

# Universities and Sustainable Cities & Communities

## Responsibilities in the Neo-Liberal Era

**James R. Dunn, Ph.D.**

Associate Vice-President, Research (Acting), McMaster University

Senator William McMaster Chair in Urban Health Equity

Professor & Chair, Dept. of Health, Aging & Society, McMaster University

Director, McMaster Institute for Health Equity

[@UrbanHealthProf](#)

# Universities & Cities: History

- Universities: important civic purpose for cities
- Civic leaders in Hamilton enticed McMaster University to move from Toronto in 1930
- A university, by their logic, was critical to civic life and to elevate the city's reputation
- An academic institution was also needed to complement the industrial base of Hamilton
- Hamilton has had a strong 'town and gown' divide', however

# Universities & Cities: Transitions

- Successive waves of global change have transformed universities since 1930
- Depression, baby boom, de-industrialization, knowledge economy, neo-liberalism, etc...
- Gender equity, immigration, ethno-racial diversity, globalization, technology, etc..
- *Still require a focus on how universities can redress societal inequity in material well-being*

# A Fundamental Responsibility: Equity in Material Well-Being

“How can universities, in an era of growing disparities in social, economic and health outcomes, redress inequities in the material well-being of populations locally and globally in the neo-liberal era?”

# Sustainable Cities & Communities: University Responsibilities

Universities, through their operation, have opportunities and obligations as:

- Educational service providers
- Employers and economic drivers
- Landholders and property developers
- Environmental stewards
- Civic and community leaders

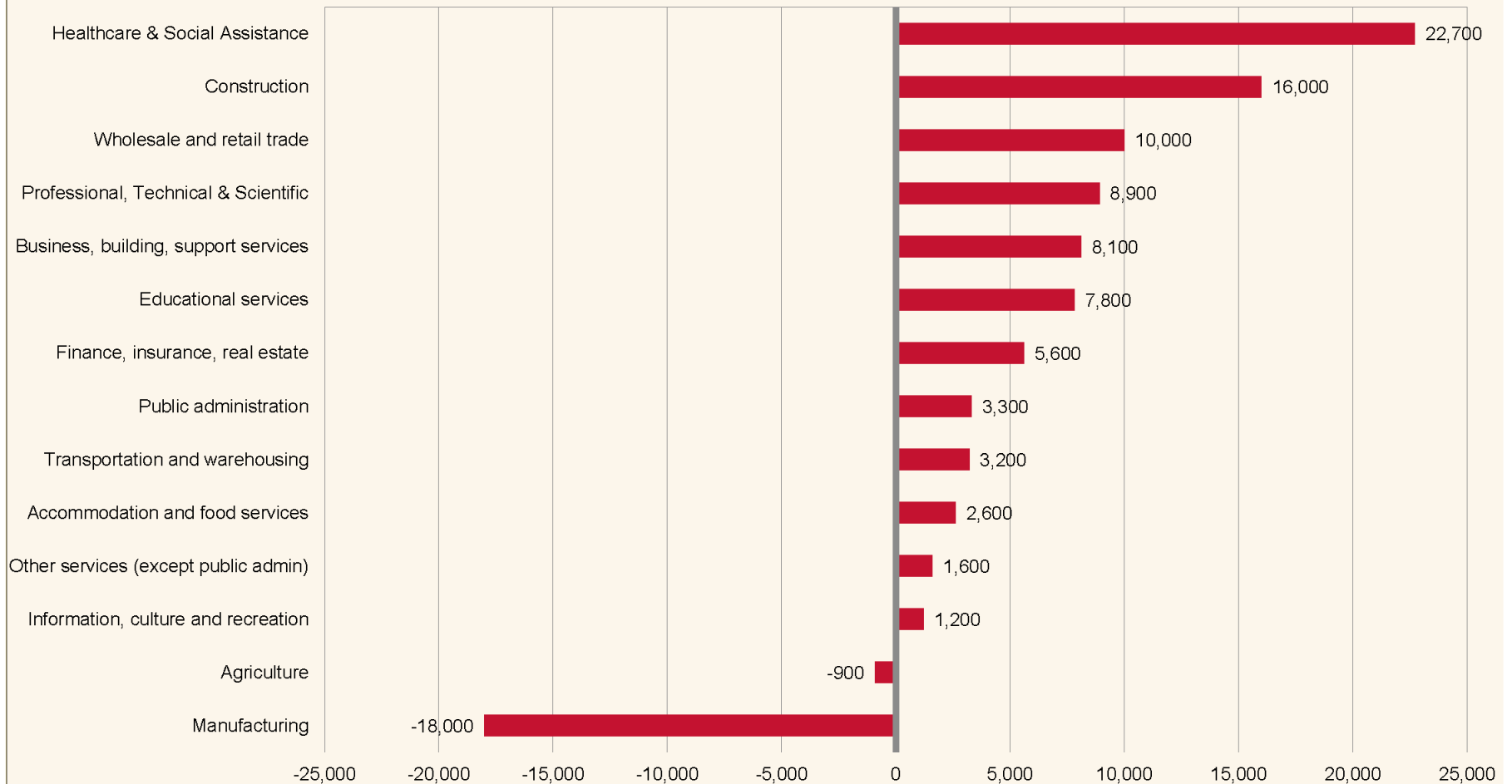
Actions in all of these areas have aggregate and differential equity impacts

