

**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.

# Care teams help Edmonton's elderly thrive at home

For Edmonton's elderly population, home is where the health is.

That's the key objective of a health and social program for seniors launched a decade ago called CHOICE, an acronym for Comprehensive Home Option of Integrated Care for the Elderly.

The goal is to keep the elderly healthy and living at home for as long as possible.

CHOICE provides one-stop shopping for health and social services for the elderly at five locations around the Alberta capital. There's a toll-free phone number for those who need to access services.

Each client is assigned a team that includes a doctor, nurse, physiotherapist, occupational therapist, social worker and pharmacist. The clients receive trans-

portation to and from the various facilities. "We're trying to prevent institutionalization," said Carol Barr, director of co-ordinated access for seniors health at Alberta Health Services.

An outside study shows the program reduces emergency room visits and shortens hospital stays if there is an admission. Similar programs have been launched in

Calgary and Lethbridge.

In Hamilton, St. Peter's Hospital announced it will cut a significant portion of a similar type of comprehensive day program for seniors that has been running for more than 30 years. The elderly had been able to visit St. Peter's twice a week to receive medical care, physiotherapy, occupational therapy and speech therapy.

Barton Street, Ottawa Street North and the harbourfront, the rate of trauma-related emergencies for people ages 70 and older was 23 per 100 people ages 70 and older.

By contrast, the rate was three per 100 people ages 70 and older in the rural Flamborough neighbourhood near Middletown Road.

The numbers also show a large variation in the proportions of seniors by neighbourhood across Hamilton.

In the neighbourhood around Nash Road South, Queenston Road and King Street East, nearly 39 per cent of the people were ages 65 and older, according to the 2006 census.

At the other extreme, just over 5 per cent of the people in the Flamborough neighbourhood around Highway 6, Concession 5 East and Centre Road were 65 and older.



Taped to the wall next to Gilda Toscani's bed are pictures of her great-grandchildren. On a bedside table, there are a few homemade Italian snacks.

It's the best the family can do to make Toscani's shared hospital room seem a little more like home.

"We bring in Italian food all the time," son Domenic says with a laugh. "She doesn't really like the food in the hospital."

"She would like to go someplace else but by the same token, they treat her pretty good here so she's a little bit uncertain because she doesn't know what to expect at another place," he added.

His mother's problems started in March 2009 when she stumbled and fell in her east-end Hamilton home, leaving her with a broken hip.

"From then on, everything went downhill," her son said.

First, a hip replacement, then rehabilitation at a nursing home, back home briefly, off to another nursing home, back home again before some new health problems landed Toscani at the General.

Before she broke her hip, Toscani was able to get around her house with the aid of a walker.

Now, she's bedridden and her family fears she may remain that way.

"What she complains about a lot is that she's not able to take a step forward," said her son. "She's lying in this bed with no chance of improvement."

"We want to see her — and she wants to see herself — be active a little bit. As you know, the more you're inactive, the worse it gets."

Meanwhile, the Toscani family is shuttling constantly between the hospital and their parents' east-end home because their 87-year-old father remains there on his own, with the help of a five-day-a-week live-in caregiver.

Even if their mother is placed in a new facility, there's little chance their father will be able to join her, adding another layer of stress to the situation.

"Sometimes she gets emotional and she has her moments," son Domenic said. "I don't think there's any chance she'll go home."

The Toscani family, of course, is far from being the only family facing this predicament.

With an aging population and longer life expectancies, the pressures will only become greater.

"We knew this was coming years ago," said Westwood-Smith of St. Joe's. "We're at a point where we're at a surge in capacity."

"We're just trying to get people to the right place, and unfortunately we work in a system where we don't have access to the right place for these individuals yet."

"This place is not fun," said Westwood-Smith, referring to a hospital. "Nobody wants to be here when they don't have to be. It's stressful all the way around."

