

SPECIAL REPORT

Join us for a Code Red Open Forum, Thursday, April 22 at 7:30 p.m. in the Spectator auditorium. This session is free, but you must register in advance. Call our Open Forum line at 905-526-3535 to register.

Bayfront rejuvenation benefits neighbourhoods

Nothing points out the economic disparities between Hamilton's neighbourhoods better than the average value of a house.

House values, particularly those at the low end, are important because research shows they can act as a marker of a person's lifetime income prospects.

"People with lower incomes or with unstable incomes over time are unlikely to purchase homes that they cannot pay for over the long term," according to one McMaster University study.

In the neighbourhood bounded by Sherman Avenue North, the rail line near Barton Street, Ottawa Street North and the harbourfront, the average value of a house was \$87,438, according to the 2006 census.

Meanwhile, the average value of a house in the Flamborough neighbourhood around Carlisle was more than \$490,000 in 2006.

Let's put it another way. You could sell an average home in Hamilton's highest-priced neighbourhood and use the money to buy five average-priced homes in the city's lowest-ranked neighbourhood — and still have enough left over to buy a Mercedes-Benz luxury sedan.

But a look back nearly 40 years to the 1971 census shows that attitudes can change for the better about neighbourhoods, which is ultimately reflected in house values.

In 1971, six of the 10 neighbourhoods with the lowest house values covered the

entire shore of Hamilton's waterfront, from the western tip of the harbour right around to the lift bridge.

The irony only became apparent later. In many places, a city's waterfront was its most desirable location. In 1971, it was Hamilton's least desirable place to live.

That's changing, as people have reclaimed parts of the waterfront.

The Beach Strip went from the neighbourhood with the seventh-lowest house values in 1971 to 68th-lowest in 2006. Average house values there jumped from \$16,803 in 1971 to \$225,214 in 2006.

At the west end of the harbour, the traditional North End neighbourhood between Wellington Street North and Pier 4 Park went from having the fourth-lowest

house values in 1971 to 21st-lowest in 2006.

The adjacent neighbourhood to the west jumped from 10th-lowest in 1971 to 29th-lowest in 2006.

"It's clear that the cleaning up of the waterfront, opening it up to access to the public and some commercial development, has attracted middle-class families to return to those areas and invest in the communities," said Terry Cooke, former regional chair, now president and CEO of the Hamilton Community Foundation.

"What that suggests is that lifestyle matters, and lifestyle includes everything from access to green space to good schools to not having five lanes of expressways running by your front door."



GARY YOKOYAMA, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR
Dr. Chris Mackie, one of Hamilton's associate medical officers of health, says Code Red data could be misread to say that neighbourhoods cause the problems. People are 'often in those neighbourhoods because they can't afford to live other places.'

of the time.

That's about five times more often than the occasions when pollution standards were exceeded in Flamborough.

Perhaps coincidentally, perhaps not, Flamborough's neighbourhoods have some of the city's best health outcomes and house values, based on The Spectator's data analysis.

Dr. Chris Mackie winces a little when he hears all this.

He's one of Hamilton's associate medical officers of health and he fears that people will look at the numbers and the maps and come to the mistaken conclusion that neighbourhoods cause the problems or that neighbourhoods cause people to access health care services more.

"People don't move to a neighbourhood and then the neighbourhood makes them poor," said Mackie. "They're often in those neighbourhoods because they can't afford to live other places."

"It's not the neighbourhood, it's people's prior conditions."



Meet Mark Chamberlain.

He's a successful businessman who took Wescam from a small company to a globally known enterprise and now he's president and CEO of Trivaris, which tries to match capital with innovative ideas.

But Chamberlain is also chair of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, a role he has embraced with almost wild-eyed zeal.

"Knowledge is a pain in the ass," Chamberlain explained, "because once you've got it, you have to do something with it."

He understands that businesses — not just governments — have a role to play in finding solutions to poverty.

"We have to show the urgency and the emergency of it to get them involved," said Chamberlain.