# City Material Social Equity: The Case of McMaster & Hamilton

- Hamilton (pop. 536,000) has transitioned from industrial to service economy: 'meds & eds'

# Hamilton Employment Trends By Industrial Sector, 2002-2017

Employment Change by Industry, City of Hamilton, 2002-2017

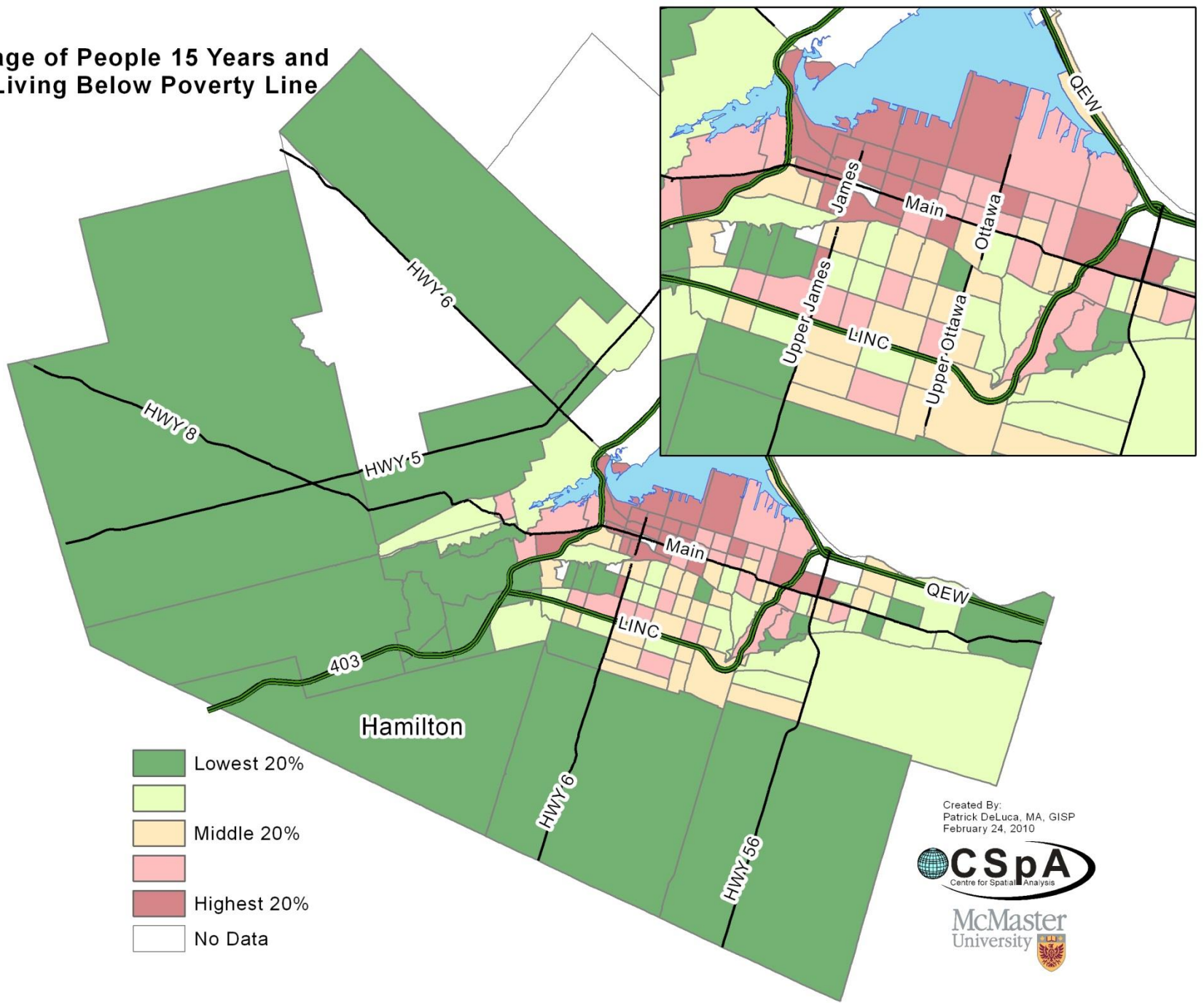


# City Material Social Equity: The Case of McMaster & Hamilton

- Hamilton (pop. 536,000) has transitioned from industrial to service economy: 'meds & eds'
