While these churches are ethnically-based, they are living and vital communities important within Hamilton's immigrant community. These churches serve an important role in connecting and serving the city's diverse ethnic population. However, this does not reveal a sufficient challenge to the case proposed above. For this we must turn to two things: first, the many churches in Hamilton that claim diverse congregations and, second, the growing partnerships between churches that create communities across ethnic barriers. Churches form community beyond the walls of their specific church and continually seek to respect ethnicity while not making it a defining characteristic.

In It for the LONG RUN

Homestead Christian Care is a stopping-place for sufferers of mental disabilities, offering a place for patients discharged from psychiatric hospitals into the community. Only a few years ago, it was a seven-bed operation, struggling to meet a large need. Facing an uphill financial battle, they considered their options carefully.

“If it’s worth doing, it’s worth doing for the long term – or until the problem is fixed.” Such was the opinion of Jeff Neven, a director at Homestead. This wasn’t merely a mission statement for a wall plaque, either. Today, Homestead runs five different facilities with a total of 120 beds in Hamilton, and is expanding into Woodstock.

Even so, it’s not enough. Neven notes that Ontario currently has only one fifth of the beds needed to house people with mental disabilities.

Their spectacular growth in just five years took entrepreneurial spirit and a rare willingness to invest time and energy. Graham Cubitt, another Homestead director, notes that employees are selected for their specific vision, their willingness to serve the community, and their financial sacrifices for a non-profit dream.

2. MAKING THE ARGUMENT

The following research is based on interviews conducted with pastors, church leaders, social service workers, and persons involved directly or indirectly with city government in Hamilton, Ontario.

The interviews revealed a desire and need for the church to play a significant role in the generation and maintenance of community life in the city. While each person’s expression of this point was specific to their context, each was in favour of more church involvement in the city.

Cathy Gazzola, President of the Durand Neighbourhood Association, believes that churches should be at the heart of economic renewal. Gazzola was raised Catholic and while she no longer attends church, she roots her own desire to get involved in civil affairs in her parent’s Catholic faith—a faith that was deeply concerned about social and justice issues. She describes city/church partnerships dedicated to economic renewal as, “the way it should be done.”

Mark Fraser also acknowledges the importance of faith institutions. As a Senior Social Planner with the Social Planning and Research Council, Fraser claims, “Faith-based communities do better at community organization than most every other group.” Gazzola highlights the churches’ importance in economic renewal, and Fraser points out the ability of churches to form communities.

Presently the City of Hamilton is finding some ways to partner with faith communities and other religious groups on individual initiatives. The city’s government, however, does not appear to be

fully aware of the potential resource base represented by established religious communities or institutions. If theories of secularization and the inevitable disappearance of religion from public life were correct, a blind spot towards organized religion wouldn’t pose a huge problem. But as Berger and Bibby insist, the place of the church and other faith-based institutions does not appear on the verge of vanishing any time soon.

Five themes emerged from the interviews we conducted, which illustrate the vital role played by religious communities in the urban centres. Within them, New Urbanist concerns for redesigned neighbourhoods and small-scale, “walkable” communities are addressed. And, perhaps more importantly, the substantial role played by religious communities in addressing issues of social

justice will also be explored, to trace largely unseen connections between the church and economic renewal.

The five themes or vital roles of the institutional urban church:

- Creation of communities that transcend social boundaries
- Involvement in the wider community, especially in terms of social service programs offered
- Drawing people to live in the city
- Significant financial investments
- Valuable contribution of church buildings to the city landscape

A. TRANSCENDING SOCIAL BOUNDARIES

On a Sunday morning at First Hamilton Christian Reformed Church, one is able to sit in the pew and see several retired millionaires, families with young children or teenagers, young professionals, middle-aged business people and established blue-collar workers. The pews are full on a Sunday morning, but not only with the “successful” sorts of people already mentioned. Several suffering from mental disabilities also call First Hamilton home. They have all come together to form community in the context of a local congregation, an example of the institutional expression of religious communities. Within this community they share their lives with each other.

