

A City on the Cusp: Neighbourhood Change in Hamilton since 1970

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The Hamilton metropolitan area appears to conform to an urban stereotype of inner city poverty and suburban affluence. The truth is more complicated and is changing. Since 1970, income inequality has grown more rapidly than in most Canadian metros. It has been reflected in a marked segregation of the poor and a steady polarisation of neighbourhoods, which has had a clear geography. The inner ('lower') city has become relatively poorer but so, since the 1980s, have inner suburbs to the east and south. Together, these areas house most recent immigrants, including refugees, and contain concentrations of renters with affordability problems. The western suburbs, including Burlington, have become relatively more prosperous. Since 2010, however, there are signs of incipient gentrification in selected lower city neighbourhoods.

Hamiltonians like to think of their city as Canada's best-kept secret. For almost half a century, such a claim became more and more implausible, not least to their neighbours in Toronto. Across Canada, no city showed more clearly than Hamilton the consequences of deindustrialization, the polarization of incomes that has affected almost every place in North America, and the consequent polarization of neighbourhoods. But just lately the patterning, if not the degree, of inequality has begun to shift. Hamilton is on the cusp of change.

The period since the oil shock of 1973 has reshaped most North American cities. Globalisation has contributed to the loss of manufacturing jobs, many of them unionised and well-paid. In ways that have recently attracted widespread attention, wage and salary incomes have grown steadily more polarised (Chen, Myles and Picot, 2012; Piketty, 2014; Walks, 2013a). As a result, in a period when immigration levels have remained high, but have involved a widening range of peoples, a growing number of immigrants have found it difficult to establish a firm economic foothold in Canada (Haan, 2005). Segregation by income has increased, and in varying degrees all cities have experienced a growing polarisation of neighbourhoods. In the 1970s, most neighbourhoods were, in income terms, broadly middle class; today, a growing number are either rich or poor, marking a trend which appears to be continuing (Hulchanski, 2010; Walks, 2013a; c.f. Bischoff and Reardon, 2013).

In this context, Canadian cities have tended to follow one of two trajectories. A number, including Toronto, Vancouver and to a lesser degree Montreal, have seen a revival of the inner city (Hulchanski, 2010; Ley and Lynch, 2012; Rose and Twigge-Molecey, 2012). This has been associated with gentrification of older, single-family dwellings and, especially in recent years, with a boom in the construction of high-rise condominiums. The poor, including lower-income immigrants, have been displaced to, or have found their place in, the inner suburbs, areas which were developed in the early postwar decades. A very different trajectory has been followed by a number of other Canadian cities, typically smaller or mid-sized. These, too, have seen a relative decline of their inner suburbs (Pavlic, 2014). What sets them apart is that they have experienced a continuing inner-city decline that is comparable with, although by no means as severe as, that of many cities in the American Midwest and North-eastern seaboard. Hamilton is a prime case in point.

General trends in Hamilton

To this day, the image that most travelers have of Hamilton is defined by the view of its waterfront as seen from the Skyway Bridge that carries the Queen Elizabeth Way, en route between Toronto and Buffalo. It was once an image of steel mills belching steam and smoke; today it is quieter, showing evidence of an active port but also of more than its share of rust and dereliction. Such images once captured Hamilton's economy, but no longer. As late as the 1980s, when the Department of Geography at McMaster University produced a collection of essays on Hamilton, it was still possible to speak of Steel City (Dear, Drake and Reeds, 1987; Weaver, 1982: 162-169). But even in the 1970s, the share of the city's workforce that were employed in blue-collar jobs had fallen sharply, from 44.6 percent to 34.6 percent, a trend which was accentuated by the recession of the early 1980s (Webber and Fincher, 1987: 240-241). Since then, factories have closed, while Dofasco and Stelco (now U.S. Steel, and currently in the process of abandoning its Hamilton operations), owners of the two major steel mills, have steadily shed jobs. Centrally-located blue-collar jobs are still available, in older metal-fabricating plants and other industries, and also around the port. Suburban factory jobs have been growing, for example in meat-packing, and notably around the airport which has become a significant freight hub. But they no longer define the city.

The decline of manufacturing has been more than matched by the growth of service industries, notably hospitals and various institutions of postsecondary education. McMaster University, established on the City's west side in 1930, has grown rapidly since the 1960s. It has doubled in size since the mid-1980s alone, with a current full-time student enrolment of 26,000. Mohawk, a Community College established in 1967, has grown even more rapidly and teaches almost 13,000, mostly part-time students. McMaster is associated with a research park, prominent medical research facilities, and a teaching hospital, while other hospitals serve the city and a wider region. Today, these are the major employers and have helped the city to record an

unemployment rate that in recent years has frequently been lower than the provincial average. In the aggregate, then, Hamilton has weathered its industrial decline quite well.

The devil is in the details. For many decades, Hamilton has contained much more than its share of the welfare and service-dependent poor, including those with physical and mental disabilities. In this regard, its hospitals and service agencies act as magnets on a regional scale. The numbers involved were increased by the deinstitutionalisation of the mentally ill, a policy promoted in Ontario as in many other jurisdictions from the 1960s (Dear and Wolch, 1987), while further challenges have arisen in recent years as Hamilton became a favoured destination for refugees. As a result, in 2005 the proportion of the city's residents who were dependent on government transfers (11.8 percent) was among the highest in country (Walks, 2013a: 27). So, too, was the incidence of poverty. It has been estimated that in 2006, 12.4 of the city's population were in 'severe' housing need (spending more than half of their income on housing), while an additional 19 percent were in 'core' need (more than 30 percent) (Gaetz et al, 2013: 17). Many occupy rooming houses or rental units in what were once single-family dwellings, about a third of which violate zoning regulations and some also fail to meet fire and electrical codes (van Dongen, 2012). The incidence of housing poverty rivals Toronto and Vancouver, where housing is much more expensive, and easily exceeds Winnipeg, a city with a comparably high proportion of low-income households.

Deindustrialization, coupled with the large numbers of refugees, low-income immigrants and the welfare poor, helps to explain why Hamilton has been more affected by general income trends than most other Canadian cities. Income inequality has increased in Canada in recent decades, as it has in most developed nations (Piketty, 2014). The increase was especially rapid between 1980 and 2000 (Walks, 2013a: 2). Hamilton has fared worse than the average. The standard measure of income inequality is the Gini coefficient, which can range from a value of 0 (perfect income equality) to 1 (complete inequality). In 1980, the Gini for the pretax income of individuals in the Hamilton CMA was 0.34, the lowest among the twelve largest CMAs in the country (Walks, 2013a: 28). Over the next two decades, on this measure, inequality increased more rapidly than in any other major CMA, by a quarter. By 2000 the value was 0.386, fourth highest among the twelve CMAs. The Gini measures the range of variation. Other indices have been constructed to measure the extent to which incomes are polarised towards, or cluster at, the ends of the income distribution. Here, too, the recent Canadian and international trend has been towards an increase; and again the rate of increase was greater in Hamilton than in any other Canadian metropolitan area (Walks, 2013a). If there is any Canadian city where we might expect to find a growing disparity among neighbourhoods then Hamilton is it.

And indeed that is what we find, but first we must briefly explain how the following analysis was conducted. The evidence reported here is based on research undertaken by the project on Neighbourhood Change and Building Inclusive Communities, directed by David Hulchanski at the University of Toronto and funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of

Canada. Previous reports have documented neighbourhood change in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Halifax and Winnipeg (Hulchanski, 2010; Ley and Lynch, 2012; Rose and Twigge-Molecey, 2012; Prouse et al., 2014). In each case, the core data series pertains to the pre-tax incomes, received from all sources, of individuals, these being averaged at the tract scale. For the purposes of analysis and comparison, tracts are divided into five categories based on the average income of individuals. Middle-income tracts are defined as those whose average incomes fall within the range of 20 percent above or below the average for the census metropolitan area (CMA). Two categories define tracts that are 'low income' (20-40 percent below average) or 'very low income' (more than 40 percent below). Correspondingly, two categories define 'high' and 'very high income' tracts. Although social homogeneity was one of the original criteria in defining census tract boundaries, those have usually remained fixed even while the social character of the tracts have changed. For that reason and others, tract boundaries rarely correspond precisely to those which local residents use when thinking about the limits of their neighbourhood. Nonetheless, following an established practice in social science research and except as noted, in the following discussion we will refer interchangeably to 'tracts' and 'neighbourhoods'.

Using this evidence and methodology, the recent trend of neighbourhood change in the Hamilton CMA is quite striking. For clarity, except where noted, all references to 'Hamilton' or 'the metropolitan area' imply the CMA, which today consists of the cities of Hamilton (population 520,000 in 2011) and Burlington (176,000). In 1970, at a time when income inequality was relatively low, almost seven out of every ten neighbourhoods in Hamilton were broadly middle class, as defined above (Figure 1). A small minority were 'low income' or 'high income', while none had 'very low' incomes and hardly any had 'very high'. Overwhelmingly, the typical neighbourhood in Hamilton-Burlington was middle class, and this was even more true in 1980. Here we may see the lingering effects of the postwar boom.

Since 1980, however, the rise of income inequality and polarisation has been reflected in the social geography of the metropolitan area. Decade by decade, the proportion of middle class neighbourhoods in the CMA has fallen: to 69 percent in 1990, 58 percent in 2000, and 51 percent by 2010. Within the City of Hamilton alone, the proportion is much lower. There has been a corresponding growth in the various types of high- and, especially, the low-income neighbourhoods. The most notable change has been in the proportion of low-income tracts, whose share doubled between 1980 and 2010. One of the consequences has been an increase in the segregation of the very poor which, by 2001, was greater in Hamilton than in any other among ten major Canadian cities. Indeed the authors of one study, who chose to examine Hamilton in detail because its experience was extreme, suggested that in 2001 very low wage-earners in Hamilton were "the most segregated [of any city] ... in recent Canadian history" (Stanger-Ross and Stanger-Ross, 2012: 225). At the other end of the income spectrum, the most significant increase was in the number of very high income tracts, whose share jumped from 2.8 to 8.5 percent. The decline of Hamilton's middle-income neighbourhoods may not have been quite as striking as that

experienced within the City of Toronto over the same period, and neither was the growth of very low or very-high income neighbourhoods (Hulchanski, 2010: 8).³ The polarisation has moved more slowly and not gone as far, but the trend is very much the same.

