City of Hamilton
GENERAL ISSUES COMMITTEE
AGENDA

Meeting #:	GIC 26-005
Date:	April 15, 2026
Time:	9:30 a.m.
Location:	Council Chambers Hamilton City Hall 71 Main Street West

Angela McRae, Legislative Coordinator (905) 546-2424 ext. 5987

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1. CALL TO ORDER

2. CEREMONIAL ACTIVITIES

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

   (Added Items, if applicable, will be noted with *)

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

   5.1 GIC 26-005

   March 25, 2026

6. DELEGATIONS

   6.1 Delegations respecting Report PED24163(e), Final 10-Year Downtown Hamilton Revitalization Strategy (City Wide) (Item 8.6), from the following individuals:

   a. Susie Braithwaite, International Village BIA (In-Person)

   6.2 Andrew Selman, respecting a call on Council to provide a transparent accounting of the full financial cost of the 2024 cyberattack and its downstream costs and impacts (In-Person)

Members of the public can contact the Clerk's Office to acquire the documents considered at this meeting, in an alternate format.

6.3 Dr. Zobia Jawed, Clean Air Hamilton, to present the 2022 and 2023 Progress report for Clean Air Hamilton (Virtually)

6.4 Jennifer Bonner, The HUB, respecting unsheltered homelessness (In-Person)

6.5 Jovan Popovic, Break First Entertainment Inc., respecting the Route 905 Festival, a large-scale 2-day country music event, at the Ancaster Fairgrounds on July 24-25, 2026 (In-Person)

6.6 Paul Takala, Hamilton Public Library, respecting the Opioid Crisis and the Hamilton Public Library (In-Person)

6.7 Abby Zaitley, respecting Item 9.5, Supporting the Role of Trustees in Maintaining an Accountable and Transparent Education System (In-Person)

7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

7.1 HSC26029

User Fee Framework Project Update and Current State Analysis (City Wide)

7.2 HSC23076(b)

2025 Ending Chronic Homelessness Performance Update (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)

7.3 HUR26006

Labour Relations Activity Report and Analysis – 2021-2025 (City Wide)

7.4 PED26018(a)

Ensuring Pedestrian Access at Jackson Street West and MacNab Street South (Ward 2)

7.5 FCS26023

2026 Municipal Election and Municipal Use of Resources Policy (City Wide)

8. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

8.1 PED26078

A By-Law to Authorize the Imposition of a Special Charge under the Better Homes Hamilton Pilot Program – Batch 2 (City Wide)

8.2 LRTC 26-001

Light Rail Transit Sub-Committee Minutes - March 31, 2026

8.3 HSC26020

Housing Focused Community Liaison Group (City Wide)

8.4 PED26082

Biodiversity Action Plan Agreement and Progress (City Wide)

8.5 PBLC 26-001

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board Liaison Committee Minutes - April 2, 2026

8.6 PED24163(e)

Final 10-Year Downtown Hamilton Revitalization Strategy (City Wide)

9. MOTIONS

9.1 Strategic Workforce Capacity and Consultant Utilization Review

9.2 Review of Contract Work

9.3 Winter Response for People Living Unsheltered in the City of Hamilton

9.4 Municipal Price Index (City Wide)

9.5 Supporting the Role of Trustees in Maintaining an Accountable and Transparent Education System

9.6 Food Security

9.7 Flamborough Connects

9.8 HEART - Healthy Youth Network

9.9 Souharissen Trail

9.10 The Waterdown-East Flamborough Heritage Society – Flamborough Archives

9.11 Jurisdictional Scan on Emergency Shelter Access and Inter-Municipal Coordination

9.12 Breakfast on the Farm Sponsorship

10. NOTICES OF MOTION

11. PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

11.1 GIC 26-005 - March 25, 2026 - Closed Session Minutes

Pursuant to Section 9.3, Sub-Sections (b), (c), (e), and (f) of the City's Procedural By-law 21-021, as amended, and Section 239(2), Sub-sections (b), (c), (e), and (f) of the *Ontario Municipal Act, 2001*, as amended, as the subject matter pertains to personal matters about identifiable individuals, including City or local board employees; a proposed or pending acquisition or disposition of land for City or a local board purposes; litigation or potential litigation, including matters before administrative tribunals, affecting the city or a local board; and the receiving of advice that is subject to solicitor-client privilege, including communications necessary for that purpose.