As mentioned previously, New Urbanism presents neighbourhoods which intentionally transcend social barriers. Its solution includes housing that meets the various needs of a diverse population—married or single, with children or without, wealthy or not-so—and includes attractive public spaces and, most importantly, a network of well-designed sidewalks. Building a beautiful neighbourhood in which to live is no doubt important, for it is unlikely that ill-kept yards and streets will do much to draw people outside their homes. But a soft spot in this model can be legitimately probed. Are mere sidewalks enough to build the sort of community New Urbanists envision?

The absence of the local church from the New Urbanist plan becomes very apparent when, for example, the diverse attendance at First Hamilton is taken into account because the church demonstrates a remarkable ability to transcend social barriers.

ARE MERE SIDEWALKS ENOUGH TO BUILD THE SORT OF COMMUNITY NEW URBANISTS ENVISION?

A similar story can be told of Philpott Memorial Church, located on York Boulevard across from Copps Coliseum in downtown Hamilton. Pastor Lane Fusilier says Philpott will be filled with anywhere between 400 to 600 people at the 9:30 a.m. Sunday morning service. The average age of this crowd is approximately 25 years old and is made up of young families, young professionals, McMaster University students, as well as about twenty medical doctors, and a group of medical students. The second service, at 11:15, represents a very different section of Hamilton’s population. The 300 people listed on the membership roll have an average age between 65 and 70; approximately half attend each week.

Like First Hamilton, Philpott shows all the signs of a socially and culturally diverse community, but neither of the two churches are perfect models of integrated communities. The congregation of First Hamilton remains strongly defined by its Dutch heritage. Tim Sheridan, the church’s Outreach Coordinator, acknowledges as much, but says that the congregation is in the process of redefining itself. First Hamilton is moving from understanding itself ethnically to defining itself within the

context of its surrounding neighbourhood. Philpott has its struggles as well. A quick look at who attends the different services is enough to demonstrate this. Average age is not the only difference: where the early service is attended mainly by white-collar professionals, the later service is attended by retired blue-collar workers, many of whom worked in Hamilton's steel industry. Pastor Fusilier says Philpott operates almost as if it were two separate congregations, separated by age and cultural boundaries.

Notwithstanding the historical circumstances that made First Hamilton and Philpott Memorial Church what they are today, both are open to becoming more diverse. They both emphasize that the Gospel message is meant for all people. The church doors are open to any who would walk through them seeking answers that, as Bibby says, only the gods can provide. Again, one may legitimately wonder whether sidewalks, or even festivals at community schools, are enough. City government may have no business probing into the hearts and minds of residents, but there should at least be recognition of the potent force institutional religious communities possess to transcend social boundaries.

B. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND SERVICE

On Wednesday mornings, members of Hughson Street Baptist Church help run a Breakfast Club in the basement of St. Luke's Parish Hall. The program, which runs from Monday-Friday, mainly serves the children who attend Bennetto Elementary School and St. Lawrence Separate School. Dwayne Cline, pastor of Hughson Street, says as many as 80 children have been fed by the breakfast club in recent years. And while the other four days of the school week are led by other organizations, the church still provides volunteers. The church has established such a helpful track record with Bennetto that when volunteers are needed to staff school outings, Hughson Street usually gets a call.

Across the schoolyard, St. Luke's Anglican Church, on John Street North, opens the doors of its parish hall for the Breakfast Club, but it does not provide staff. Instead, the small, 70-member congregation directs its energies towards maintaining the Seafarers Mission. The Right Reverend Sir Robert Hudson, its current rector, goes to meet every foreign ship that arrives in Hamilton's ports. Last year, around 130 foreign ships entered Burlington Bay during its 10 ½ months of accessibility; in each case, the rector was the first Canadian to board after Canada Customs finished their inspection. The Mission puts itself at the disposal of the foreign sailors, driving them around to stores to purchase necessities or amenities.

The contributions made by Hughson Street Baptist and St. Luke's, though undoubtedly invaluable, are relatively small when put in a city-wide perspective. Volunteer-run social services organizations fill an essential role which meets the larger needs of the community. Individual congregations can not hope to address the scale of Hamilton's needs on their own, but the influence of the institutional church extends far beyond the capabilities of individual congregations. Church partnerships and faith-based organizations serve to aid the city on a larger scale.