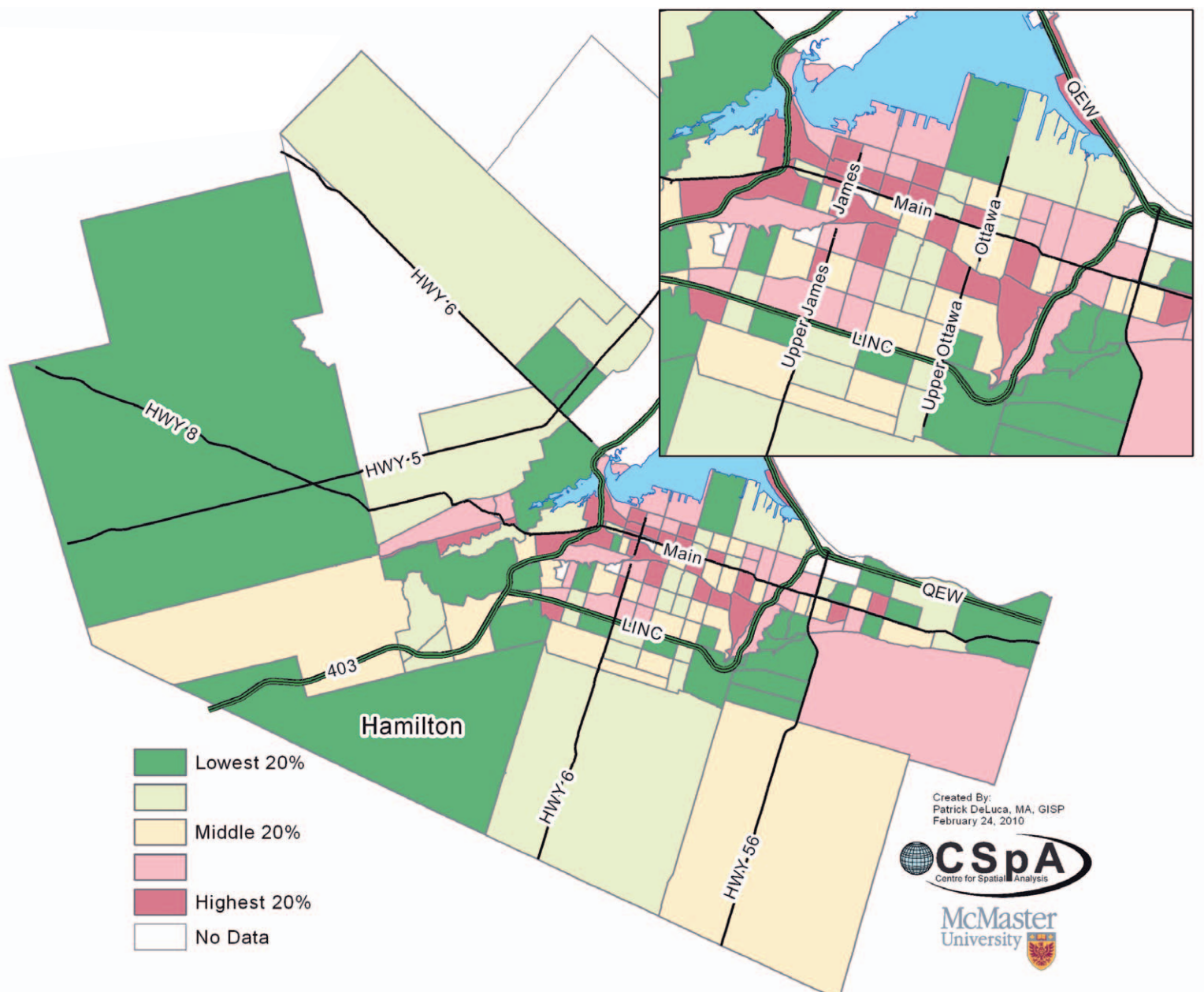


The call the Toscani family had been waiting for finally came in early March.

On March 10, after 154 days in a hospital bed, Gilda Toscani was transferred to the Clarion Nursing Home in Stoney Creek.

"I'm happy," said Domenic. "Hopefully, she'll get a little more movement now."

"It's going to make everyone's life a little easier."



