



MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

by

The Hon. Vance M. Campbell, JP, MP
Minister of the Cabinet Office

Draft City of Hamilton Plan 2024

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Mr. Speaker, I would like to take the opportunity to update the house on progress with the preparation of the new City of Hamilton Plan. The House will recall that the Draft City of Hamilton Plan 2024 was released for public consultation on 23rd February 2024, with the consultation period ending on 26th April. **Mr. Speaker**, this marks the end of significant consultation efforts undertaken by the Department of Planning in support of a land use plan which will be used to guide and shape development activity within the city in the forthcoming years.

Mr. Speaker, the release of the Draft Plan for consultation provided the public and other stakeholders with an opportunity to submit their comments to the Department with a view to shaping the Plan. On that note, **Mr. Speaker**, I would like to offer my sincere gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the plan-making process thus far. I strongly believe that it is of critical importance for people to participate in the preparation of land use plans as these documents are used to shape the spaces and places that we interact with every day in life. Furthermore, robust, and meaningful consultation is how we test concepts, reach consensus, and achieve buy-in, and ultimately, for plans to be successful, people need to know that they have been part of the process and their opinions have been valued.

Mr. Speaker, as part of the consultation process in support of the Draft Plan, the Department undertook a series of activities to publicize the Plan and provide the public with an opportunity to discuss its content. This included virtual public town hall meetings, pop-up sessions in the city, a radio interview, as well as extensive social media outreach. **Mr.**

Speaker, I'm pleased to say that I directly participated in some of these events and was inspired to witness the passion of the Department's staff for this project and the genuine belief that a progressive land use plan such as the emerging City Plan, could be the bedrock for a new era of economic investment in our Island's capital.

Mr. Speaker, in this vein I am encouraged to be informed by the Department that there has been a notable level of interest from developers, agents and architects in the approach to decision-making outlined within the plan, and the elevated status it affords to design quality.

Mr. Speaker, I can confirm that only one objection to the Draft Plan was received as part of the consultation exercise, which is a testament to the work of the Department and the fact that officers made themselves directly accessible to members of the public throughout the consultation phase. Allowing for open dialogue provided opportunities for people to have their questions answered, minimising the need to make formal submissions to the Department. However, **Mr. Speaker,** this is only part

of the reason why I believe there has been a minimal number of objections.

Mr. Speaker, the House will recall that, having reflected upon previous plan-making endeavours, the Department of Planning decided to add an entirely new stage to the plan-making process in preparation of this new City Plan. This resulted in the publication of the City of Hamilton Plan Consultative Draft 2023 in January 2023. **Mr. Speaker**, there were multiple reasons behind the introduction of this new and earlier stage to the plan-making process, which I believe are worth repeating, as the Department's intentions have now proven to be fruitful.

Mr. Speaker, the Department is acutely aware of previous criticisms which it has received in preparing land use plans, particularly around the release of an operative draft plan and the perceived lack of meaningful public engagement. The entire ethos behind the new Consultative Draft Plan stage of the process was to create an earlier stage to maximise opportunities for public input. The Department intentionally front-

loaded consultation efforts at this stage in recognition that this was the optimal stage for influencing the content of the Plan.

Mr. Speaker, the Consultative Draft Plan received a total of 19 formal written submissions and the Department directly responded to all those participants to make them aware of how their comments were processed. The fact that only a single objection was received to the formal Draft Plan is a clear indication that people were satisfied by the Department's responses and that the Consultative Draft stage was a worthwhile exercise.

Mr. Speaker, it is also worth noting that the Consultation Draft Plan stage provided an opportunity to address concerns outside of the legislated confines of the Draft Plan stage. This allowed for a more fluid exchange of opinions and generated an inherent motivation to reach consensus before even reaching a legislated stage of the process.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge the contributions of the Corporation of Hamilton in getting the plan to this stage of the process. I'm aware that there has been ongoing dialogue between the Department

and the Corporation's technical staff. These conversations have ensured that there is an intrinsic understanding of how some aspects of the plan can impact upon the Corporation's areas of responsibility and that there are appropriate policy measures in place to provide for informed solutions.

Mr. Speaker, the Department is now in the process of undertaking the final legislative steps required to move the plan towards adoption and it is anticipated that, due to having only received a single objection, the Department will comfortably be able to achieve the targeted adoption date of December 2024.

Thank you, **Mr. Speaker**.