Paul B. Reed and L. Kevin Selbee of Statistics Canada find that a strong connection between religious faith and community service presently exists. In their "The Civic Core in Canada: Disproportionality in Charitable Giving, Volunteering, and Civic Participation," Reed and Selbee describe the dominant characteristics of Canada's civic core as having "a strong religious orientation, multiple forms of personal generosity and supporting a common good, and explicit commitment to community" (Reed and Selbee, "The Civic Core in Canada: Disproportionality in Charitable Giving, Volunteering, and Civic Participation", 2001, p. 15). They identify a "moral elite" in Canadian society, featuring a

strong propensity towards religious observance. What religious communities possess in terms of social, material, and financial resources will go a long way to address the many issues facing urban centres.

In 2004 the Social Planning and Research Council (SPRC) published and produced "Income and Poverty in Hamilton (2004)," which claimed that:

There are enough people living in poverty in Hamilton to fill Copps Coliseum five times... almost 20% or 95,370 of Hamilton residents are living on incomes below the poverty line. This includes almost 25% of all children under the age of twelve (Fraser, 2004, p.1).

While jumping to quick conclusions about the causes of poverty is dangerous, it is possible to suggest that the growing poverty in Hamilton rests in a number of trends working against those in low and middle income groups such as: decreasing incomes, rising cost of living, and an expansion of the number of low wage part-time, temporary or contract positions, with few or no benefits.

THERE ARE ENOUGH PEOPLE LIVING IN POVERTY IN HAMILTON TO FILL COPPS COLISEUM FIVE TIMES... ALMOST 25% OF CHILDREN UNDER 12 LIVE IN POVERTY.

These are much bigger problems than a single religious community could ever hope to address. What happens when money and food runs out? Currently Hamilton has a well-developed social safety net in place, especially in the form of food banks. The Hamilton Food Share network connects food banks together in order to better serve the community. Many of these have their roots in church groups, like the Salvation Army. The Salvation Army runs a food bank at Bay and York (right next door to Philpott Memorial Church) and serves as many as 6,000 people at Christmas. Major Byron Jacobs, a regional director for the Salvation Army, notes that many people do not realize that the Salvation Army is first a church, and only second a distributor of social services. For his part, Fraser observes that beyond the recognizable food-bank system there is an immeasurable periphery made up predominantly by churches, including Hughson Street Baptist, and other religious organizations that run much smaller scale programs like soup kitchens and food basket distribution.

The SPRC's "Progress Report on Homelessness" identifies homelessness as "a growing crisis in Hamilton. Every night, hundreds of people stay in emergency shelters. Every night, families with children are placed in motel rooms because they have nowhere else to go" (Wingard, "Progress Report on Homelessness", 2003, p. 9). Numbers have increased steadily over the past few years. A quick glance at the list of Hamilton's emergency shelters shows how many operate in connection with church communities, including: the Salvation Army's Booth Centre, the Roman Catholic Good Shepherd Men's Centre and Martha House for women, the Evangelical Mission Services Men's Centre, and the Wesley/Living Rock Temporary Youth Shelter are among the twelve organizations listed. The staffs at all of these are mainly provided by their sponsoring faith communities. As Fraser pointed out during his interview, "Social capital has to be mobilized; the spiritual capital of faith communities has a huge ability to mobilize people."

Jeff Neven, a member of First Hamilton, is living evidence for Fraser's argument. He is the director of Homestead Christian Care which maintains 120 beds in five separate facilities across Hamilton for people suffering from mental disabilities. Neven claims, "Homestead selects its employees

specifically for their vision” —a key component, he says, because they “don’t pay enough to keep anyone around who doesn’t share the vision.” In the past five years, the organization has seen incredible growth. From 2000, when there were only seven beds in a single residence, to 2005, the budget has grown from \$120,000 to \$1.6 million. Plans are also in the works to expand into Woodstock, Ontario, at a facility that will provide thirty beds by the fall of 2005.