Unfortunately, the comparison with Toronto is not straightforward. In defining the boundaries of CMAs, Statistics Canada attempts to frame urban areas that are substantially self-contained. For several decades, urban development has been more or less continuous along the northern shore of Lake Ontario between downtown Toronto and downtown Hamilton. One sign of this was the incorporation of Burlington as a City in 1974. Today, large numbers of people commute between the cities of Hamilton and Burlington, and also from both places in the direction of Toronto. Burlington is just as much a suburb of Toronto, as it is a part of Hamilton, while Burlingtonians would insist that it is its own place. Treated as such, we can see that it has hardly shared in the neighbourhood trends that have defined the rest of the Hamilton CMA. It has always been predominantly middle class, with a significant minority of high and very high income neighbourhoods (Figure 2). Here, the growth of income inequality is signalled quite subtly, by a relative increase in the number of very high income tracts and the appearance of a lone low income area by 2010. If it is problematic to treat the Hamilton CMA as an entity, then, that is doubly true for Burlington. Lately, some governmental agencies have begun to speak of the GTHA, the Greater Toronto Hamilton Area, an urbanised region that is increasingly recognized in transit planning. No urban place is an island but, by comparison with all other major urban centres across Canada, the City of Hamilton and/or the Hamilton CMA are the least self-contained.

The Changing Social Geography of Hamilton

The recent polarisation of incomes and neighbourhoods in Hamilton has mapped itself out in a very striking fashion, building on patterns that have been established over a century or more. The social geography of Hamilton has always been powerfully shaped by the physical geography of its setting. It is bounded by Lake Ontario, and more specifically Hamilton Harbour, to the north, and almost as influentially by a section of the Niagara escarpment to the south, known locally as ‘The Mountain’ (Figure 3). This escarpment, whose most famous feature is the Niagara Falls, rises sharply by 300 feet, and locally for decades represented a barrier to southward settlement with the city. This was breached to only a limited extent before WWII, so that it defines a real, as well as the perceptual, boundary of Hamilton’s inner city, the area ‘below the Mountain’. When widespread car ownership, and a growing number of access routes, made the Mountain more accessible after 1945, there was a steady exodus of better-paid wage and salary workers from the lower city. In almost every Canadian city, there is a clear distinction between suburbs that were

³ It is unlikely that the trend at the scale of Toronto CMA would be as striking as that within the central city.

developed before and after 1945, but in Hamilton the escarpment elevates and underlines that divide (Maoh, Koronios and Kanaroglou, 2010).

Complicating this distinction is the contrast, also very typical in North America between the east and west sides. In the early phase of development of the industrial city, prevailing westerly winds brought smells and dirt to the east side of town. Since the mid nineteenth century, Hamilton's industry has always been concentrated in the region between downtown and the long shoreline of the Harbour. The eastern suburbs grew up predominantly working class. Because many of Hamilton's industries required skilled labour and paid decent wages, the residents of these working-class districts were proudly respectable. As Sylvia Fraser, who grew up in one of them from the late 1930s to the early 1950s, has put it, these areas contained "good neighbours united by the tough virtues of honesty, industry, sobriety and the certain knowledge that life is short, difficult, unpredictable and likely to get more so" (Fraser, 1972: 35; c.f. Synge, 1978: 103). In contrast, middle and upper class settlement moved south, to the foot of the escarpment, and then from the 1920s westwards, into Westdale (Weaver, 1982: 103). Pollution controls and the decline of manufacturing have moderated the environmental contrasts, but not eliminated them, and in any event decades of development created a built environment that still strongly favours the west. This bias of course also favoured the western suburbs of Flamborough, Dundas and Ancaster over the eastern suburb of Stoney Creek, until 2001 when all were amalgamated into the enlarged City of Hamilton.

Coupled with an aging infrastructure, these influences – polluting industry, and the escarpment barrier – have many effects on the lower city that have been well-documented and which are widely appreciated. Researchers have shown that air pollution levels are highest in that area, and especially to the north-east of downtown; that perceptions of ill-health follow this pattern, as does the actual incidence of some types of cancer and in general of unmet health needs (DeLuca, Buist and Johnston, 2012; Elliott et al, 1999; Hamilton Spectator, 2013; Kitchen, Williams and Simone, 2012; Law et al, 2005; Luginaah et al., 2001; Wakefield, Elliott and Cole, 2007). Adding to health problems, although food costs are no higher, fresh vegetables and other elements of a healthy diet are not readily available (Latham and Moffatt, 2007). Patterns of pollution correlate closely with property values, and both are associated with the main concentrations of poverty, aboriginal residents, refugees, the service-dependent poor and high levels of consumer (as opposed to mortgage) debt (Dear and Wolch, 1987: 138; Jerrett et al, 2012; Mayo, 2011: 27; Walks, 2013b: 172).

Many neighbourhoods in the inner city contain an unusually high proportion of people who are dependent on government transfer payments. This is a diverse category that includes the elderly as well as the disabled and the welfare poor. These are groups with distinctive situations and changing experiences that cannot easily be documented, and certainly not with any consistency, from published sources. However, indicative evidence is available for selected years. In 1990, for example, when across the Hamilton CMA residents received 11 percent of their

income from government transfers the proportion in many lower city neighbourhoods was more than twice as high (Figure 4). A very similar pattern was still apparent fifteen years later among economic families, that is households that contain two or more related persons. In the CMA as a whole, families obtained 9 percent of their income from transfers but in 22 tracts the proportion was more than twice that level. Of these, no less than 21 were neighbourhoods in the lower city (Figure 5). It would be a mistake to try to interpret these maps too closely because they speak to diverse experiences. But together they point to the continuing concentration of the welfare and service-dependent poor in Hamilton's inner city. Dependency and a lack of resources makes people feel powerless. In a couple of lower city neighbourhoods, voter turnout now hovers around 20 percent, while other indicators reveal low levels of social capital and a weaker sense of place (Kitchen, Williams and Simone, 2012; Mayo, 2011: 56; Williams and Kitchen, 2012). Many of these were once proud working-class neighbourhoods, but times have changed.

This array of specific features combines to form a broader pattern and stereotype. Thirty years ago, Martin Taylor (1987: 144-145) documented the generally low social status of Hamilton's inner city, a pattern that had already begun to deepen during the 1960s. To some extent this decline was more apparent than real. Some older homes were torn down and replaced by apartment buildings; families were replaced by singles and young couples who were not 'poor' but who, temporarily, had lower household incomes. This pattern persisted into the early 1970s, however, when a more substantial decline began. By then, a number of Canadian cities had begun to show some signs of incipient gentrification, but not Hamilton (Filion, 1987). It was one of five cities (out of 9 documented) in which not a single inner-city census tract gained in terms of socioeconomic status during the 1970s (Filion, 1987: 229). By the 2000s, together with Windsor, Ontario, Hamilton was the Canadian city that showed the most consistent income contrast between the inner city and the rest of the metro area (Martin Prosperity Institute, 2012).

If the broad pattern is clear, the mental maps of Hamiltonians are simpler still. No matter where they live, residents of postwar neighbourhoods draw a sharp line between the upper and lower city (Shanks, Coates and Harris, 2014). Indeed, for many of them the inner city is *terra incognita*, and they are happy to keep it that way. Suburban stereotypes, and indeed resentment, surfaced and were reinforced by the process of amalgamation, carried through by the Provincial government against strong suburban opposition in 2001 (Spicer, 2013). This brought previously-independent municipalities into an expanded City of Hamilton. Suburban residents resented their loss of identity and autonomy; they also opposed the resulting equalisation of the tax base which, in many cases, raised their taxes. More than a decade later the issue is still alive: in the civic election of 2010, the successful mayoral candidate vowed to reopen the issue with the provincial government. It was a futile gesture but an effective electoral ploy: the result of the vote confirmed the suburban nature of his base.

Over the years local media, notably the *Hamilton Spectator*, the local daily newspaper, have done what they could to counter the negative image of Hamilton's downtown and adjacent

neighbourhoods. In 2013, for example, they supported an extensive study of the Barton Street corridor. Extending eastwards from the north end of downtown, Barton is the artery of a series of neighbourhoods that have experienced long-term and cumulatively devastating decline. In a week-long series of articles, the *Spectator*'s reporter Steve Buist (2013) looked for signs of possible regeneration. His rich, but anecdotal evidence was met with some local skepticism (Robertson, 2013). More plausibly, the *Spectator*, and a recently-opened CBC online office, have trumpeted signs of revival in other neighbourhoods, and most importantly the downtown. But it has not shrunk from sponsoring studies that have documented the problems of the lower city, these being grouped under the umbrella of an award-winning 'Code Red' series (DeLuca, Buist and Johnstone, 2012; Hamilton Spectator, 2013).

Many aspects of Hamilton's lower city have been documented, then, and some cross-sectional studies have shown metro-wide variations. But broad secular trends have never been satisfactorily documented, and not in a way that enables comparisons to be made with other Canadian cities. This is possible, using standardised evidence drawn from the NCRP project. The challenge here was to make appropriate adjustments for changes in census tract boundaries and reported income categories, and to compensate for the inadequacy of the income data reported in the voluntary census of 2011, officially known as the National Household Survey.⁴ The resulting series of maps from 1970 through 2010 confirm the patterns indicated by previous research but set them in a firmer context and reveal a striking trend.

The income map of Hamilton in 1970 confirms the persistent importance of the escarpment and of east-west contrasts. With one exception, the low-income tracts define a compact area adjacent to the downtown core and extending north-eastwards towards the waterfront. Again with one exception, isolated high income neighbourhoods were to be found only to the west, above and below the Mountain, and more numerous in several parts of Burlington. Two of the three high income tracts within the city and lying just below the escarpment were long-standing areas of middle and upper-middle class settlement dating from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. They correspond approximately to the neighbourhoods of Durand and, immediately to the west, Kirkendall. Further west lies Westdale, developed mostly during the interwar period, which prospered when McMaster was established on its western edge. Outside of these high and low-income enclaves, most of the city was broadly middle class, as were its suburbs.

Since 1970, the trend has been towards a steady polarisation of neighbourhoods. This was even apparent during the 1970s when, as noted previously, the proportion of middle-class tracts actually increased slightly. By 1980, the first very low income tract had emerged, immediately adjacent to downtown, while the low-income cluster consolidated in an eastward direction along the Barton artery (Figure 6). Meanwhile, the western suburbs emerged as consistently high-income.

⁴ For details see Maaranen (2012).

This trend became entrenched during the 1980s and 1990s. By 2000, a substantial group of very low-income tracts had grown around the downtown core and to the north-east (Figure 7). Most of the lower city tracts were low-income, now extending eastwards into what was still the suburb of Stoney Creek. Below the Mountain, the notable holdouts were Kirkendall and, to a lesser extent, Westdale, where professors mingled (sometimes uncomfortably) with students. The western suburbs, and large parts of Burlington, had emerged as very high income.