12. ADJOURNMENT

GENERAL ISSUES COMMITTEE
MINUTES - GIC 26-004

9:30 a.m.
March 25, 2026
Council Chambers (Hybrid), City Hall, 2nd Floor
71 Main Street West, Hamilton, Ontario

Present: Mayor A. Horwath
Deputy Mayor J. Beattie (Chair)
Councillors C. Cassar, B. Clark, R. Cooper, M. Francis (Virtually), T. Hwang (Virtually), T. Jackson, C. Kroetsch, T. McMeekin, N. Nann, E. Pauls, M. Tadeson (Virtually), A. Wilson (Virtually) and M. Wilson

Absent: Councillor M. Spadafora - Personal

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1. CALL TO ORDER

Deputy Mayor J. Beattie called the meeting to order at 9:30 a.m.

2. CEREMONIAL ACTIVITIES

There were no ceremonial activities.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

(McMeekin/Pauls)
That the agenda for the March 25, 2026 General Issues Committee meeting, be approved, as presented.

CARRIED

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS

5.1 GIC 26-004
February 25, 2026

(Cooper/Kroetsch)
That the February 25, 2026 minutes of the General Issues Committee, be adopted, as presented.

CARRIED

Please refer to the April 1, 2026 Council minutes for the disposition of these matters.

6. DELEGATIONS

6.1 Dr. Zobia Jawed, Clean Air Hamilton, to present the 2022 and 2023 Progress report for Clean Air Hamilton (Virtually)

The delegate was not present when called upon.

6.2 Aynur Izzettin, Beef Farmers of Ontario, respecting how Ontario's beef farmers are advancing environmental sustainability through responsible land stewardship, innovation, and climate-smart practices (In-Person)

Aynur Izzettin and Jennifer Kyle, Beef Farmers of Ontario, addressed the Committee respecting how Ontario's beef farmers are advancing environmental sustainability through responsible land stewardship, innovation, and climate-smart practices.

6.3 Kelly Oucharek, respecting the City's emergency warming strategy (In-Person)

(i) Kelly Oucharek, addressed the Committee respecting the City's emergency warming strategy.

(ii) **(Pauls/Cooper)**
That the delegate be provided with an additional 2.5 minutes to complete their delegation.

Result: MOTION, CARRIED by a vote of 12 to 0, as follows:

Yes	-	Mayor Andrea Horwath	
Yes	-	Ward 1	Councillor Maureen Wilson
Yes	-	Ward 2	Councillor Cameron Kroetsch
Yes	-	Ward 3	Councillor Nrinder Nann
Yes	-	Ward 4	Councillor Tammy Hwang
Absent	-	Ward 5	Councillor Matt Francis
Absent	-	Ward 6	Councillor Tom Jackson
Yes	-	Ward 7	Councillor Esther Pauls
Yes	-	Ward 8	Councillor Rob Cooper
Yes	-	Ward 9	Councillor Brad Clark
Yes	-	Ward 10	Councillor Jeff Beattie
Absent	-	Ward 11	Councillor Mark Tadeson
Yes	-	Ward 12	Councillor Craig Cassar
Yes	-	Ward 13	Councillor Alex Wilson
Absent	-	Ward 14	Councillor Mike Spadafora
Yes	-	Ward 15	Councillor Ted McMeekin

Please refer to the April 1, 2026 Council minutes for the disposition of these matters.

(i) (Kroetsch/Pauls)
That the following delegations, be received:

(1) Aynur Izzettin and Jennifer Kyle, Beef Farmers of Ontario, respecting how Ontario's beef farmers are advancing environmental sustainability through responsible land stewardship, innovation, and climate-smart practices (Item 6.2).

(2) Kelly Oucharek, respecting the City's emergency warming strategy (Item 6.3)

CARRIED

6.4 Lori-Anne Gagne, Victoria Park Community Homes respecting Report HSC26016, Removal of Certain Consents for Part VII.1 Housing Providers (City Wide) (Item 8.8) (In-Person)

(i) Lori-Anne Gagne, Victoria Park Community Homes, addressed the Committee respecting Report HSC26016, Removal of Certain Consents for Part VII.1 Housing Providers (City Wide) (Item 8.8).