Funding for shelter programs comes from a variety of different sources. Homestead receives about a third its operating budget from the government, while the other two thirds come from either private donations or rent paid by tenants. The story of government support is shared by every social service organization listed here. Neven notes that the government provides a considerable amount of funding but runs very few social service programs. “The government,” he says, “is not very good at social service programs because of its size—a personal relational component is missing, or if it exists at all, it is usually adversarial.” Fraser came to a similar conclusion through a study of City of Hamilton programs providing jobs for people in need of work. A person could be provided with a job on Tuesday, but there was a high probability that person would lose the job by Friday because the City lacked the necessary personal sensitivity necessary to address a job applicant’s individual circumstances.

Of the many organizations that are rooted in faith communities, the Salvation Army is perhaps the best suited to offer social service to the community. A product of its unique history surrounding its founders, the Salvation Army bases itself on the mission William and Catherine Booth carried out in the slums of 19th century London, England. Now, Hamilton’s Salvation Army is the number-one provider of transitional and emergency shelter in Canada. In the Hamilton area these include the previously mentioned Booth Centre, Gray’s Haven (a home for teen mothers), and Lawson Lodge (a care centre for the physically and mentally disabled). Salvation Army Thrift Stores also are well

“THE GOVERNMENT... IS NOT VERY GOOD AT SOCIAL SERVICE PROGRAMS BECAUSE OF ITS SIZE—A PERSONAL RELATIONAL COMPONENT IS MISSING, OR IF IT EXISTS AT ALL, IT IS USUALLY ADVERSARIAL.”

known across Canada for selling donated clothing where any profit is funneled back into other service programs. Major Jacobs added that, in Hamilton, the Salvation Army staffs and operates a suicide prevention and crisis centre twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The Salvation Army also sends out a soup van 365 days a year that serves as many as 300 people in a single day.

Not every church in Hamilton contributes to the same degree; but most make some contribution to

the city’s life. Graham Cubitt, like Neven a member of First Hamilton and a director at Homestead Christian Care, took part in the church’s Community Opportunity Scan (COS). The church is in the process of looking for more ways its members can serve its two surrounding neighborhoods of Kirkendall and Durand. Cubitt has joined with Cathy Gazzola on the Durand Neighbourhood Association to help “plug the church into the community”. The COS has identified a number of service opportunities, including helping out in a women’s shelter within walking distance of the church.

Pastor Lane Fusilier has a vision for Philpott Memorial: to “become a church that networks with social service agencies, and staffs them with volunteers.” Like First Hamilton, Philpott has a lot of work to do before Fusilier’s vision becomes a reality. But Philpott’s membership is ready and willing to respond to opportunities. As recently as May 2005, 160 people showed up to help out in a neighbourhood clean-up project.

Although there are many success stories, some churches are struggling to remain open. Of the twelve Anglican parishes that exist currently in Hamilton, rumours circulate that as many as five will be closed in the near future. Susan Huxford Westhall, a longtime member of the All Saints Parish on Queen Street, doesn't think her church will be among the ones to close, but she is quick to identify the problem the denomination currently faces: very few people between the ages of 20 and 45 attend. An entire generation has been lost. But even in small numbers, attendees are very active in the church, she says. There are a few families who bring their young children—the next generation which, she hopes, will replace the one that was lost. Over at St. Luke's, Boris Nusko and his family fit Westhall's description of a highly involved, young family on which the future of so many parishes rests. Westhall describes the membership at All Saints as "nibbling up" —rising slowly.

In the last forty years, the Anglican Church in the Hamilton region has lost two thirds of its membership. This decline has meant that many of the community services they once offered have been closed down. Westhall remembers how at one time there were five Friendship Centres running in Hamilton for the developmentally disabled. At least two have closed down because no younger volunteers have filled in an aging and thinning base of volunteers. However, younger membership must take up the task of volunteering if, for example, St. Matthew's House on Barton Street is to continue to offer counselling, ESL programs, rehabilitation apartments, and a food bank.