The most novel development during the 1980s and 1990s was the emergence of large areas of lower-income settlement on the Mountain. Between 1980 and 2000 the number of low-income tracts in the upper city grew from one to eleven. By the latter year these were all clustered between the top edge of the escarpment, known locally as the Mountain brow, and the Lincoln Alexander Parkway ('the Linc'), a limited-access highway completed in 1997. Hamilton is unusual among North American cities in that its city limits have grown steadily to embrace the expanding edge of urban settlement, and so these were neighbourhoods that had always lain within the City. But in other respects these areas are Hamilton's version of what are elsewhere referred to as the inner, or older ring of, suburbs. In Toronto, as in most Canadian and U.S. cities, this is a zone that has recently experienced a relative decline, and in particular a significant increase in the incidence of poverty. In this regard, the experience of the older neighbourhoods on the Mountain has been very typical.

The pattern established by 2000 then stabilised (Figure 10). The west end of the city, including what had once been the western suburbs of Ancaster and Dundas, remained consistently affluent. During the 2000s, there was some slight reshuffling in terms of exactly which census tracts in the lower city could be counted as very low-income, as there was among the low-income tracts on the Mountain. Too much should not be made of this, because in some cases a change of a couple of percentage points nudged a tract above or below the relevant cutoff. More meaningful was the emergence of a very low-income tract, corresponding to the neighbourhood of Riverdale, towards the eastern fringe. Here, then, is a more marked example of inner-suburban decline.

Following these recent changes decade-by-decade does not do full justice to the cumulative shift. Because of data limitations, a summary analysis is only possible for the period since 1980. In Hamilton, however, it is only since then that the major socio-geographical changes have gathered momentum, and so this analysis effectively captures the key period of transformation. For analytical purposes, tracts were divided into three categories, and for comparative purposes using the same labels as those employed in the analysis of trends in Toronto. Tracts in "City #1" saw an increase in income of at least ten percent over this thirty-year period; in one case the increase was 47 percent. These neighbourhoods, then, were prospering. Tracts in "City #2" remained largely unchanged: incomes rose or fell by less than ten percent. At least in terms of income, these neighbourhoods were broadly stable. In "City #3", however, individual incomes declined by ten percent or more. Those designated "3-L" had fallen into a low, or very low-income category.

Those designated “3-MH” were still at least middling in 2010. All of these, but most obviously those in City#3 that were designated “3-L”, were under pressure.

It is a sign of the challenges that Hamilton has faced in recent years that almost half of its neighbourhoods, 47 percent to be precise, have been to some degree pressured. A minority of these, almost all of them on the fringes of the built-up area, have declined somewhat but are still (at least) middling in income (Figure 9). In some cases, their relative decline may simply be what happens when partially-developed areas of single-family homes are filled out with townhouses. But fully one third have not only declined but now also fall into the low or very low-income categories. The areas of decline are primarily concentrated in the inner city. Indeed, the great majority of lower-city neighbourhoods fall into this most troubled group. So, too, do a large proportion of those on the Mountain, and especially in its older districts. These are once middle-income suburbs whose relative position has deteriorated. Indeed, a more selective map that shows the changing status of only those areas that were once middle class, reveals that to the west and south, as well as to the east, these older suburbs are slipping (Figure 10).

What is most striking about the general map of change, however, is the persistence and indeed the strengthening of the established, east-west contrast. All of the tracts where incomes have increased are in Burlington or on the City’s west side, notably in Flamborough and Ancaster. The great majority of tracts lying north, south and especially east of downtown have been in decline. The mix of influences at work here are different from those that created the original contrast. Air pollution and visual blight do affect the east side more, but the west side has the growing advantage of being within much easier commuting distance of the expanding Greater Toronto Area (GTA), including the municipalities of Burlington, Oakville and Mississauga, which are strung out along the north shore of Lake Ontario in the direction of Toronto. Many of the new residents of Ancaster and Flamborough have been driven out of the GTA by high housing costs and use Highway 403 to drive back. Hints of a similar effect may be discerned in the far east end, around the intersection of the Queen Elizabeth Way (QEW), which links Toronto with Buffalo and Niagara Falls across the Skyway Bridge, and the Red Hill Expressway, which connects the QEW with ‘the Linc’ and points west (Figure 8). Here, too, GTA-bound commuters may find cheaper housing, and the completion of the Red Hill in 2007 has further improved the accessibility of this district. On a modest scale, it will probably continue to prosper.

Emerging patterns

In a general way, Hamiltonians have become familiar with many of the patterns and trends outlined above. Above all, for decades the growing problems of the inner city were widely rehearsed. The contrast between eastern and western sectors is also well-known, although the scale and broad consistency of recent shifts, documented here for the first time, may surprise many. A third trend has received less attention, although it is now well-developed.

Whether measured in terms of income, or dependence on transfer payments, a significant number of postwar neighbourhoods lying above the escarpment and eastwards in Stoney Creek have been in a slow but steady decline since the 1980s (Figures 5, 9, 10). Several influences have been at work. As is typical, families that moved into new, single-family homes in the early postwar decades have often aged in place, retired, and now live on reduced incomes. As in many Canadian suburbs, the tracts that were developed from the 1950s to the 1970s included a significant number of townhouses and medium-rise apartment buildings. Many of these have always housed younger people with modest incomes, and sometimes inadequate maintenance has made them progressively less attractive. Both types of accommodation have come under pressure from a variety of types of low-income persons. These include the rapidly-growing number of students enrolled at Mohawk College, located centrally in the older part of the Mountain. It also includes a growing number of immigrants and refugees. In classic fashion, back in 1971 immigrants coming to Hamilton settled first in neighbourhoods that were immediately adjacent to the downtown, and overwhelmingly in the lower city (Figure 11). Given that inner-city housing stock has remained relatively cheap, many still cluster close to the core, but a growing number settle first on the Mountain and the further east end (Figure 12). Today, the tract with the highest proportion of recent immigrants in Riverdale, lies in Stoney Creek. Echoing the title of a recent, influential survey of immigrant districts around the world, this neighbourhood has recently been described as Hamilton's "arrival city" (Mayo, Klassen and Bahkt, 2012: 37; c.f. Saunders, 2010).

Riverdale contains recently-arrived Somalis, Roma and Africans, quite a number of whom are refugees. Hamilton's refugee population is not substantial in absolute terms, amounting to only 2.7 percent of the population in 2011, but large in comparison most other Canadian cities. Their pattern of settlement may be regarded as an indicator of affordable housing and, potentially, of neighbourhood change. Unfortunately, although the 2011 National Household Survey did gather information on refugee status, a low response rate compelled Statistics Canada to suppress data for a number of inner-city tracts. Even so, the available evidence yields a pattern that is broadly indicative. Clusters of refugees are apparent near downtown, on the Mountain and in Stoney Creek, including Riverdale, and there is a broad swathe of neighbourhoods across the Mountain where the proportion of refugees was near or above the CMA average (Figure 13). Not surprisingly, these are also areas where a high proportion of residents have difficulty in finding decent and affordable housing. A composite index of housing disadvantage, which combines affordability, crowding and dwelling quality shows that the main problem neighbourhoods straddle the escarpment, rather than falling, as might have been expected, largely below it (Figure 14). Increasingly, the inner suburbs are experiencing a decline. Given that, in Hamilton even more than in many other cities, those districts are poorly serviced by transit, the focus of policy concern should be shifting.

This point is underlined by a fourth trend, which is at present only incipient, and not readily apparent from available, published data. The steady expansion of the GTA, and the

growing incorporation of Hamilton into its commuter shed, is now affecting the lower city as well as Ancaster and Flamborough. Parts of Hamilton below the Mountain are attracting those commuters who value older streetscapes and walkable commercial strips, such as the Locke Street area in the Kirkendall neighbourhood in the west end. The ongoing renovation and planned re-opening of a commuter rail station just north of downtown, with the promise of all-day service to downtown Toronto, is already fueling interest in the North End. Commuters are not the whole, or even the main story. The rapidly-growing success of Supercrawl, an arts and music festival held annually on James Street just north of downtown; the revival of James Street north itself; a growing construction boom for downtown condos and hotels; and anecdotal evidence of the migration of parts of Toronto's arts community to centrally-located neighbourhoods in Hamilton, indicate a revival of the downtown that is gathering momentum. A recent analysis of price trends by real estate district showed that four areas in Hamilton had experienced above-average price increases between 2009 and 2013 (Peesker, 2014). Three were predictable: Ancaster, Flamborough, and Hamilton West, including Kirkendall and Westdale. Bucking a long-term trend the fourth, Hamilton Centre, surely came as a surprise to many. Other reports have underlined the vitality of most parts of Hamilton's housing market, including the downtown (Craggs, 2013). Belatedly, then, Hamilton's inner city seems poised to join the trend of gentrification that has been reshaping many Canadian cities.

Policies and Prospects.

Municipalities are able to exert only a limited influence on the scale and patterning of urban growth, and that is as true of Hamilton as anywhere else. For many years, the City attempted to stem the decline of downtown, for example by offering tax breaks or holidays for businesses and land developers. In the face of industrial decline and steady suburban expansion – which, it must be said, the suburbs and a regional municipality aided and abetted – these efforts at first met with little success. They may have played a part in the recent revival of downtown investment, although it is likely that broader market trends have been the major determinants. Apart from the expansion of the GTA, already noted, these include a growing demand for older, walkable urban environments coupled with the fact that the long-term decline of many of Hamilton's older neighbourhoods has created what, to many potential gentrifiers, appears to be a very affordable stock of housing. One of the changes that has increased the attractiveness of these districts was the passage of provincial legislation in 2005 which designated a greenbelt that encompasses the entire GTHA. This, coupled with municipal policies that promote intensification, have redirected growth pressures into areas of existing urban settlement. Given that those pressures have been, and are likely to remain, substantial, reinvestment in the lower city is inevitable.