(ii) (Horwath/M. Wilson)
That the delegation from Lori-Anne Gagne, Victoria Park Community Homes respecting Report HSC26016, Removal of Certain Consents for Part VII.1 Housing Providers (City Wide) (Item 8.8), be received.

CARRIED

7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

7.1 Climate Change Advisory Committee Annual Update

(i) Beatrice Ekwa Ekoko, Project Manager, Climate Change Initiatives introduced Ian Borsuk and Gaby Kalapos, Co-Chairs of the Climate Change Advisory Committee who provided Committee with a presentation respecting the Climate Change Advisory Committee Annual Update.

(ii) (Cassar/Kroetsch)
That the Climate Change Advisory Committee Annual Update, be received.

CARRIED

(i) (A. Wilson/Pauls)
That the following Items for Information, be received:

7.2 CCAC 25-010
Climate Change Advisory Committee Minutes - December 9, 2026

Please refer to the April 1, 2026 Council minutes for the disposition of these matters.

7.3 TARC 26-001
Transit Area Rating Review Sub-Committee - No Quorum Minutes - March 2, 2026

CARRIED

7.4 HSC26022
Health Impacts of Exposure to Elevated Total Reduced Sulphur Compounds (Ward 9)

(Clark/Beattie)
That Report HSC26022, respecting Health Impacts of Exposure to Elevated Total Reduced Sulphur Compounds (Ward 9), be received.

CARRIED

7.5 PED26035
Draft Waterfall Destination Master Plan (City Wide)

(i) Lisa Abbott, Director, Tourism and Culture introduced Tamara McCarthy and Drew Wensley, from MT Planners who provided Committee with a presentation respecting Report PED26035, Draft Waterfall Destination Master Plan (City Wide).

(ii) (A. Wilson/Cooper)
That Report PED26035, Draft Waterfall Destination Master Plan (City Wide), and the accompanying presentation, be received.

CARRIED

7.6 FCS26014
2025 Assessment Growth (City Wide)

(Clark/Jackson)
That Report FCS26014, respecting 2025 Assessment Growth (City Wide), be received.

CARRIED

7.7 HSC26023
Emergency Warming Centre Operation at Bennetto Community Centre (City Wide)

(i) (Kroetsch/Pauls)
That Report HSC26023, respecting Emergency Warming Centre Operation at Bennetto Community Centre (City Wide), be received.

(ii) Deputy Mayor J. Beattie recessed the meeting at 12:54 p.m. until 1:24 p.m.

The General Issues Committee reconvened at 1:24 p.m.

Please refer to the April 1, 2026 Council minutes for the disposition of these matters.

(iii) That Report HSC26023, respecting Emergency Warming Centre Operation at Bennetto Community Centre (City Wide), be received.

CARRIED

7.7(a) Correspondence respecting Report HSC26023, Emergency Warming Centre Operation at Bennetto Community Centre (City Wide) (Item 7.7)

(Nann/Kroetsch)
That the following correspondence respecting Report HSC26023, Emergency Warming Centre Operation at Bennetto Community Centre (City Wide) (Item 7.7), be received:

7.7(a)(i) Chris Merkus

CARRIED

8. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

8.1 Business Improvement Areas 2026 Budget and Schedule of Payments

(Nann/Kroetsch)
That Items 8.1(a) through 8.1(c), 8.3, 8.5, 8.6, 8.9 and 8.10 be approved, as follows:

(i) PED26023
Westdale Village Business Improvement Area 2026 Budget and Schedule of Payments (Ward 1) (Item 8.1(a))

That Report PED26023, dated March 25, 2026, respecting Westdale Village Business Improvement Area 2026 Budget and Schedule of Payments (Ward 1), be received and the following recommendations be approved:

(a) That the 2026 proposed budget of the Westdale Village Business Improvement Area, attached as Appendix A to Report PED25258, in the amount of $179,603 BE APPROVED;

(b) That the levy portion of the 2026 proposed budget of the Westdale Village Business Improvement Area, in the amount of $179,603, BE APPROVED;

(c) That the General Manager of Finance and Corporate Services BE AUTHORIZED and DIRECTED to prepare the requisite By-law pursuant to Section 208, the Municipal Act, 2001 (the “Act”), to authorize the levy on qualifying properties within the Westdale Business Improvement Area, as referenced in Recommendation of Report PED25258; and

(d) That the following schedule of payments to the Westdale Village Business Improvement Area, representing the levy amount for 2026 BE APPROVED:

(1) April: $89,801.50;
(2) June: $89,801.50.