Although the Anglican Church in Hamilton is struggling, it is important to once again highlight the success stories of Hamilton churches. One of the areas churches are having an incredible impact is in their ability to integrate immigrants into the Hamilton community. Strong ties to nationality pose a problem for members of Eastern Orthodox churches in North America. Once immigrants get settled, the strong ties to ethnicity begin to break down and many cease going to church. Orthodox churches find it a hard battle to adapt themselves to a new cultural environment. But even while they struggle to find their place, they perform a very valuable service to the large immigrant community as a safe haven and a network of opportunities for immigrants coming into Hamilton. Its members are able to find employment and places to live. Fr. Bodan Hladio, from Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral of St. Vladimir on Barton Street in Hamilton's east end, recounted how in the past his church had served such a purpose for Ukrainian immigrants. Now that much of the liturgy is read in English, Orthodox from many different backgrounds regularly attend. The church may be primarily organized around worship, but the social networks that develop there are also important. Fr. Hladio recalls a Ukrainian Catholic employer stopping by his church, simply looking for workers. Ethnicity and a common Christian identity no doubt had a large role to play in this process.

In the recent past, First Hamilton served for many years in a similar capacity, as a conduit for Dutch immigrants to Canada. Today, the church offers ESL courses for Chinese immigrants, in conjunction with Hamilton's Settlement and Immigration Services Organization (SISO).

Healthy communities cannot be built if the problems of poverty and physical and mental disabilities are not addressed. Proponents of New Urbanism have recognized this, and proposed neighbourhoods where rich and poor share the same space. The overwhelming contribution made by religious communities to social services in Hamilton is evidence that a common vision is required to make the gears of the social services industry turn. Through all this a single conclusion can be drawn: institutional faith serves and builds community, and is capable of marshalling significant resources in terms of people, money, programming, and physical facilities.

If you **BUILD** it...

For a church built inside a towering business and shopping district, a real faith community can be hard to find. Philpott Memorial Church found a solution: build the community up around them.

Originally founded in 1892, the church once had a large presence in the city's centre. Between 2000 to 3000 people would show up on a Sunday evening to hear the evangelist Peter.W. Philpott preach.

A lot of that changed when Copsps Coliseum was built. Park Street, which formerly went straight into King Street and connected Philpott to the city's downtown core, was diverted. Says Pastor Lane Fusilier, suddenly "nobody could see the church."

To counteract the ill effect the construction of Copsps' had on the church, Philpott purchased a number of properties in its immediate vicinity. Much of that land is currently used for parking space, and is leased out during the week for public use. But Philpott has started a long term vision for the church which includes a massive redevelopment of church property, with the end goal of rebuilding a livable community right around the church.

When Pastor Fusilier came to Philpott six years ago, attendance was stable at around 150 people each week, while the average age of the congregation was somewhere between 65 and 70 years old. Today, Philpott runs two separate services on Sunday, one for the older generation and one for the younger. The younger people's service is regularly attended by over 400 people: an indication of a bright urban future for the burgeoning congregation.

C. DRAWING MEMBERSHIP TO LIVE DOWNTOWN

No more than a decade ago, many downtown churches were considering closing their doors and either relocating to greener pastures in the suburbs or disbanding altogether. This was the story of Philpott Memorial, First Hamilton, and Hughson Street Baptist, and is currently being retold in the parishes of the Anglican Church in Hamilton. For the first three churches mentioned, at least, the story has changed. While a large portion of First Hamilton's congregation still commutes to church, over the last number of years the number of people who walk to church has been very steadily increasing. One Sunday morning in June 2005, for example, three new members were introduced to the congregation. Each of them lived within walking distance of the church.

Walkability is important to New Urbanists. The automobile, they say, is stealing time and community from North Americans, and is having a very profound effect on the quality of human life. Most people will acknowledge the significant benefits the automobile has introduced, especially the ability to travel great distances. But anyone trying to find a balance between the two perspectives should be able to recognize the social benefits, not to mention the environmental benefits, of being able to walk to work, to the store, or to church.

When Dwayne Cline came to Hughson Street Baptist Church eight years ago, the entire congregation drove to downtown Hamilton from the suburbs on a Sunday morning and left sometime early Sunday afternoon. This arrangement didn't encourage investment in the neighbourhood of the church building. Like many other churches, Hughson seriously considered relocating. Cline, however, had a vision of a church that not only inhabited, but served the Hughson Street neighbourhood. In the eight years he has served Hughson as the senior pastor, the congregation has been transformed. Between 70 and 75 percent of Hughson's membership growth has been attracted through community service projects. Almost as large a percentage walks to church on Sunday morning. With so many members and regular attendees in

close proximity to the church, Hughson has direct access to a large volunteer base to staff events like the Breakfast Club. The church has published a flyer listing at least 28 different ways members of the church can serve the community.