In this context, one of the City's recent initiatives may have a significant impact. In 2005, the City of Hamilton and the Hamilton Community Foundation convened an ongoing Roundtable For Poverty Reduction. The HCF initiated a related Tackling Poverty Together project which initially identified eight 'hubs' in disadvantaged neighbourhoods, seven in the lower city and one

on the Mountain. Often located in a school, these hubs offered “centralized community work”, in some ways akin to the sorts of settlement houses that were established in many North American cities in the early twentieth century (Eby, Kitchen and Williams, 2012; Hamilton Community Foundation, 2009). Then, in 2010, the publication of what turned out to be the *Hamilton Spectator*’s first ‘Code Red’ series attracted a good deal of local attention, prompting the City to appoint a ‘poverty czar’. Inspired by the example of the City of Toronto, a Neighbourhood Development Strategy was devised which targeted funds and staff resources to selected low-income neighbourhoods, for the most part coinciding with the HCF’s hubs (Eby, Kitchen and Williams, 2012; Mayo, Klassen and Bahkt, 2012; Johnson, 2012).⁵ The goals were to strengthen the neighbourhoods by bringing residents together and to provide them with better supports. There are some initial successes, but the longer-term effects are as yet unclear (Pecoskie, 2014).

It is much too soon to say what, if any, the effects of these initiatives will be. The experience of the federal Neighbourhood Improvement Program (NIP) of the 1970s indicates some of the possibilities. At a time when it was still widely assumed that some neighbourhoods were beyond redemption, NIP funds were targeted at areas which had experienced moderate decline but were still deemed to be salvageable. In cities like Toronto, the timing was fortuitous: many NIP areas prospered and in time gentrified. The neighbourhoods that Hamilton has recently targeted are typically more deteriorated than those that received NIP funds, being among the most challenged in the city. But times have changed: instead of being viewed as an unlikely event, the revitalisation of inner-city neighbourhoods is seen as almost inevitable, and almost all older neighbourhoods are thought to have potential. It is likely that several of the targeted neighbourhoods in Hamilton, notably those that are centrally located, will revive. In time – and of course the timeline is imponderable – so will others. Those furthest away from the centre, however, including some declining areas on the Mountain that are ill-served by transit, and that do not have the ready appeal of historic cachet and walkability, will face greater challenges.

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⁵ For background, and a description of these neighbourhoods, see:
<http://www.hamilton.ca/ProjectsInitiatives/NeighbourhoodDevelopment/>

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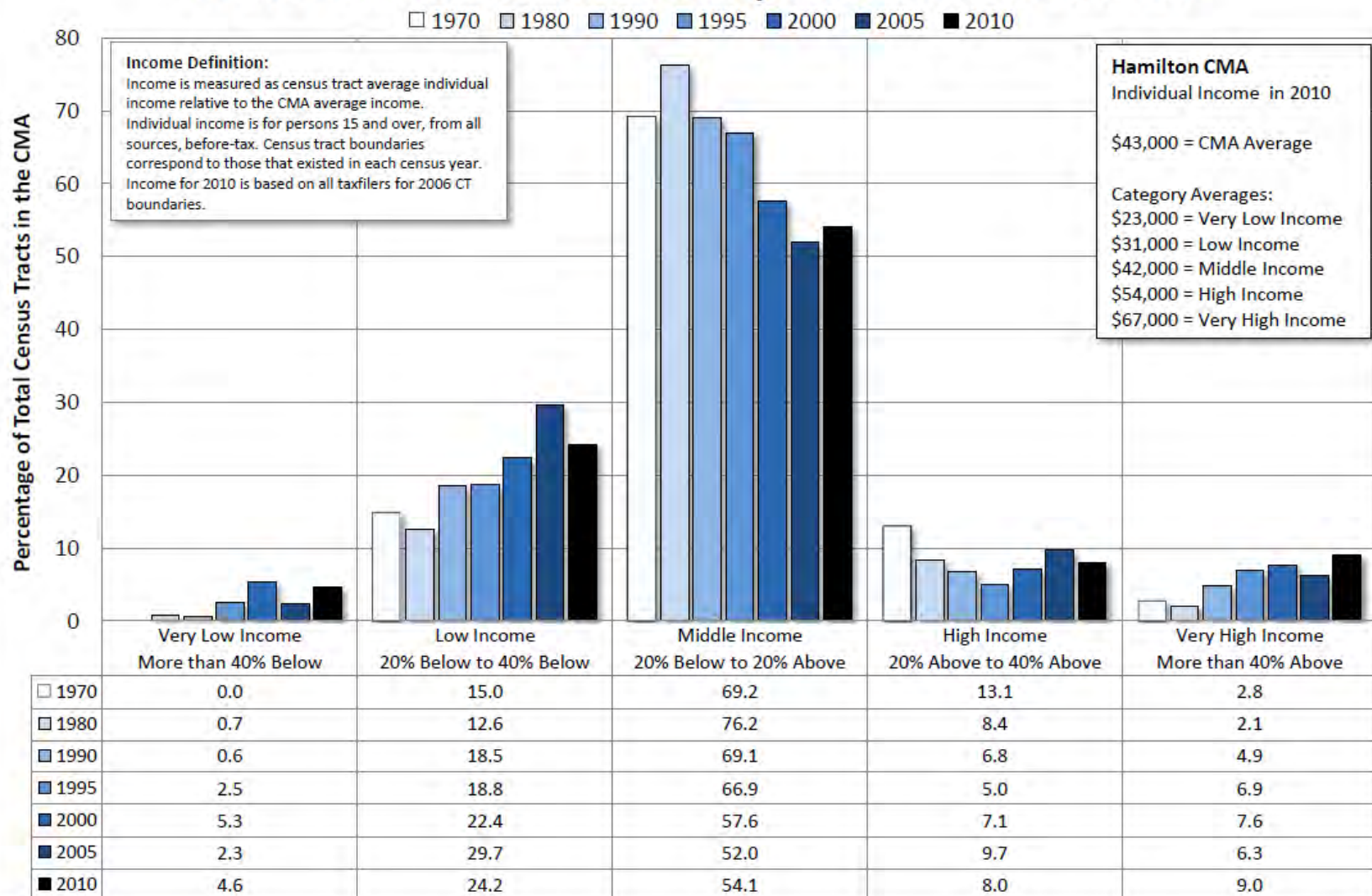
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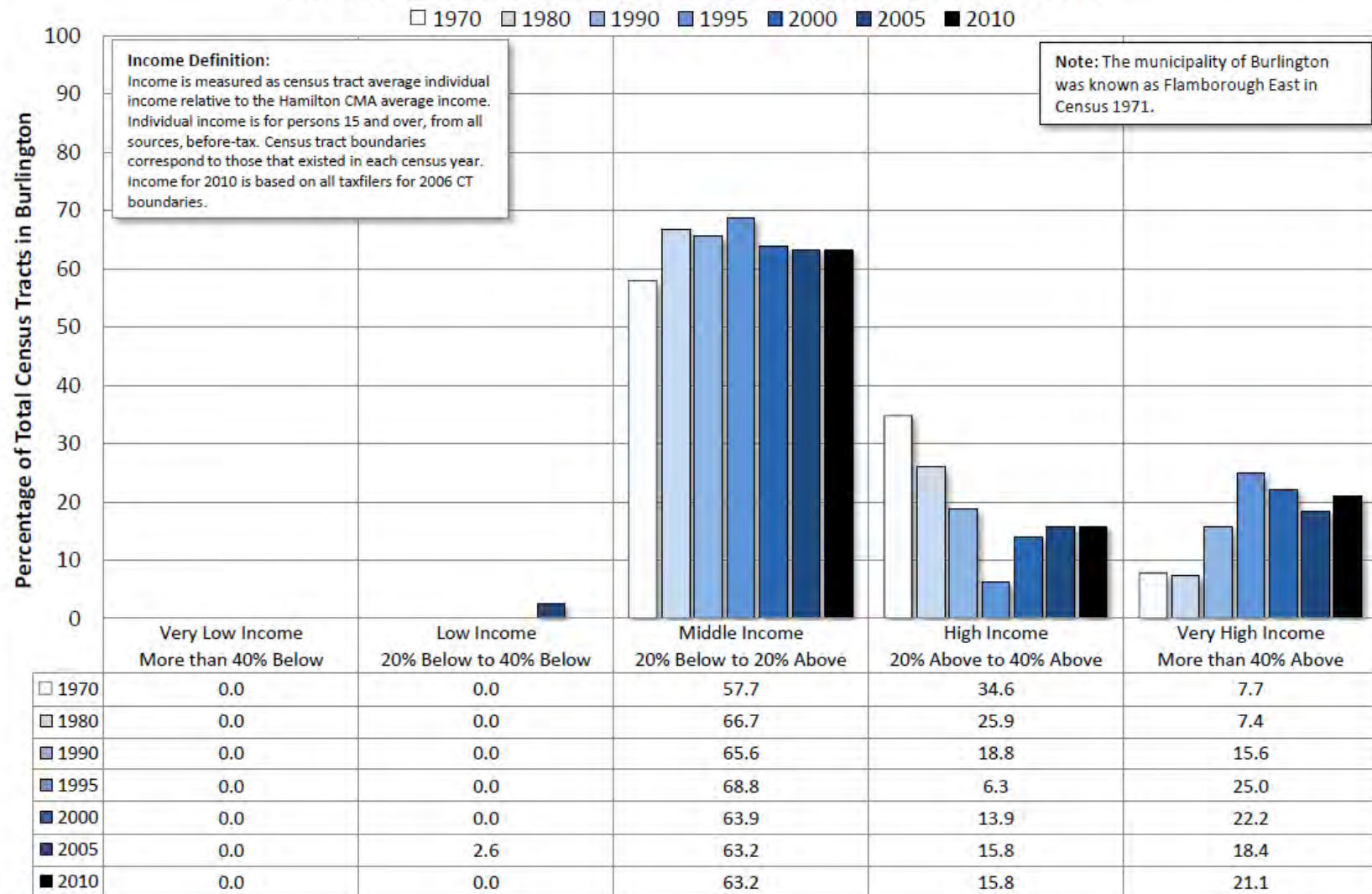
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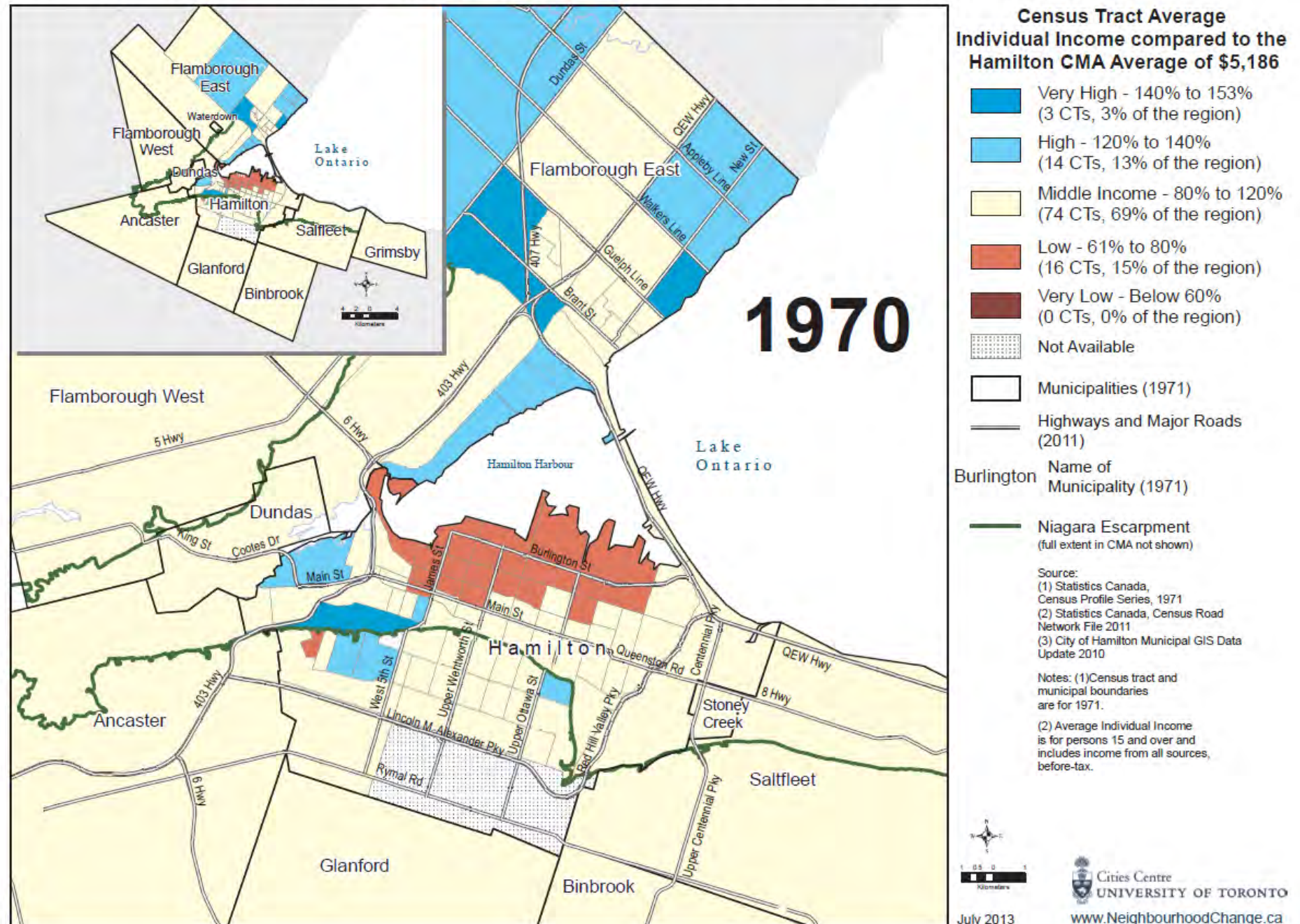
Change in Neighbourhood Income Distribution in the Hamilton Census Metropolitan Area 1970-2010