(ii) PED26040
Locke Street Business Improvement Area 2026 Budget and Schedule of Payments (Ward 1) (Item 8.1(b))

That Report PED26040, dated March 25, 2026, respecting Locke Street Business Improvement Area 2026 Budget and Schedule of Payments (Ward 1), be received and the following recommendations be approved:

(a) That the 2026 proposed budget of the Locke Street Business Improvement Area, attached as Appendix A to Report PED26040, in the amount of $113,283 BE APPROVED;

(b) That the levy portion of the 2026 proposed budget of the Locke Street Business Improvement Area, in the amount of $51,783, BE APPROVED;

(c) That the General Manager of Finance and Corporate Services be hereby authorized and directed to prepare the requisite By-law pursuant to Section 208, the Municipal Act, 2001 (the Act), to authorize the levy on qualifying properties within the Locke Street Business Improvement Area, as referenced in Recommendation of Report PED26040; and

(d) That the following schedule of payments to the Locke Street Business Improvement Area, representing the levy amount for 2026 BE APPROVED:

(1) April: $25,891.50;
(2) June: $25,891.50.

(iii) PED26064
Dundas Business Improvement Area 2026 Budget and Schedule of Payments (Ward 13) (Item 8.1(c))

That Report PED26064, dated March 25, 2026, respecting Dundas Business Improvement Area 2026 Budget and Schedule of Payments (Ward 13), be received and the following recommendations be approved:

(a) That the 2026 proposed budget of the Dundas Business Improvement Area, attached as Appendix “A” to Report PED26064, in the amount of $250,600 BE APPROVED;

Please refer to the April 1, 2026 Council minutes for the disposition of these matters.

(b) That the levy portion of the 2026 proposed budget of the Dundas Business Improvement Area, in the amount of $189,000, BE APPROVED;

(c) That the General Manager of Finance and Corporate Services be hereby authorized and directed to prepare the requisite By-law pursuant to Section 208, the Municipal Act, 2001 (the Act), to authorize the levy on qualifying properties within the Dundas Business Improvement Area, as referenced in Recommendation of Report PED26064; and

(d) That the following schedule of payments to the Dundas Business Improvement Area, representing the levy amount for 2026 BE APPROVED:

(1) April: $94,500;
(2) June: $94,500.

(iv) DSCC 26-001
Downtown Sub-Committee Minutes - March 2, 2026 (Item 8.3)

That the Downtown Sub-Committee Minutes DSCC 26-001 - March 2, 2026 be received and the recommendations contained therein, be approved.

(v) SBPC 26-001
School Board Properties Sub-Committee Minutes - March 9, 2026 (Item 8.5)

That the School Board Properties Sub-Committee Minutes SBPC 26-001 - March 9, 2026 be received and the recommendations contained therein, be approved.

(vi) BIAC 26-003
Business Improvement Area Sub-Committee Minutes - March 10, 2026 (Item 8.6)

That the Business Improvement Area Sub-Committee Minutes BIAC 26-003 - March 10, 2026 be received and the recommendations contained therein, be approved.

(vii) EHSC 26-001
Expanding Housing and Support Services for Women, Non-Binary and Transgender Community Sub-Committee Minutes - March 12, 2026 (Item 8.9)

That the Expanding Housing and Support Services for Women, Non-Binary and Transgender Community Sub-Committee Minutes EHSC 26-001 - March 12, 2026 be received and the recommendations contained therein, be approved.

(viii) ACPD 26-003
Accessibility Committee for Persons with Disabilities Minutes - March 10, 2026 (Item 8.10)

That the Accessibility Committee for Persons with Disabilities Minutes ACPD 26-003 - March 10, 2026 be received and the recommendations contained therein, be approved.