Not every church downtown Hamilton is located near enough to residential areas to make walking in on Sunday mornings practical. Philpott Memorial finds itself surrounded by a sea of commercial buildings and parking lots. Pastor Fusilier speaks of meeting the needs of people where they can be found, with the resources available. The same must be said about meeting the needs of the church. Some past members of the church possessed the foresight to see parking space becoming a serious problem, so at present three nearby parking lots are owned, leased out for public use on weekdays.

Not every example provided here demonstrates a strong revitalization of interest in living an urban life, but they provide mounting evidence that the times are changing. No longer are church members moving *en masse* to the suburbs. Rather, the general trend of suburban flight shows signs of reversing itself within church communities. How much of this belongs to the larger New Urbanist trend can be debated. However, the concentration of a wide variety of resources in faith communities gives them a significant advantage over secular initiatives to see the New Urbanist project through to fruition.

D. PRIVATE INVESTMENT

Tim Sheridan is a recent addition to the staff at First Hamilton. His title is Outreach Coordinator, and he has been a significant force behind the "Community Opportunity Scan". Sheridan has stewarded a \$500,000 private donation by getting to know the community and its leaders, and developing a plan for turning First Hamilton into a church that is active in community life. Pastor Fusilier from Philpott says that his church is currently looking to hire a graduate student from McMaster's Department of Sociology to fill a similar position.

Sheridan has made himself not only a resource to the church, but to the community-at-large, building social networks. The substantial private investment that made it possible to bring him to Hamilton is not unique to the First Hamilton community. Churches and other religious organizations draw many private dollars in the form of tax-deductible donations. For example, Homestead Christian Care, staffed largely by people connected to the community around First Hamilton, is a free-standing institution separate from the church. Thus, it is an appropriate avenue of donation to people who might balk at donating directly to churches.

Due to their powerful ability to mobilize various types of resources, religious communities play an extremely important role in the larger Hamilton community. A key to maintaining and even furthering their success is private investment in the religious communities themselves. A private donation given primarily for the benefit of a church community, as in the case of Sheridan, has a beneficial ripple effect to the larger community. St. Luke's service to foreign sailors is another illustration. If St. Luke's were to close its doors and discontinue worship services, Rector Sir Robert Hudson would mostly likely leave, and the Seafarer's mission would lose its volunteer staff. But investment commitment is high in these communities, says Boris Nusko, a long-time member of St. Luke's. There are members of the congregation who can be called on to write a cheque when the church is in need.

EASTERN beauty at a WESTERN intersection

Drawing investment to the downtown is part of drawing people, as we have already explored. First Hamilton provided an excellent example of a church able to draw people back into Hamilton's downtown to make a life for themselves. Taking this into account, a church's direct investment in the wider community can be accompanied by a number of other incidental investments made by members who decide to purchase a home, shop at the corner store, join a neighbourhood association, or make friends with neighbours. In sum, these people who are drawn downtown help to build community through activities not formally related to the church.

Bibby points out that even during the years when church attendance was down significantly, in almost every Christian denomination a small core of believers remained committed to and invested in the life of the church. This committed membership has also continued to put their energies into serving communities around Canada. If, as Bibby would claim, a renaissance of religious observance is currently underway, how much more will the religious communities be in a position to invest in coming years?

E. SACRED SPACES

Church buildings are not typically thought of as free public spaces. Compare, however, a church building to a restaurant. Almost without exception, restaurants will expect that their patrons purchase something if they plan on staying for any amount of time. A restaurant may be a public space, but sharing its space comes with a price attached. It goes without saying that the more expensive the items listed on the menu are, the more exclusive the restaurant becomes to the general population. Established religious communities, on the other hand, do not have as strict a policy towards public use of their buildings. While it is standard procedure to charge rent to a group that wants to use facilities for purposes not directly attached to

An impressive structure breaks the monotony of the urban landscape near the corner of Barton and Gage Streets. The Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral of St. Vladimir rises from the horizon, by far the highest building in the area. Surrounded by predictable buildings with conventional commercial and residential designs, the cathedral's imposing height is augmented by its departure from the architectural norm. St. Vladimir's is different.