### AVERAGE NUMBER OF DAYS OF ALTERNATE LEVEL OF CARE PER HOSPITAL ADMISSION

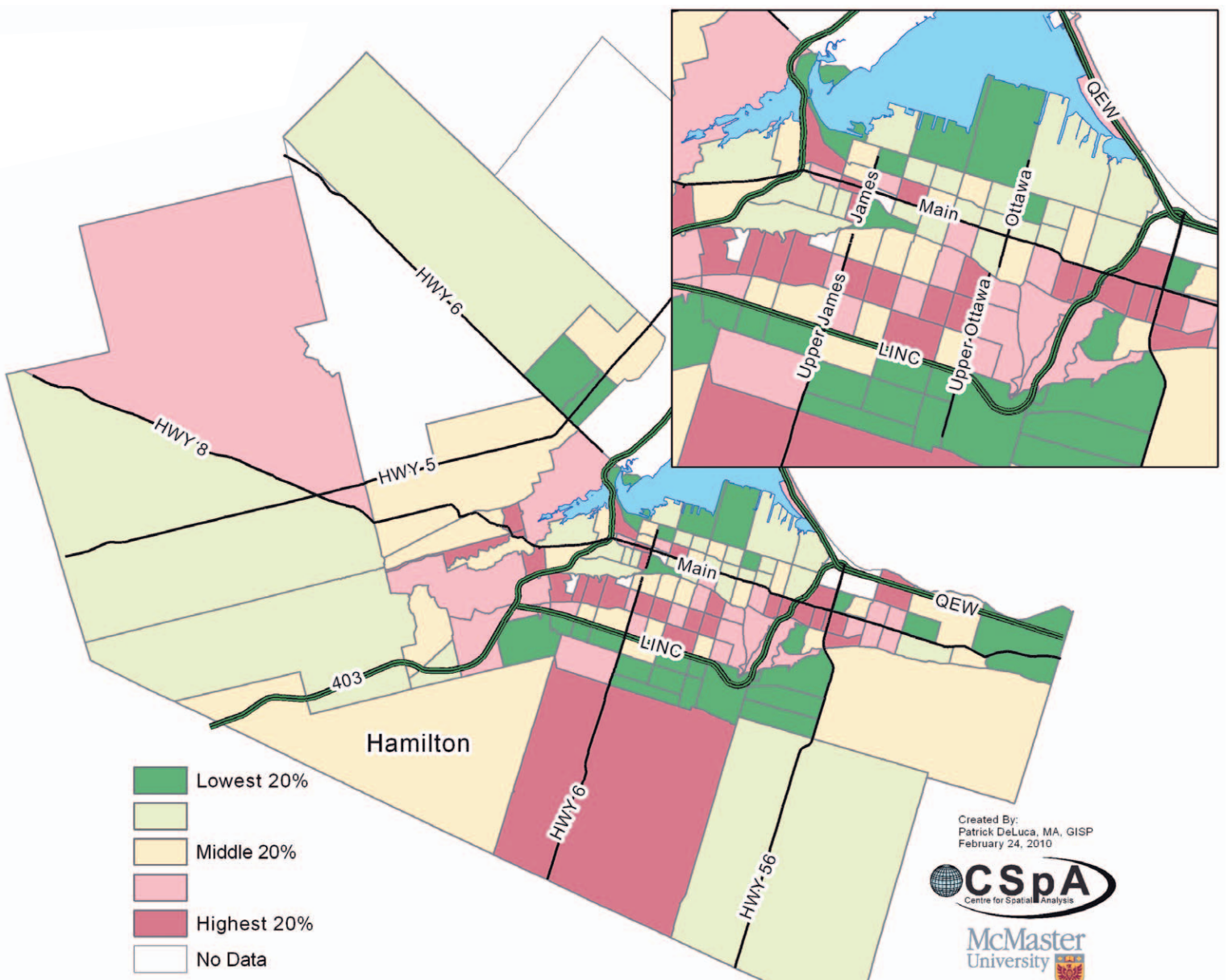
#### HIGHEST

1. 5370037 (Queen Street South / King Street West / James Street South / Hunter Street West)	3.83
2. 5370064 (Queen Street North / rail line / James Street North / Cannon Street West)	3.16
3. 5370049 (James Street North / Cannon Street East / Wellington Street North / King Street East)	2.51
4. 5370073 (Hamilton Beach Strip)	2.49
5. 5370050 (Wellington Street North / Cannon Street East / Wentworth Street North / Main Street East)	2.46

#### LOWEST

1. 5370142.01 (Middletown Road / Highway 8 / Governors Road / Flamborough border)	0
2. 5370142.02 (Highway 8 / Flamborough border / Gore Road / Middletown Road)	0.07
3. 5370026.03 (King Street East / east of Quigley Road / Greenhill Avenue / Centennial Parkway)	0.07
4. 5370002.01 (Garth Street / Lincoln Alexander Parkway / Upper James Street / Stone Church Road West)	0.10
5. 5370040 (Locke Street South / Hunter Street West / Queen Street South / Aberdeen Avenue)	0.12

**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.



### PERCENTAGE OF PEOPLE AGED 65 AND OVER

#### HIGHEST

1. 5370026.02 (Nash Road South / Queenston Road / west of Centennial Parkway / King Street East)	38.9%
2. 5370008 (Upper Sherman Avenue / Fennell Avenue East / Upper Gage Avenue / Mohawk Road East)	37.1%
3. 5370015 (Upper Paradise Road / Mountain Brow / Rice Avenue / Mohawk Road West)	35.4%
4. 5370038 (Bay Street South / Hunter Street West / James Street South / Aberdeen Avenue)	29.2%
5. 5370011 (Upper Wellington Street / Fennell Avenue East / Upper James Street / Mohawk Road East)	27.4%

#### LOWEST

1. 5370140.03 (Concession 5 East / Centre Road / north of Dundas Street / Highway 6)	5.3%
2. 5370001.02 (Upper Gage Avenue / Stone Church Road East / Upper Ottawa Street / Beaverbrook Avenue)	5.8%
3. 5370080.03 (Upper Mount Albion Road / Escarpment / Upper Centennial Parkway / Mud Street)	6.5%
4. 5370001.08 (Upper Gage Avenue / Stone Church Road East / Upper Wentworth Street / Rymal Road East)	6.5%
5. 5370001.09 (Upper James Street / Rymal Road East / Upper Gage Avenue / south of Rymal Road East)	6.6%