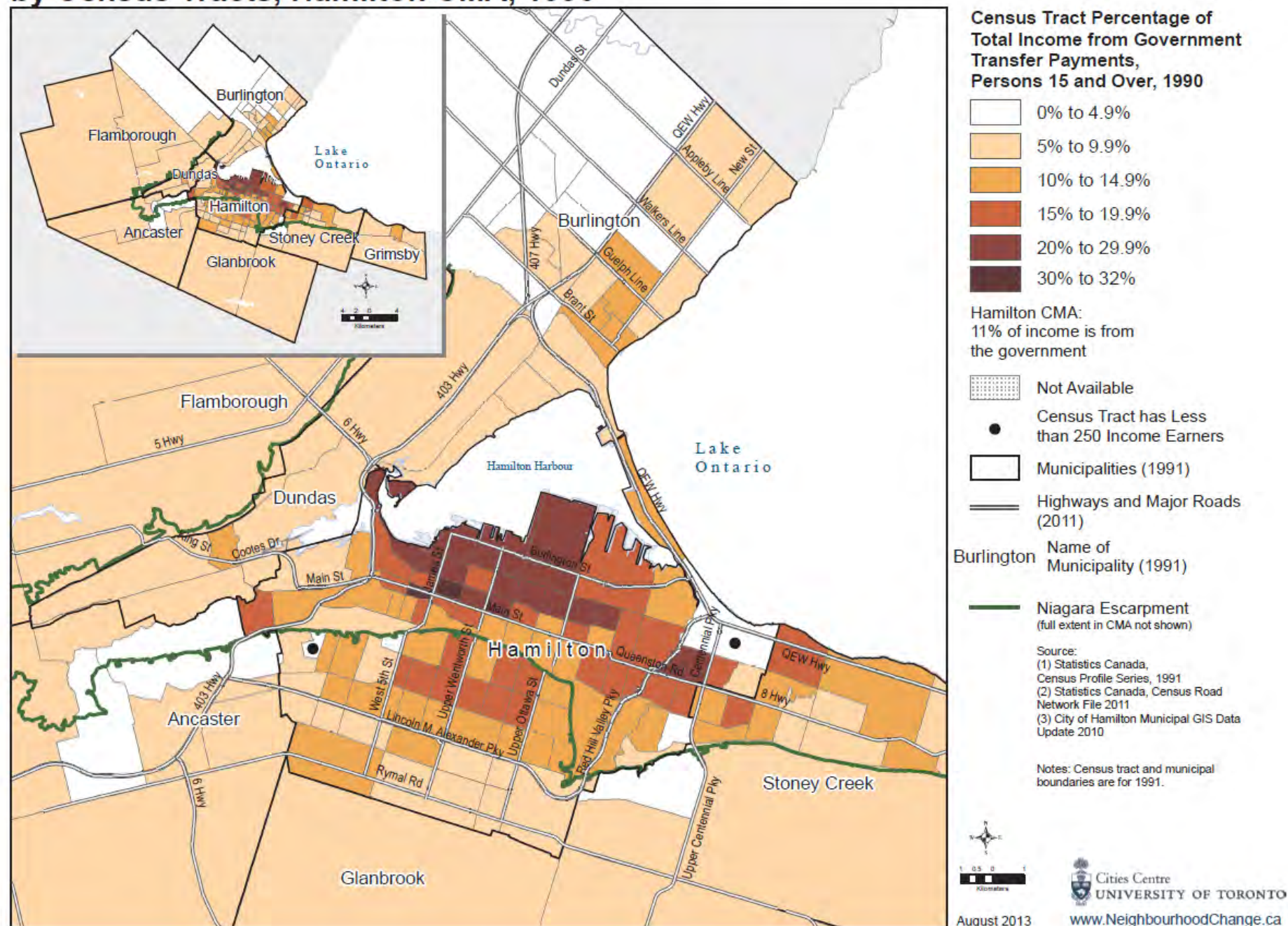
Change in Neighbourhood Income Distribution in the Municipality of Burlington 1970-2010



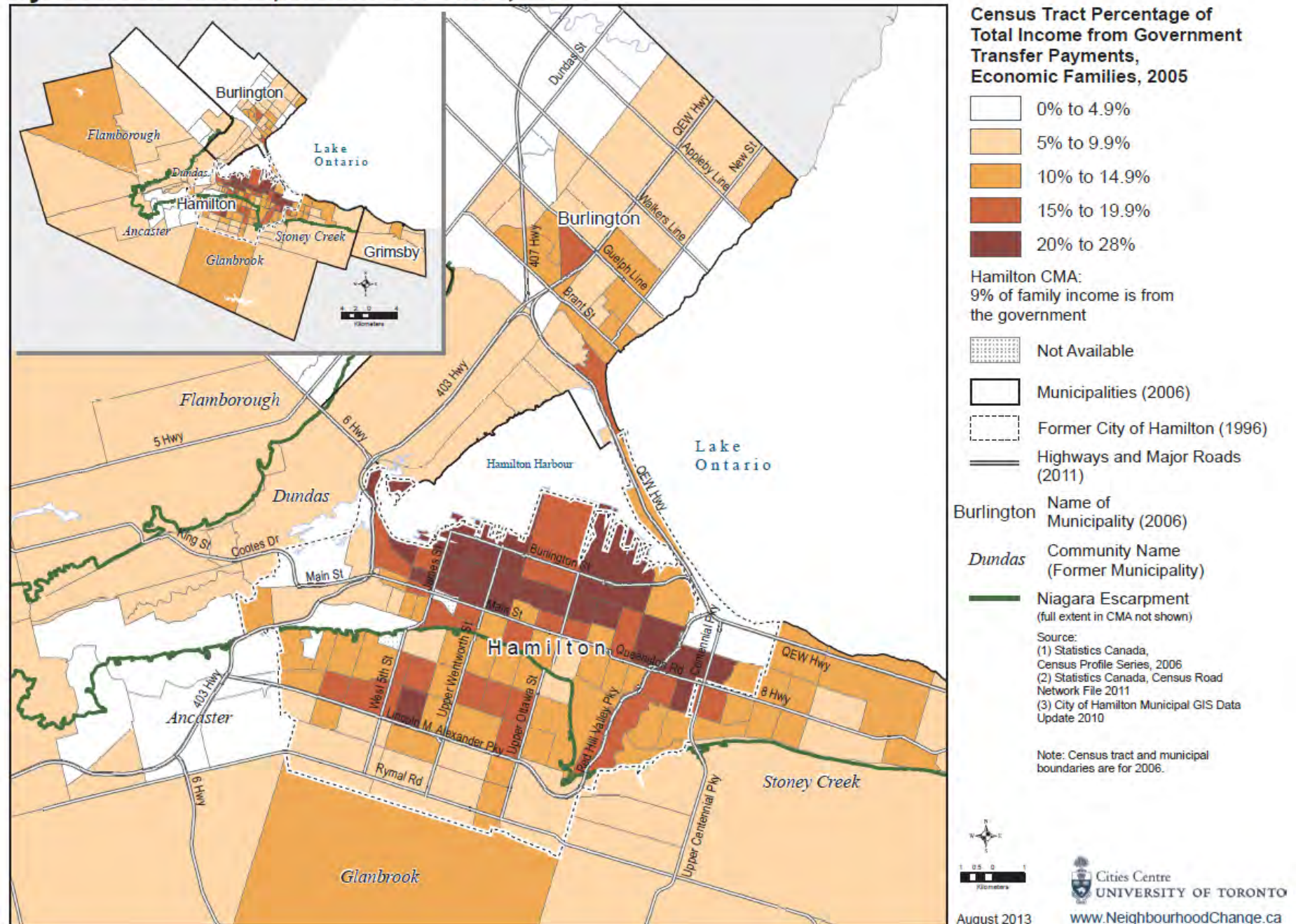
Average Individual Income, Hamilton Census Metropolitan Area, 1970