The interior is even more beautiful. Scenes from the Bible, stories of Ukrainian saints, and iconic representations are immortalized on the walls and vaulted ceilings.

Fr. Bohdan Hladio recounts how one day a young boy came off the streets to take a look inside the impressive church building. Leaving his friends on the sidewalk, the boy stepped across the threshold, and his eyes widened in amazement. After a few moments of silence, his eyes drawn upward, he turned back to his friends and beckoned them to come in and see how "cool" the space looked.

The Orthodox Church has long been good at preserving its beautiful tradition, including the architectural and artist elements of the cathedral. But in the North American context, it now finds itself struggling to adapt to an environment where different national traditions, like Ukrainian, don't mean as much as they did in Europe.

Fr. Hladio notes that holding so strongly to tradition is a mixed blessing for the Orthodox community. Many people coming from Eastern Europe out of Orthodox backgrounds first contact the

church upon arriving in Canada. It serves as a sort of home away from home and a place to find work. The Serbian Orthodox Church, Fr. Hladio mentioned, helped to introduce 100 refugees to Hamilton during the Bosnian conflict in the 1990s.

However, North American culture tends to break down strong ties among ethnically or nationally-defined communities. And so, Fr. Hladio laments, many only come to church until they are settled in, then they find other congregations.

He calls it a crisis in Orthodox identity, but is confident the church and the community will survive it. Believing that something more important is in play, Fr. Hladio says, “Beauty will save the world.”

official church functions (often as a cost-recovery measure), there are some notable exceptions to the rule. Hughson Street Baptist is currently open to anyone who lives in the immediate neighbourhood free of charge so long as there are no previous bookings. Guests are simply asked to abide by a number of rules, including one against the consumption of alcohol on church premises.

Every year anywhere from 3,500 to 4,000 people immigrate to Hamilton. Religious communities integrate newcomers into community through strong social networks, and frequently allocate space in church buildings to ESL classes. Both First Hamilton and Philpott Memorial Church presently run programs in conjunction with SISO on their premises, and in the case of the former, supply volunteers to run the classes as well.

Aside from bare utility, New Urbanism emphasizes the importance of attractive physical space, well laid out sidewalks and parks, and creative architectural design. While it may over-estimate the ability of physical spaces to encourage the development of intimate human communities, the importance of aesthetics should be not dismissed. Dave Witty, Dean of the Faculty of Architecture at the University of Manitoba, notes that beautiful city centres have a lot to do with keeping Florida’s “creative class” from moving elsewhere—and that they demand a significant investment in architectural design and the careful and intentional use of space.

In Hamilton, quite a number of churches have been declared buildings of historical value. When First Hamilton applied to the City of Hamilton for permission to renovate the existing church building, consultants were brought in to ensure that the building’s appearance was not damaged and the history it testified to was not lost. In this small way the wider community has recognized the value added by the physical presence of a church to the neighbourhood. In a limited sense, Witty’s insights can be applied to churches regardless of where they are located in relation to the city’s centre. Church buildings add character to the face of a neighbourhood; they break up the monotony of rows upon rows of houses; many preserve architectural styles and motifs of years gone by and, because of their great age, Jacobsen notes, their presence in a community has an anchoring and unifying effect.

Driving westbound on King Street in Hamilton towards Highway 403, the bell tower of the Cathedral of Christ the King can be seen rising between the rows of shops that line the roadside. The cathedral is placed perfectly so that for several minutes it occupies the centre of a driver’s field of vision. Any number of buildings or signs could be placed in the same location, but none could add the same value to the cityscape.

Conclusion

Times are changing. Theories of secularization have been discredited in many circles as unable to account for the true complexity of human life. People are taking a renewed interest in the role played by religion, both theoretically and personally.

Who stands to gain in this changed environment? Reginald Bibby argues that the surviving groups will be those that have been around a long time and continue to have a solid base of support. In other words, religious institutions—established communities of worship—stand to gain. Many of the different churches examined here show that this is exactly what they are doing: gaining. And the city of Hamilton is benefiting because of it.