Result: MOTION, CARRIED by a vote of 12 to 0, as follows:

Absent	-	Mayor Andrea Horwath	
Yes	-	Ward 1	Councillor Maureen Wilson
Yes	-	Ward 2	Councillor Cameron Kroetsch
Yes	-	Ward 3	Councillor Nrinder Nann
Yes	-	Ward 4	Councillor Tammy Hwang
Absent	-	Ward 5	Councillor Matt Francis
Yes	-	Ward 6	Councillor Tom Jackson
Yes	-	Ward 7	Councillor Esther Pauls
Absent	-	Ward 8	Councillor Rob Cooper
Yes	-	Ward 9	Councillor Brad Clark
Yes	-	Ward 10	Councillor Jeff Beattie
Yes	-	Ward 11	Councillor Mark Tadeson
Yes	-	Ward 12	Councillor Craig Cassar
Yes	-	Ward 13	Councillor Alex Wilson
Absent	-	Ward 14	Councillor Mike Spadafora
Yes	-	Ward 15	Councillor Ted McMeekin

8.2 PED20139(a)
Environmental Remediation and Site Enhancement Redevelopment Grant Application (ERG-18-08), 115 and 121 Vansitmart Avenue (Ward 4)

(Hwang/Nann)
That Report PED20139(a), dated March 25, 2026, respecting Environmental Remediation and Site Enhancement Redevelopment Grant Application (ERG-18-08), 115 and 121 Vansitmart Avenue (Ward 4), be received and the following recommendations be approved:

Please refer to the April 1, 2026 Council minutes for the disposition of these matters.

(a) That Environmental Remediation and Site Enhancement Redevelopment Grant Application (ERG-08-18), submitted by 1349010 Ontario Inc. (John Kemp, Douglas Kemp, Ronald Kemp, Thomas Kemp, and William Kemp), owner of the properties at 115 and 121 Vansitmart Avenue, Hamilton BE APPROVED for an Environmental Remediation and Site Enhancement Redevelopment Grant, not to exceed $562,244, for estimated eligible remediation costs, to be provided over a maximum of 10 years, in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Environmental Remediation and Site Enhancement Redevelopment Agreement;

(b) That the General Manager of the Planning and Economic Development Department BE DIRECTED to execute the Environmental Remediation and Site Enhancement Redevelopment Agreement together with any ancillary documentation required, to give effect to the Environmental Remediation and Site Enhancement Redevelopment Grant for 1349010 Ontario Inc., owner of the properties at 115 and 121 Vansitmart Avenue, Hamilton in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor; and

(c) That the General Manager of the Planning and Economic Development Department BE DIRECTED to administer the Grant and Grant Agreement including but not limited to: Deciding on actions to take in respect of events of default and executing any Grant Amending Agreements, together with any ancillary amending documentation, if required, provided that the terms and conditions of the Environmental Remediation and Site Enhancement Redevelopment Grant, as approved by City Council, are maintained and that any applicable Grant Amending Agreements are undertaken in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

Result: MOTION, CARRIED by a vote of 12 to 0, as follows:

Absent	-	Mayor Andrea Horwath	
Yes	-	Ward 1	Councillor Maureen Wilson
Yes	-	Ward 2	Councillor Cameron Kroetsch
Yes	-	Ward 3	Councillor Nrinder Nann
Yes	-	Ward 4	Councillor Tammy Hwang
Absent	-	Ward 5	Councillor Matt Francis
Yes	-	Ward 6	Councillor Tom Jackson
Yes	-	Ward 7	Councillor Esther Pauls
Absent	-	Ward 8	Councillor Rob Cooper
Yes	-	Ward 9	Councillor Brad Clark
Yes	-	Ward 10	Councillor Jeff Beattie
Yes	-	Ward 11	Councillor Mark Tadeson
Yes	-	Ward 12	Councillor Craig Cassar
Yes	-	Ward 13	Councillor Alex Wilson
Absent	-	Ward 14	Councillor Mike Spadafora
Yes	-	Ward 15	Councillor Ted McMeekin

Please refer to the April 1, 2026 Council minutes for the disposition of these matters.

8.4 PED26015
Climate Change Advisory Committee's Transition to a Community Liaison Group (City Wide)

(i) Beatrice Ekwa Ekoko, Project Manager, Climate Change Initiatives provided Committee with a presentation respecting Report PED26015, Climate Change Advisory Committee's Transition to a Community Liaison Group (City Wide).