- Common hallmarks of urban industrial-service economic transition seen in Hamilton
  - 'Hollowing out' of downtown core / suburbanization
  - Low-wage, service sector jobs
  - Low unemployment, but low labour force participation
  - Severe socio-economic disparities by geography
- Hamilton Spectator's 'Code Red' series documents disparities in health terms



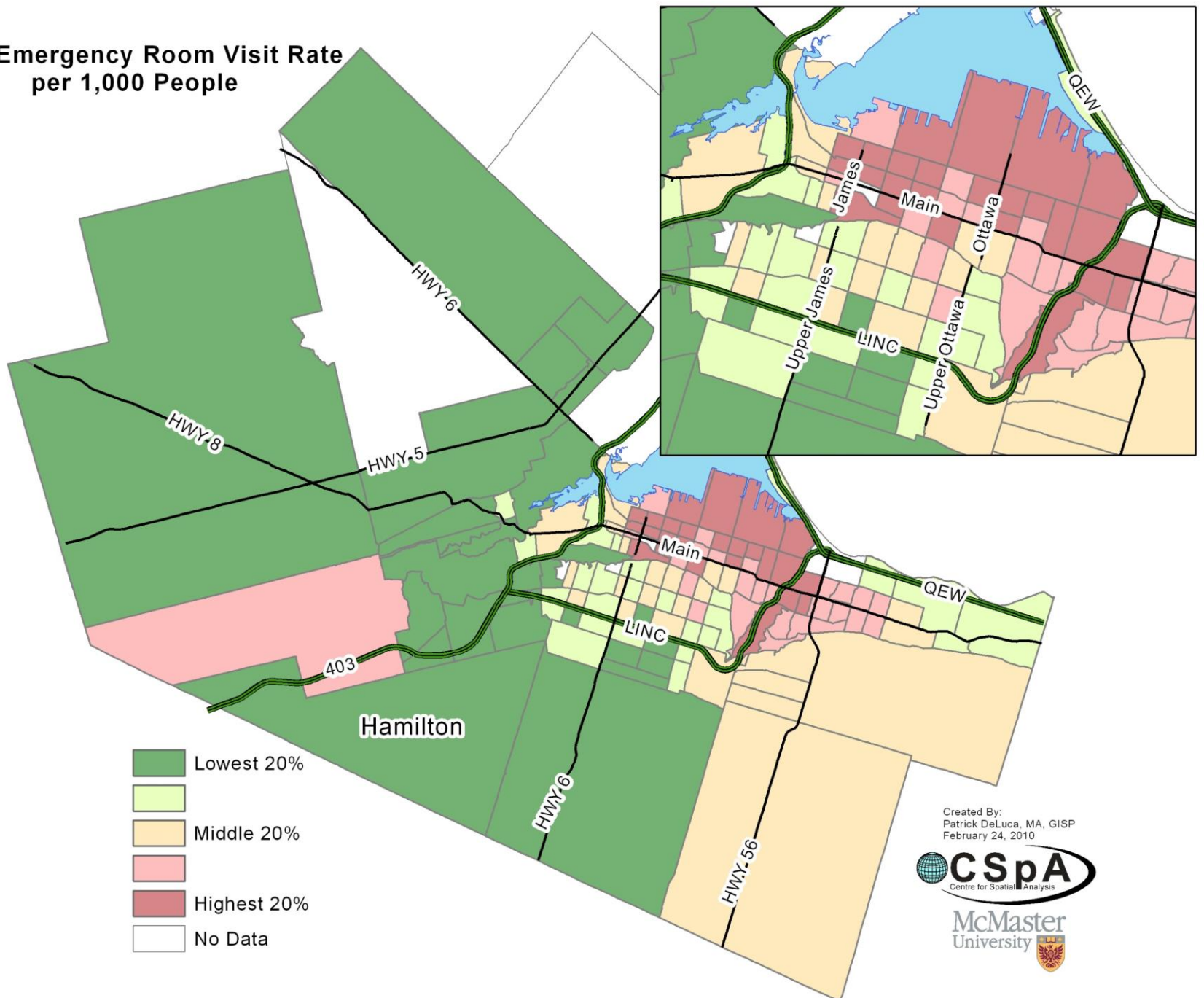
# Percentage of People 15 Years and Older Living Below Poverty Line