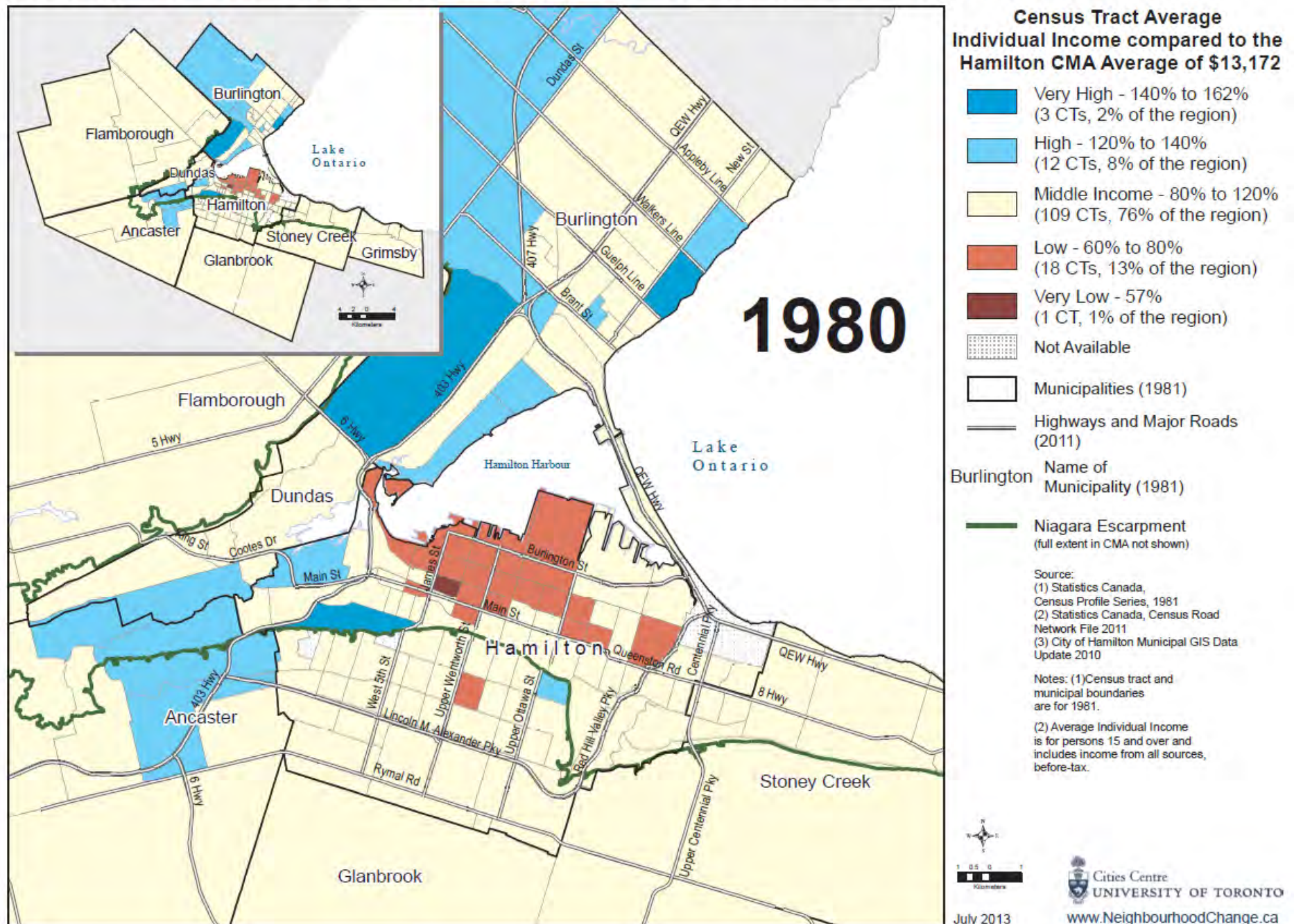
Percentage of Total Income from the Government, Persons 15 and Over by Census Tracts, Hamilton CMA, 1990



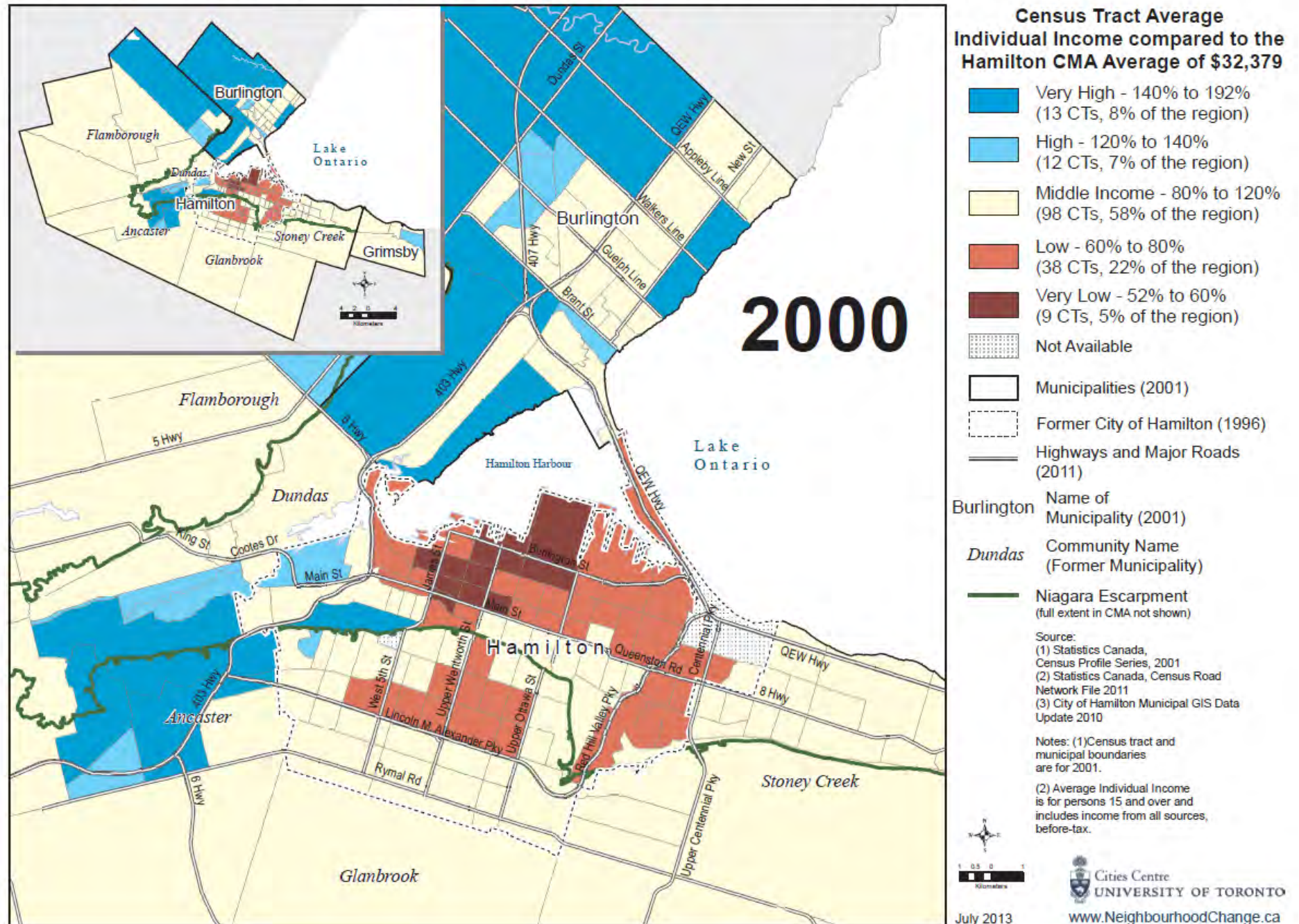
Percentage of Total Income from the Government, Economic Families by Census Tracts, Hamilton CMA, 2005



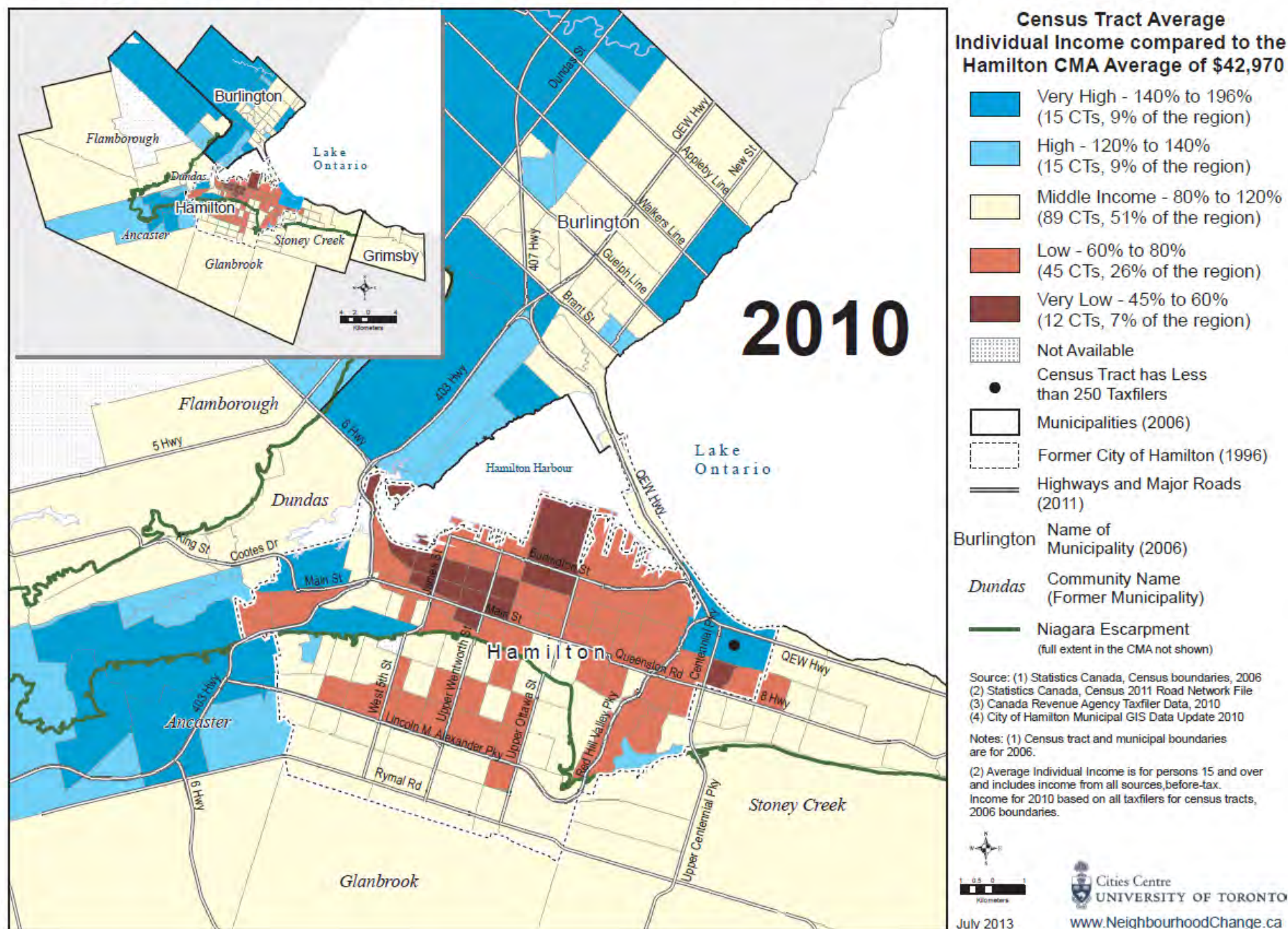
Average Individual Income, Hamilton Census Metropolitan Area, 1980