(ii) **(Cassar/Nann)**
That Report PED26015, dated March 25, 2026, respecting Climate Change Advisory Committee's Transition to a Community Liaison Group (City Wide), and the accompanying presentation be received and the following recommendation be approved:

(a) That the Climate Change Advisory Committee continue to meet and operate according to their established Terms of Reference as a Volunteer Advisory Committee until their last meeting in September 2026, in alignment with this current Term of Council, BE APPROVED; and

(b) That the transition of the Climate Change Advisory Committee to the Climate Change Community Liaison Group be effective October 1, 2026, BE APPROVED.

Result: MOTION, CARRIED by a vote of 11 to 1, as follows:

Absent	-	Mayor Andrea Horwath	
Yes	-	Ward 1	Councillor Maureen Wilson
Yes	-	Ward 2	Councillor Cameron Kroetsch
Yes	-	Ward 3	Councillor Nrinder Nann
Yes	-	Ward 4	Councillor Tammy Hwang
Absent	-	Ward 5	Councillor Matt Francis
Yes	-	Ward 6	Councillor Tom Jackson
Yes	-	Ward 7	Councillor Esther Pauls
Absent	-	Ward 8	Councillor Rob Cooper
No	-	Ward 9	Councillor Brad Clark
Yes	-	Ward 10	Councillor Jeff Beattie
Yes	-	Ward 11	Councillor Mark Tadeson
Yes	-	Ward 12	Councillor Craig Cassar
Yes	-	Ward 13	Councillor Alex Wilson
Absent	-	Ward 14	Councillor Mike Spadafora
Yes	-	Ward 15	Councillor Ted McMeekin

Please refer to the April 1, 2026 Council minutes for the disposition of these matters.

8.7 PED26070
Revitalizing Hamilton Tax Increment Grant Application (RHTIG 03/24) and Downtown and Barton/Kenilworth Housing Opportunities Program Application (DBKHO 02/24), 299 Main Street East, Hamilton (Ward 3)

(Nann/Hwang)
That Report PED26070, dated March 25, 2026, respecting Revitalizing Hamilton Tax Increment Grant Application (RHTIG 03/24) and Downtown and Barton/Kenilworth Housing Opportunities Program Application (DBKHO 02/24), 299 Main Street East, Hamilton (Ward 3), be received and the following recommendations be approved:

(a) That a Revitalizing Hamilton Tax Increment Grant Program Application RHTIG 3/24 submitted by Adhiba Hamilton Limited (Sumaiya Sadiq and Muhammad Rakib Hasan) for the property at 299 Main Street East, Hamilton, estimated to total $93,960.92 over a maximum of four years based on the incremental tax increase attributable to the redevelopment of 299 Main Street East, Hamilton, BE APPROVED in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Revitalizing Hamilton Tax Increment Grant Program;

(b) That the General Manager of the Planning and Economic Development Department BE AUTHORIZED and DIRECTED to execute a Grant Agreement together with any ancillary documentation required, to give effect to the Revitalizing Hamilton Tax Increment Grant for Adhiba Hamilton Limited (Sumaiya Sadiq and Muhammad Rakib Hasan) for the property at 299 Main Street East, Hamilton, in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor;

(c) That the General Manager of the Planning and Economic Development Department BE AUTHORIZED AND DIRECTED to administer the Grant and Grant Agreement including, but not limited to, deciding on actions to take in respect of events of default and executing any Grant Amending Agreements, together with any ancillary amending documentation, if required, provided that the terms and conditions of the Revitalizing Hamilton Tax Increment Grant Program, as approved by City Council, are maintained and that any applicable Grant Amending Agreements are undertaken in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor;

(d) That a Downtown and Barton/Kenilworth Housing Opportunities Program Application DBKHO 02/24, submitted by Adhiba Hamilton Limited (Sumaiya Sadiq and Muhammad Rakib Hasan), the registered owner of the subject site at 299 Main Street East, Hamilton, BE APPROVED for a Downtown and Barton/Kenilworth Housing Opportunities Loan not to exceed $1,790,000, in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Downtown and Barton/Kenilworth Housing Opportunities Program conditional upon the receipt of updated financing terms from Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to meet the 25% equity requirement;

(e) That the General Manager of the Planning and Economic Development Department BE AUTHORIZED AND DIRECTED to execute a Loan Agreement together with any ancillary documentation required, to effect the Downtown and Barton/Kenilworth Housing Opportunities Loan, to Adhiba Hamilton Limited (Sumaiya Sadiq and Muhammad Rakib Hasan), the registered owner of the subject site at 299 Main Street East, Hamilton, in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor; and

