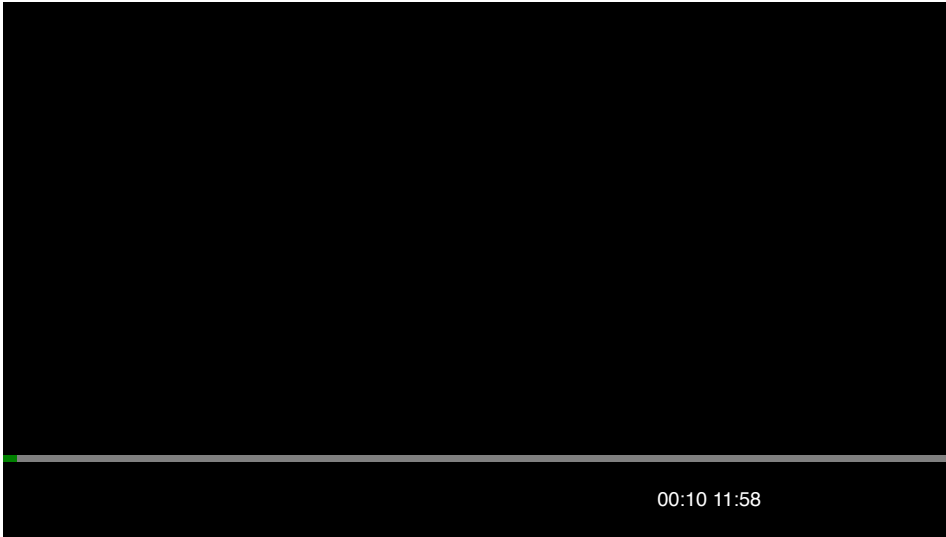


In Conversation: The Toronto developer and the city councillor

Councillor Matthew Green and developer Brad Lamb talked identity, affordability and much more

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Toronto developer Brad Lamb says while Hamiltonians might be reeling at the pace of change in the city, he feels it is "early days" and there is much change to come.

And the city should embrace that idea.

"I would say Hamilton is fortunate. There are many cities that would love to have the buzz that is happening here right now, and the opportunity to grow this city in responsible way.



"It is early days, I understand when you are here, you see there is all this change. From the standpoint of what could happen, very little has happened so far."

'No one is moving here from Toronto to try to change the culture or nature of the city. I think you're fine.'

- Brad Lamb

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Lamb's Television

City project proposed for the CHCH headquarters on Jackson Street West is a big step toward that larger pace of change. The proposal is for 620 condos in two towers, 30 and 40 storeys high. Lamb, who says he sees a bright future for the city, was speaking as part of CBC's series exploring Hamilton's evolving identity.

Agree and disagree

The flashy and sometimes brash developer spoke with Ward 3 Coun. Matthew Green, as the two explored issues around development, affordability and the Toronto migration's impact on the city's future.

In a wide-ranging conversation, the two traded observations, debated points of development, and argued over the role of the OMB — but also found points of agreement. You can watch an edited version of their conversation in the window above.

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Green, who described himself as "pro development" but not always "pro-developer," cautioned Lamb that Hamilton is a skeptical city when it comes to flashy promises from outsiders.

"If you've been in Hamilton long enough, we've seen that time and time again. Hamilton people are skeptical of the two dimensional drawings and the hype. It's because we have had that horse and pony show coming to the city for a very long time ... for us, we don't get too excited about that. We're a 'show me' kind of city."



Toronto developer Brad Lamb says it is still "early days" for change in Hamilton and that the future for the city is bright. (Rick Hughes/CBC)

While welcoming and prepared for change, the city has a culture and history that needs to be respected, he told Lamb.

Different perspectives

Each offered a perspective on how they viewed development and the change Hamilton is undergoing:

Said Green:

"How do we balance the economic needs of development — I'm very pro development, but not always pro developer, depending on the situation — to ensure that the folks that have built this city over multiple generations aren't pushed to the fringe, and so it's building and maintaining a place for Hamiltonians, while opening our doors to welcome — whether it's new Syrians or people like yourself coming from Toronto."

Lamb said:

"A typical developer's perspective is more myopic than yours. You have an overall view of where you want the city to be, and our view is, we've bought a piece of property and we have an idea for that property ... we don't have the same overarching ideology that you might have but having said that, whenever we develop in a city we want to develop something in a city that will make it better."

What kind of canvas?

Lamb, who also riled some of Hamilton's social media several weeks ago with his comment that the city is an "unpainted canvas," clarified that he meant the city was more a work in progress.

"I wouldn't characterize as an unpainted canvas, I would characterize as an uncompleted canvas. Hamilton has had these growth spurts and then there has been retrenchments, industrial ups and downs.

"To me it feels the painting shall continue and the future is amazing. I think the retrenchments are over, I only see growth in the city."



Hamilton councillor Matthew Green says he is pro development, but not always pro-developer. (Rick Hughes/CBC)

One topic they touched on was the role of the movement of people from Toronto into the city.

Lamb felt the city had nothing to fear from that.

"I think Hamilton can maintain its integrity and sense of being a distinct city despite the fact there are external migrations taking place. It's all based on how Hamiltonians react and how politicians react. Its really up to the people who live here how the city progresses.

"I don't see the city changing dramatically. No one is moving here from Toronto to try to change the culture or nature of the city. I think you're fine."

Managing expectations

Green, however talked about managing expectations of newcomers and the dilemmas it causes.

"We have this interesting cultural pheneomen where folks are coming in from Toronto and saying in my old city I received X, Y and Z. I'm here now and I'm demanding, my city councillor, that you give me a dog park, that you give me a bike lane that you give me all these things that urbanists want and expect in TO, without paying for it.

"There is a bit of a caviar taste with a Burger King budget sometimes with people."

The views from outside: What other places are saying about Hamilton

On the question of being an outsider to the city bringing change, Lamb was not concerned about the label.

"I don't feel bad, don't think its relevant. The key is, cities need to change, cities need new blood and new ideas to not get staid and not get comfortable."

Green, endorsing change and progress, said people new to the city had to understand the history they were buying into.

"As long as you are acknowledging there has been a lot of people working for long time to get to where we are today, you'll be fine."



Hamilton city councillor Matthew Green talks with Toronto developer Brad Lamb about development, identity, affordability and the future of Hamilton. (CBC Hamilton)