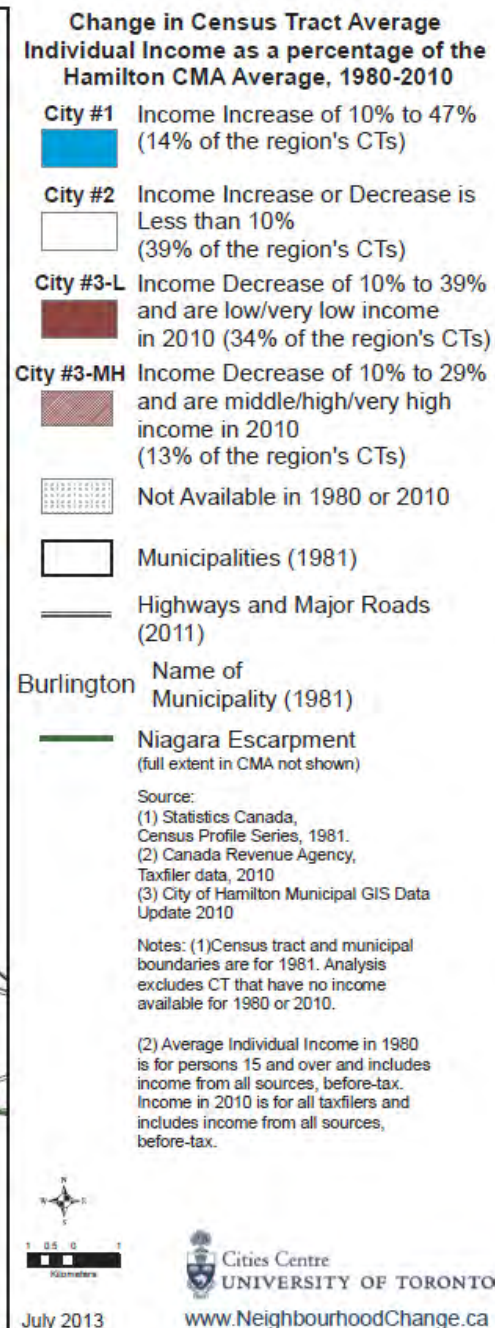


Average Individual Income, Hamilton Census Metropolitan Area, 2000

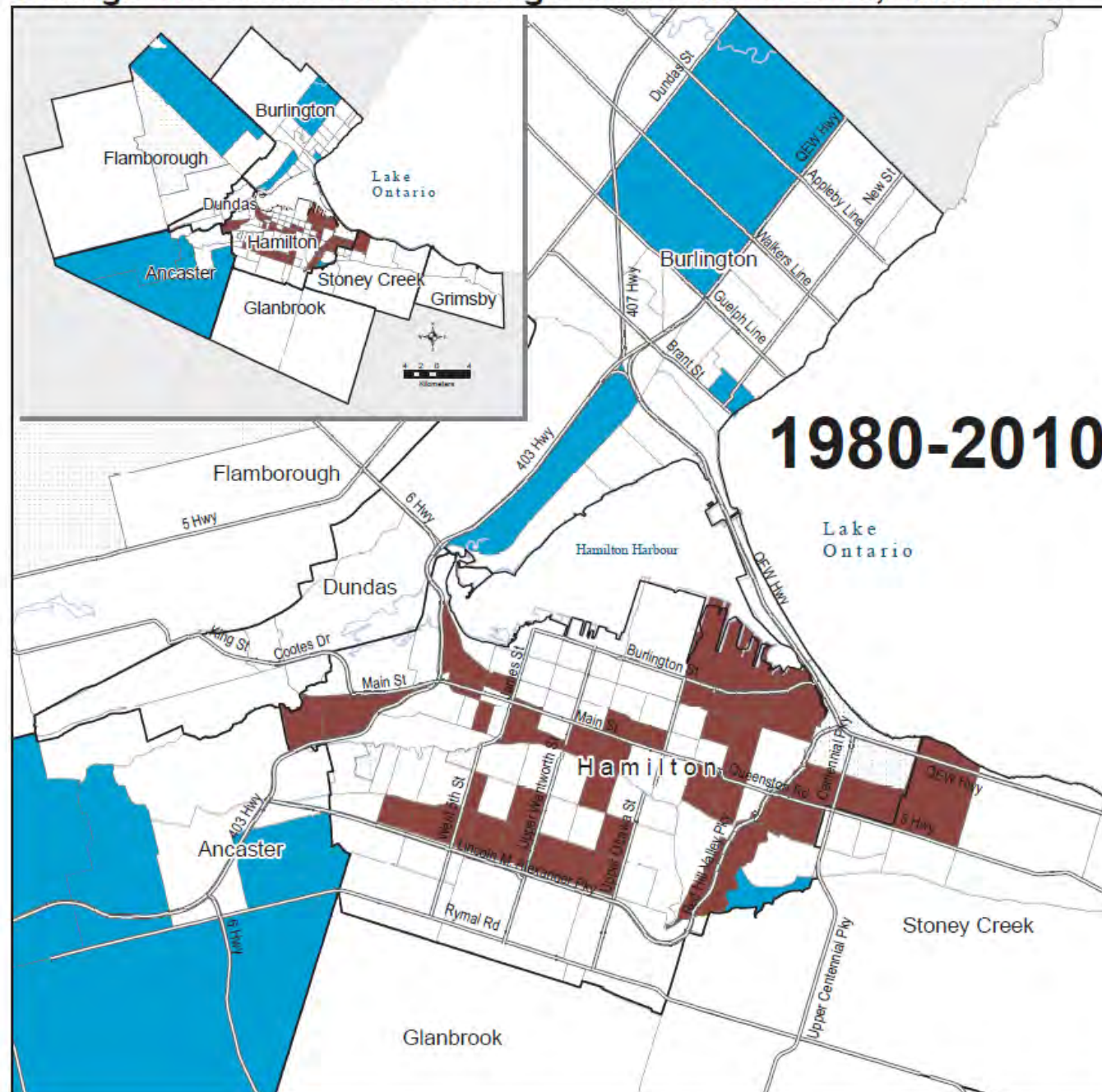


Average Individual Income, Hamilton Census Metropolitan Area, 2010





Formerly Middle Income Neighbourhoods in the Hamilton CMA, Change in Census Tract Average Individual Income, 1980-2010



Formerly Middle Income Census Tracts
43 of the 107 middle income census tracts in 1980 (20% above or below the Hamilton CMA average income) were no longer middle income in 2010

- 8 of these CTs went up in income (7% of the 1980 middle group)
- 35 of these CTs went down in income (33% of the 1980 middle group)
- Formerly Middle Income Status Not Applicable
- Not Available in 1980 or 2010
- Municipalities (1981)
- Highways and Major Roads (2011)

Burlington Name of Municipality (1981)

Source:
(1) Statistics Canada, Census Profile Series, 1981.
(2) Canada Revenue Agency, Taxfiler data, 2010