Churches, synagogues, mosques and other religious communities are institutions with a critical role to play in urban life. This is not a plea to recover what once *was*, but to recognize what presently *is*. Civil, business, and religious leaders need to change the language they employ to recognize and capitalize on the resource base represented by such communities for the economic development and renewal of cities.

THIS IS NOT A PLEA TO RECOVER WHAT ONCE WAS, BUT TO RECOGNIZE WHAT PRESENTLY IS.

As this report has shown, times are also changing for churches themselves. Not so long ago, three of the five churches examined—First Hamilton, Hughson Street Baptist, and Philpott Memorial Church—were seriously considering closing the doors of their downtown locations due to declining membership. Yet in the space of a decade, all have worked to redefine their identities and become true city churches, to great effect. All three churches report that membership is growing and that they are actively looking for ways to connect more closely with their neighbourhoods.

Each of the interviewees echoed in their own language the words of Cathy Gazzola: “This is the way it should be done.” Despite past failures to integrate with the wider community, there still remains an intuitive sense that there is an important place for the church.

In Hamilton's *VISION 2020*, government, businesses, and citizens are all listed as institutions critical to the long-term development of the city. Should not churches—or more broadly, established religious communities—be added to this list?

Presently Hamilton is looking for ways to revitalize its city centre. An important step in this process will include identifying potential places of growth. If churches can 1) grow community, 2) promote community service, 3) attract people to live downtown, 4) draw private investment, and 5) add beauty to the physical appearances of community—five themes emerging consistently from our study—they represent enormous potential for the very kind of growth the city of Hamilton is interested in promoting.

Wherever active and growing churches can be found, there one can also find seeds of urban renewal and economic growth. The challenge of Hamilton and other urban centers is to capture this reality in language and practice, and begin working cooperatively for the renewal of our cities.

Appendix

METHODOLOGY

The research gathered comes from two sources:

1) SURVEY OF BROADER DEVELOPMENTS IN SCHOLARSHIP:

- a. New Urbanism
- b. Eric Jacobsen on New Urbanism
- c. Richard Florida's Creative Class
- d. Spiritual Capital
- e. Reginald Bibby on the renaissance of religion in Canada

2. INTERVIEWS OF CIVIL AND RELIGIOUS LEADERS IN HAMILTON.

- a. Rev. Dwayne Cline, Hughson Street Baptist Church¹
- b. Graham Cubitt, Director of Homestead Christian Care (HSCC)²
- c. Mark Fraser, Senior Social Planner, Social Planning and Research Council³
- d. Rev. Lane Fusilier, Philpott Memorial Church⁴
- e. Cathy Gazzola, President of the Durand Neighbourhood Association⁵
- f. Vanessa Grupe, Senior Planner, Community and Design Section, City of Hamilton⁶
- g. Fr. Bodhan Hladio, Ukrainian Orthodox Cathedral of St. Vladimir⁷
- h. Major Byron Jacobs, Public Relations and Development Director, Salvation Army, Southwestern Ontario⁸
- i. Jeff Neven, Director of HSCC
- j. Boris Nusko, Member at the Parish of St. Luke's⁹
- k. Tim Sheridan, Outreach Coordinator at First Hamilton Christian Reformed Church¹⁰
- l. Susan Huxford Westhall, Member at All Saints Church¹¹

¹ <http://www.hughsonstreetbaptist.com/>

² <http://www.homesteadservices.on.ca/>

³ <http://www.sprc.hamilton.on.ca/>

⁴ <http://www.getchurch.org/>

⁵ <http://www.hwcn.org/Information/associations/durand/general.html>

⁶ <http://www.city.hamilton.on.ca/Planning-and-Development/development/Community-Planning-and-Design/default.asp>

⁷ <http://www.inform.city.hamilton.on.ca/details.asp?RSN=27516&Number=331>

⁸ <http://www.salvationarmy.ca/home/default.asp>

⁹ <http://www.niagara.anglican.ca/parishes/index.cfm?PID=109>

¹⁰ <http://firsthamilton.ca/>

¹¹ <http://www.niagara.anglican.ca/parishes/index.cfm?PID=102>

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