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# Total Emergency Room Visit Rate per 1,000 People

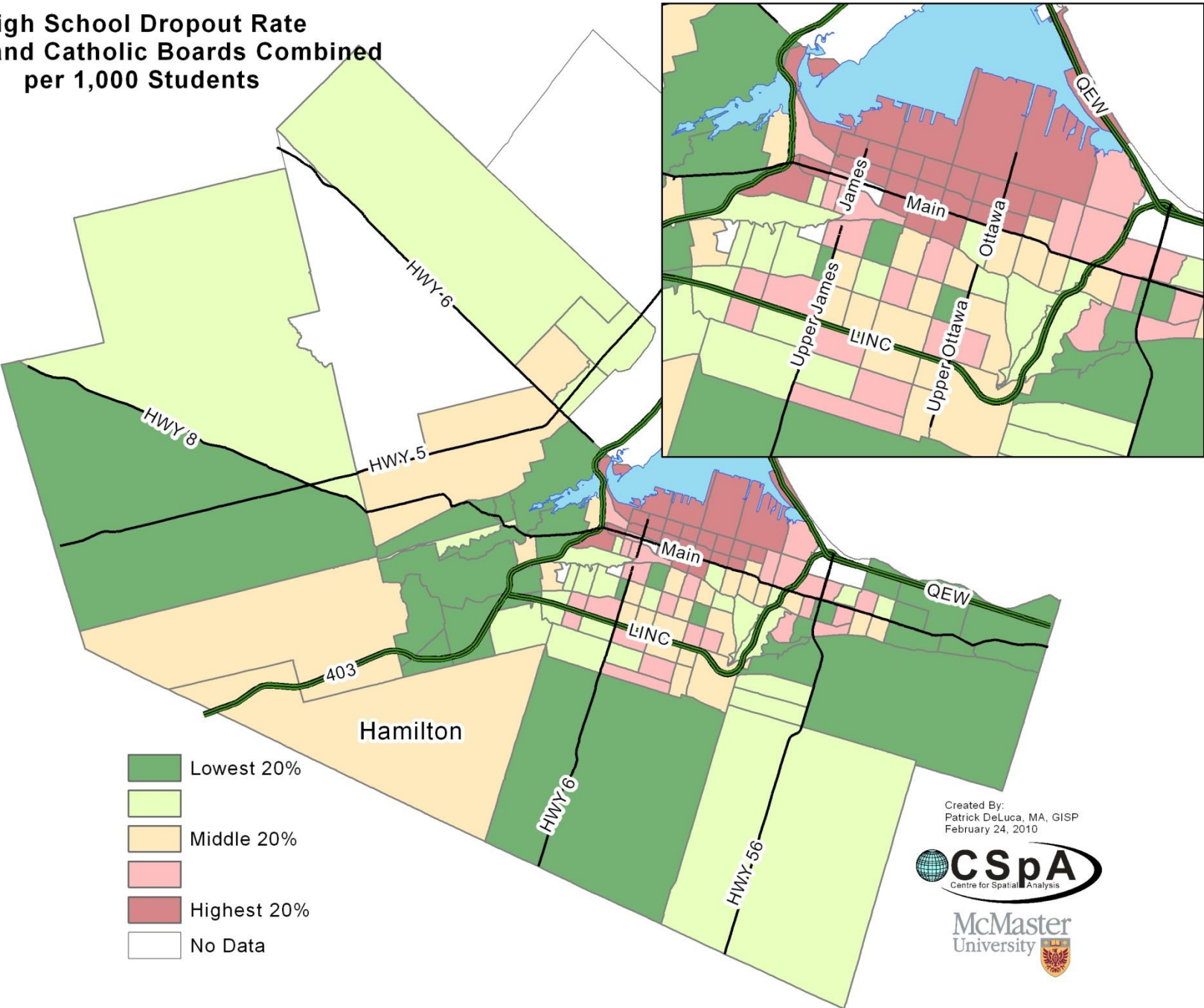


- Lowest 20%
- Middle 20%
- Middle 20%
- Highest 20%
- No Data

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# High School Dropout Rate Public and Catholic Boards Combined per 1,000 Students



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# Universities as Educational Service Providers

- Code Red patterns became major community imperative, leading to significant mobilization
- Key issue: distribution of material resources
  - What services / resources does an institution have that could improve the material well-being of marginalized populations?
- McMaster and other institutions trying to reduce barriers to post-secondary education
- Research can have an impact – risks though

# Universities as Employers & Economic Drivers

- Universities increasingly important to the economic base of their cities
  - Employment & workforce development
  - Business accelerator (commercialization activities)
  - Purchaser (procurement)
- Conditions of the city should govern priorities
  - in Hamilton, human capital development, labour force attachment, living wage, social procurement are foci
- Social procurement leverages purchasing to achieve public good – env't, social equity, etc.

# Universities as Landholders & Developers

- Land critical to universities, but urban settings a “special challenge” for universities
  - Externalities & income transfers via land markets
- Harvey (2019) distinguishes three ‘cities’:
  - The city of use value (non-rent-seeking property use)
  - The city of exchange value (property as revenue source)