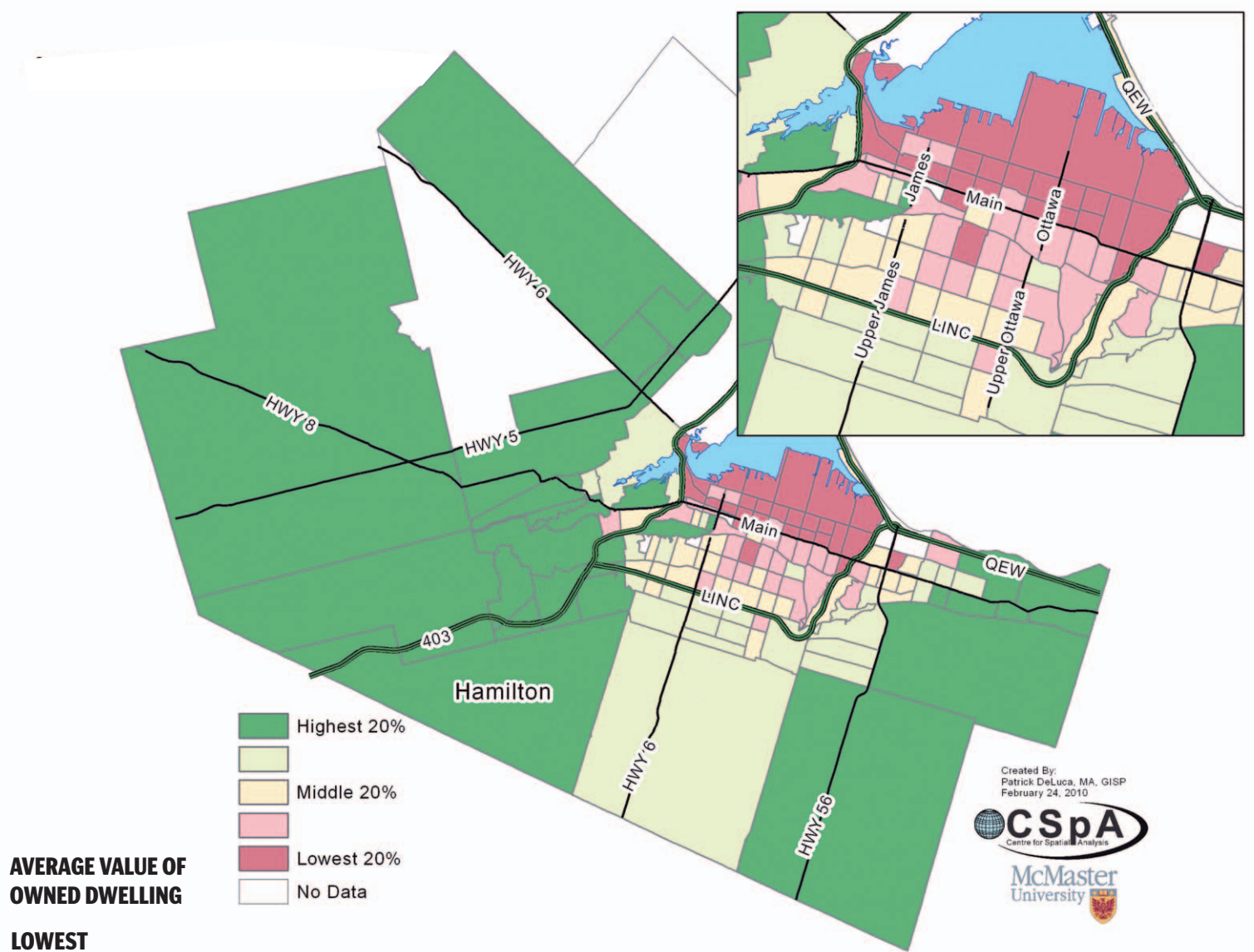
"It's not that businesses are bad," he added. "Businesses are there for a reason. They create wealth, they create jobs, they create profit, but they're focused on the things that matter to them."

"We have to make this matter to them."

But what he also understands is the strong link between personal wealth and personal health.

"It's so counterintuitive to say to somebody, 'You know, a big part of your health outcome in your life will be your income,'" said Chamberlain.

"If that's true then we could improve our health outcomes in our country and reduce our overall health care illness cost if we simply pay people more."