(f) That the General Manager of the Planning and Economic Development Department BE AUTHORIZED AND DIRECTED to administer the Loan and Loan Agreement including but not limited to: Deciding on actions to take in respect of events of default and executing any Loan Amending Agreements, together with any ancillary amending documentation, if required, provided that the terms and conditions of the Downtown and Barton/Kenilworth Housing Opportunities Program are maintained and that any applicable Loan Amending Agreements are undertaken in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

Result: MOTION, CARRIED by a vote of 12 to 0, as follows:

Absent	-	Mayor Andrea Horwath	
Yes	-	Ward 1	Councillor Maureen Wilson
Yes	-	Ward 2	Councillor Cameron Kroetsch
Yes	-	Ward 3	Councillor Nrinder Nann
Yes	-	Ward 4	Councillor Tammy Hwang
Absent	-	Ward 5	Councillor Matt Francis
Yes	-	Ward 6	Councillor Tom Jackson
Yes	-	Ward 7	Councillor Esther Pauls
Absent	-	Ward 8	Councillor Rob Cooper
Yes	-	Ward 9	Councillor Brad Clark
Yes	-	Ward 10	Councillor Jeff Beattie
Yes	-	Ward 11	Councillor Mark Tadeson
Yes	-	Ward 12	Councillor Craig Cassar
Yes	-	Ward 13	Councillor Alex Wilson
Absent	-	Ward 14	Councillor Mike Spadafora
Yes	-	Ward 15	Councillor Ted McMeekin

8.8 HSC26016
Removal of Certain Consents for Part VII.1 Housing Providers (City Wide)

(Jackson/Cassar)
That Report HSC26016, dated March 25, 2026, respecting Removal of Certain Consents for Part VII.1 Housing Providers (City Wide), be received and the following recommendations be approved:

(a) That the City ENTER INTO Part VII.1 Housing Services Act, 2011, Service Agreements with Housing Providers who satisfy the criteria set

out in Appendix "A" to HSC26016 as determined by the General Manager of Healthy and Safe Communities or designate, with such terms and conditions as contained in Appendix "B" to HSC26016, in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor and that the General Manager be authorized and directed to execute such Agreements and any ancillary agreements or documents;

(b) That the General Manager of Healthy and Safe Communities or designate BE DELEGATED the authority to amend the matrix in Appendix A so long as it supports the long-term sustainability of the social housing portfolio at End of Agreement/End of Mortgage; and

(c) That upon request by a Housing Provider who meets the criteria in Appendix "A" to HSC26016, as determined by the General Manager of Healthy and Safe Communities, and who is an existing Part VII.1 Housing Services Act, 2011 Service Agreement with the City that their Service Agreement BE AMENDED to contain such terms and conditions provided for in Appendix "B" to Report HSC26016.

Result: MOTION, CARRIED by a vote of 12 to 0, as follows:

Absent	-	Mayor Andrea Horwath	
Yes	-	Ward 1	Councillor Maureen Wilson
Yes	-	Ward 2	Councillor Cameron Kroetsch
Yes	-	Ward 3	Councillor Nrinder Nann
Yes	-	Ward 4	Councillor Tammy Hwang
Absent	-	Ward 5	Councillor Matt Francis
Yes	-	Ward 6	Councillor Tom Jackson
Yes	-	Ward 7	Councillor Esther Pauls
Absent	-	Ward 8	Councillor Rob Cooper
Yes	-	Ward 9	Councillor Brad Clark
Yes	-	Ward 10	Councillor Jeff Beattie
Yes	-	Ward 11	Councillor Mark Tadeson
Yes	-	Ward 12	Councillor Craig Cassar
Yes	-	Ward 13	Councillor Alex Wilson
Absent	-	Ward 14	Councillor Mike Spadafora
Yes	-	Ward 15	Councillor Ted McMeekin

8.11 FCS26024
2026 Tax Policies and Area Rating (City Wide)

(Jackson/Pauls)
That Report FCS26024, dated March 25, 2026, respecting 2026 Tax Policies and Area Rating (City Wide), be received and the following recommendations be approved:

(a) That the following optional property classes BE APPROVED for the 2026 taxation year:

Please refer to the April 1, 2026 Council minutes for the disposition of these matters.