  - The city of speculative gain (property as speculative investment)
- A ‘practical ethics’ of university urban development (Weber, et al. 2005):
  - Transparency and Reciprocity – operational principles
  - Efficiency, Legitimacy, Fairness – ethical norms

# David Braley Health Sciences Centre



# Universities as Environmental Stewards

- Energy efficiency
- Minimization of greenhouse gas emissions
  - Buildings
  - Transportation (workforce, students)
- Minimization of waste
- Responsible investment of funds
- Protection and enhancement of natural lands
- Recreational / educational use of natural lands
  - President's Advisory Committee on Natural Lands



# Universities as Civic and Community Leaders

- Universities occupy a unique place in the landscape of a city's civic leadership
- Academic freedom, research capacity and reputation for balanced analysis are assets
- Universities can and should take leadership in strategic action to address local city needs
  - But must go well beyond 'research transfer'
  - Leverage existing resources / services for public good
- Hamilton Anchor Institutions Leadership (HAIL)
  - One local example of such an initiative

# Key Urban Equity Challenges: University Responsibilities

- Development & human capital over lifecourse
- Labour force attachment & well-being
- Threats to housing affordability
- Vulnerable, high users of services
  - Severe & persistent mental illness, addictions
  - Older adults with frailties, functional limitations
- Supporting immigrants & refugees
- Environmental impacts of university ops

# Thank You

# Collaboratory for Research on Urban Neighbourhoods, Community Health & Housing



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