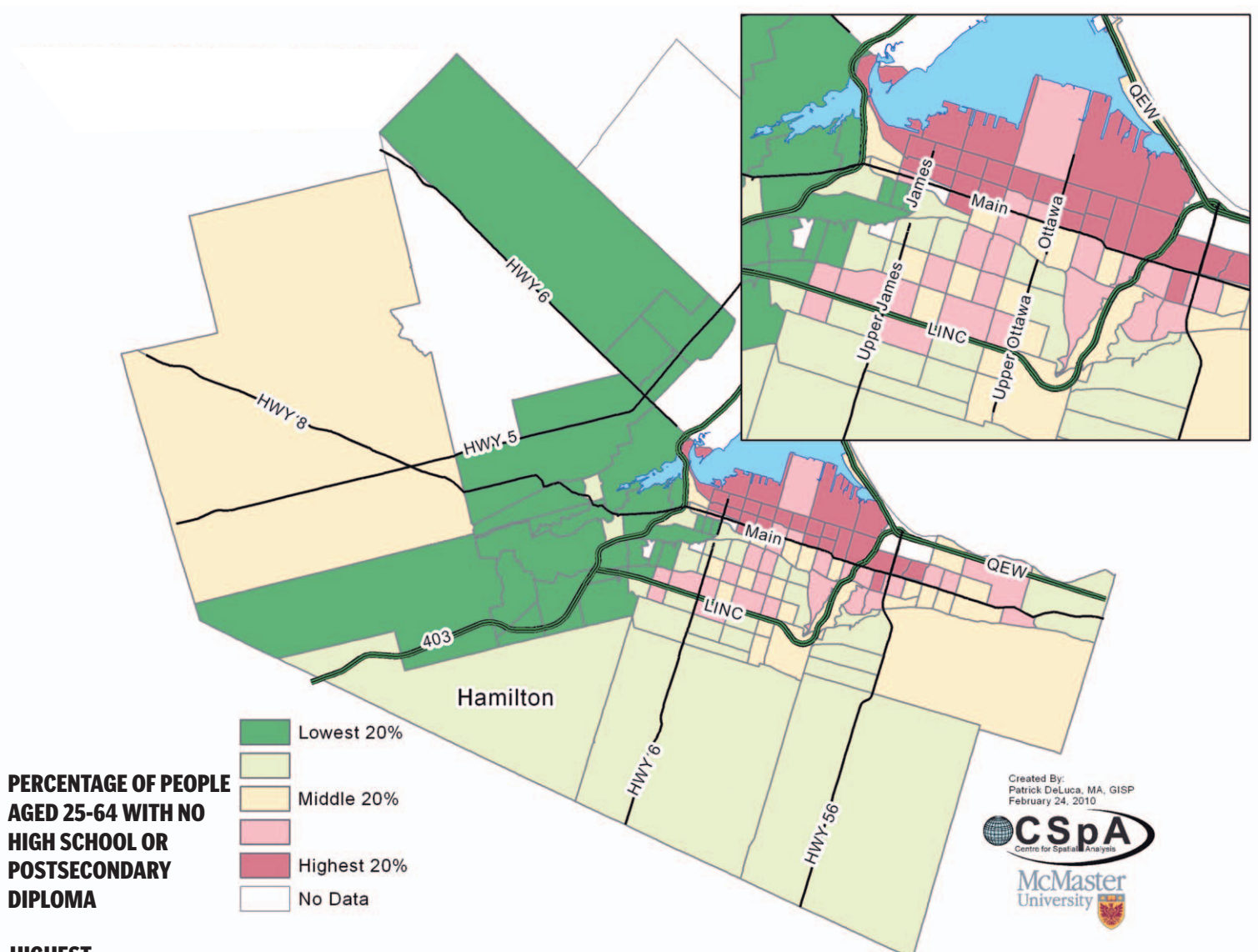
LOWEST

1. 5370068 (Sherman Avenue North / harbourfront / Ottawa Street North / rail line)	\$87,438
2. 5370069 (Ottawa Street North / harbourfront / Parkdale Avenue North / rail line)	\$104,960
3. 5370061 (Wentworth Street North / rail line / Sherman Avenue North / Cannon Street East)	\$110,297
4. 5370059 (Gage Avenue North / rail line / Ottawa Street North / Cannon Street East)	\$111,801
5. 5370067 (Wellington Street North / harbourfront / Sherman Avenue North / rail line)	\$114,138

HIGHEST

1. 5370144 (Highway 6 / Flamborough-Puslinch Townline / Millborough Line / Concession 5 East / Robson Road / Parkside Drive)	\$490,048
2. 5370124 (Sulphur Creek / east of Scenic Drive / Mohawk Road West / Wilson Street / Sulphur Springs Road)	\$485,056
3. 5370120.02 (Glancaster Road / Garner Road / Jerseyville Road / Sawmill Road)	\$430,780
4. 5370122.02 (Wilson Street West / Shaver Road / Sulphur Springs Road / Martin Road)	\$408,728
5. 5370141 (Highway 6 / Concession 4 West / Moxley Road / Dundas Street / Middletown Road / north of Patterson Road / Escarpment)	\$394,418

NOTE: Neighbourhoods are identified by their Hamilton census tract number, as defined by Statistics Canada (5370001, for example). For a complete list of Hamilton's census tracts and their geographic boundaries, visit the Code Red project at thespec.com.



HIGHEST

1. 5370070 (Parkdale Avenue North / Windermere Basin / Red Hill Creek / rail line)	41.9%
2. 5370062 (Wellington Street North / rail line / Wentworth Street North / Cannon Street East)	38.2%
3. 5370067 (Wellington Street North / harbourfront / Sherman Avenue North / rail line)	37.8%
4. 5370063 (James Street North / rail line / Wellington Street North / Cannon Street East)	37.7%
5. 5370057 (Kenilworth Avenue North / rail line / Strathearne Avenue / Britannia Avenue)	36.3%

LOWEST

1. 5370122.02 (Wilson Street West / Shaver Road / Sulphur Springs Road / Martin Road)	2.4%
2. 5370123 (Garner Road / Southcote Road / Highway 403 / Golf Links Road / Mohawk Road West / Wilson Street / Fiddlers Green Road)	2.4%
3. 5370140.04 (Hamilton Street / Burlington border / Highway 6 / north of Dundas Street)	2.8%
4. 5370045 (Main Street West / Coldwater Creek / Cootes Paradise / Longwood Road South)	4.0%
5. 5370017 (Mountain Brow / Aberdeen Avenue / rail yards / Highway 403)	4.4%