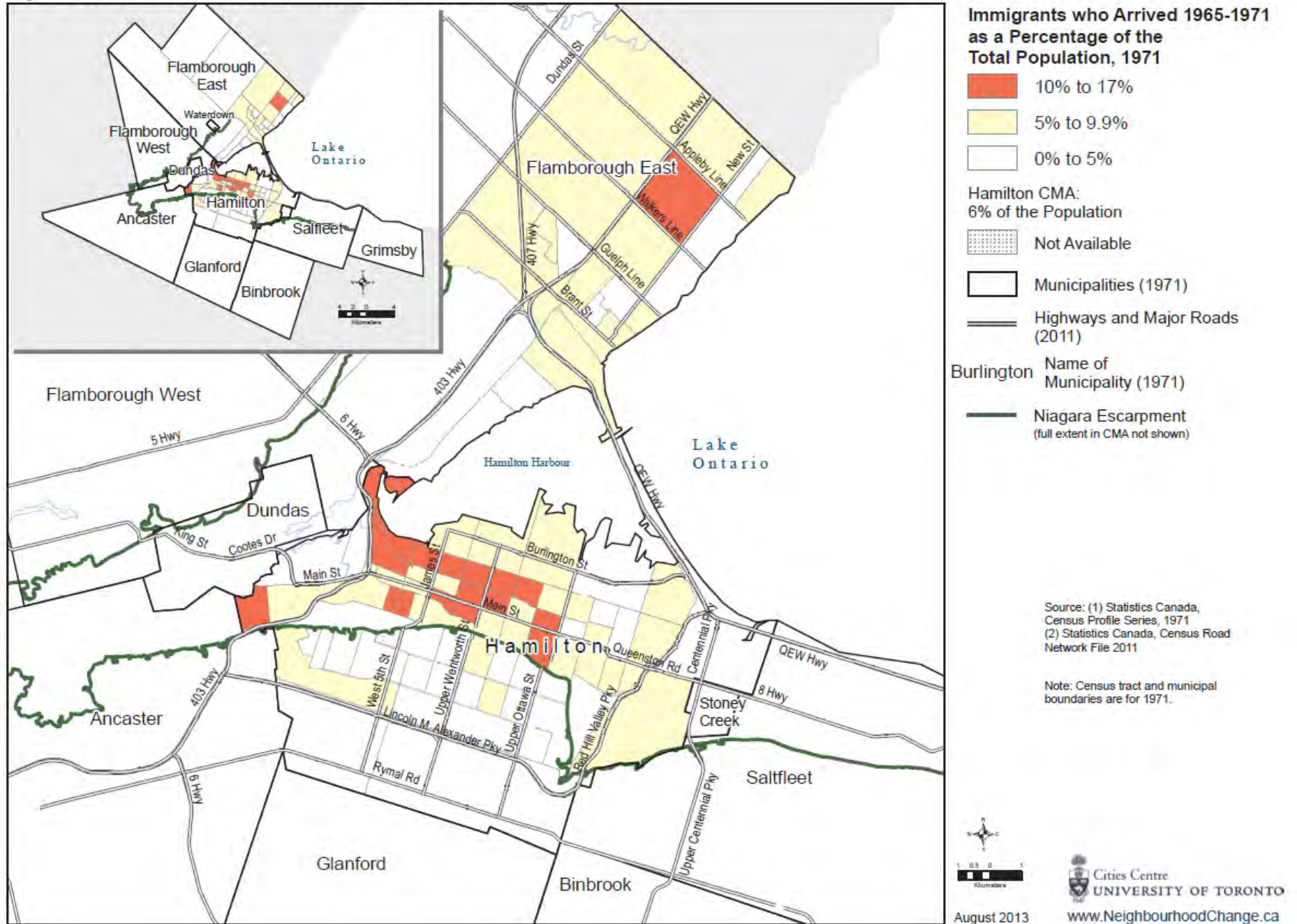
Notes: (1) Census tract and municipal boundaries are for 1981. Analysis excludes CT that have no income available for 1980 or 2010.

(2) Average Individual Income in 1980 is for persons 15 and over and includes income from all sources, before-tax. Income in 2010 is for all taxfilers and includes income from all sources, before-tax.

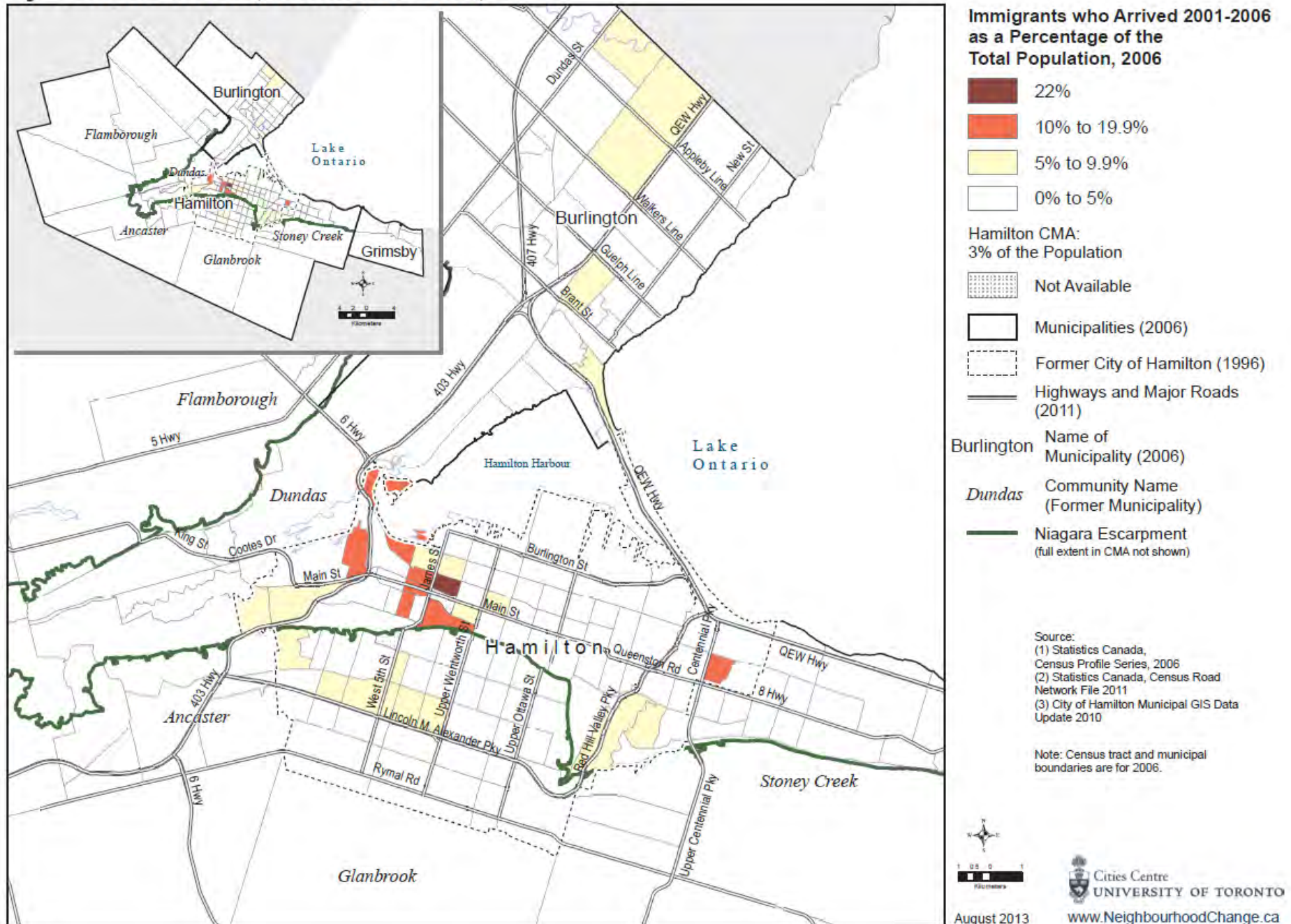


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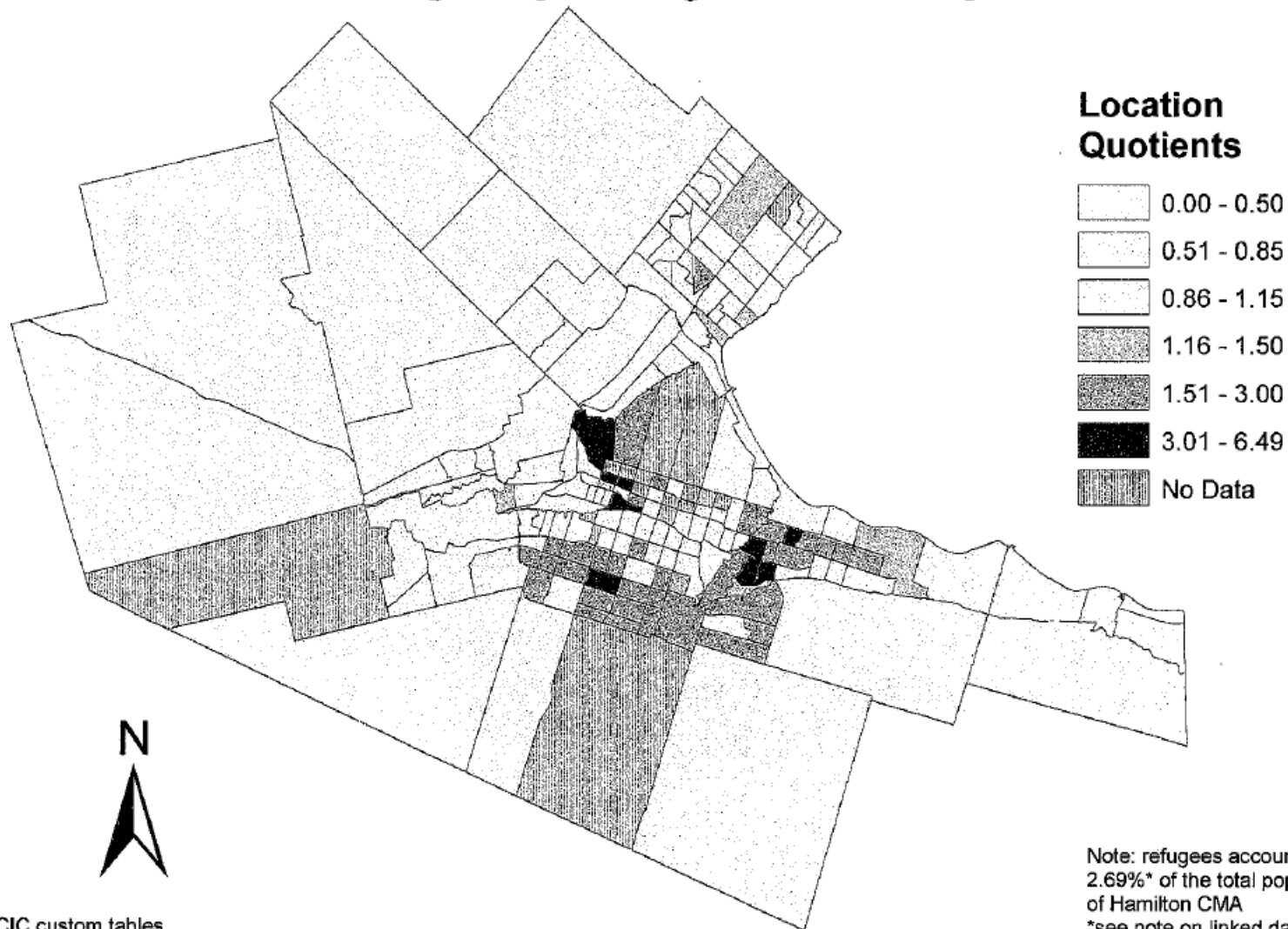
Recent Immigrant (1965-1971) Percentage of the Population by Census Tracts, Hamilton CMA, 1971



Recent Immigrant (2001-2006) Percentage of the Population by Census Tracts, Hamilton CMA, 2006



Hamilton CMA Refugees [Landing: 1980 - 2011]



Source: CIC custom tables,
2011 National Household Survey,
Immigration Landing File data base

0 3.75 7.5 15 22.5 30 Kilometers

Note: refugees account for
2.69%* of the total population
of Hamilton CMA
*see note on linked data

Map produced by Craig E. Jones

Rental Housing Disadvantage Index, Hamilton Census Metropolitan Area, 2006