(i) Parking Lot and Vacant Land; and,
(ii) Large Industrial;

(b) That the following final tax ratios for the 2026 taxation year BE APPROVED:

RTC Description	Tax Ratio
Residential	1.0000
Multi-Residential	2.0000
Multi-Residential: Farmland Awaiting Development	0.7500
New Multi-Residential	1.0000
Commercial	1.9800
Commercial: Farmland Awaiting Development	0.7500
Office Building	1.9800
Shopping Centre	1.9800
Parking Lot	1.9800
Industrial	2.8570
Large Industrial	3.3500
Pipeline	1.7947
Landfill	2.9696
Farm	0.1767
Managed Forests	0.2500
Aggregate Extraction	2.4465

(c) That the following tax reductions for the 2026 taxation year BE APPROVED:

(i)	Farmland awaiting development (1st Subclass)	25%
(ii)	Farmland awaiting development (2nd Subclass)	0%
(iii)	Excess land Subclass (Residual Commercial)	0%
(iv)	Excess land Subclass (Residual Industrial)	0%
(v)	Vacant land Subclass (Residual Industrial)	0%
(vi)	Excess land Subclass (Large Industrial)	0%

(d) That the General Levy and the Area Rated Levies as identified in Appendix "A" Schedule 1 to Report FCS26024, BE APPROVED";

(e) That the Draft By-law "To Set and Levy the Rates of Taxation for the Year 2026" as identified in Appendix "A" to Report FCS26024, BE APPROVED

(f) That the Draft By-law "To Set Optional Property Classes Within the City of Hamilton for the Year 2026" as identified in Appendix "B" to Report FCS26024, BE APPROVED;

Please refer to the April 1, 2026 Council minutes for the disposition of these matters.

(g) That the Draft By-law "To Establish Tax Ratios and Tax Reductions for the Year 2026" as identified in Appendix "C" to Report FCS26024, BE APPROVED;

(h) That the Draft By-law "To Levy a Special Charge Upon the Rateable Property in the Business Improvement Areas for the Year 2026", BE APPROVED;

(i) That the continuation of the Deferral of Tax Increases for Seniors and Low-Income Persons with Disabilities Program (Deferral of Tax Increases Program) for 2026 BE APPROVED;

(j) That the continuation of the Full Tax Deferral Program for Seniors and Low-Income Persons with Disabilities Program (Full Tax Deferral Program) for 2026 BE APPROVED;

(k) That the continuation of the Seniors' (65+) Tax Rebate Program for 2026 BE APPROVED; and

(l) That the continuation of the 40% Tax Rebate for eligible charities and similar organizations for 2026 BE APPROVED.

Result: MOTION, CARRIED by a vote of 12 to 0, as follows:

Absent	-	Mayor Andrea Horwath	
Yes	-	Ward 1	Councillor Maureen Wilson
Yes	-	Ward 2	Councillor Cameron Kroetsch
Yes	-	Ward 3	Councillor Nrinder Nann
Yes	-	Ward 4	Councillor Tammy Hwang
Absent	-	Ward 5	Councillor Matt Francis
Yes	-	Ward 6	Councillor Tom Jackson
Yes	-	Ward 7	Councillor Esther Pauls
Absent	-	Ward 8	Councillor Rob Cooper
Yes	-	Ward 9	Councillor Brad Clark
Yes	-	Ward 10	Councillor Jeff Beattie
Yes	-	Ward 11	Councillor Mark Tadeson
Yes	-	Ward 12	Councillor Craig Cassar
Yes	-	Ward 13	Councillor Alex Wilson
Absent	-	Ward 14	Councillor Mike Spadafora
Yes	-	Ward 15	Councillor Ted McMeekin

9. MOTIONS

9.1 Strategic Workforce Capacity and Consultant Utilization Review

Councillor Tadeson WITHDREW the motion.

Please refer to the April 1, 2026 Council minutes for the disposition of these matters.

9.2 Review of Housing-Related Services Governance and Reporting Structures

(Jackson/Francis)
WHEREAS, the City of Hamilton delivers housing-related services, programs, and strategic oversight through two separate entities: the Housing Secretariat and the Housing Services Division;

WHEREAS, the Housing Secretariat was created in April of 2023 when Council adopted the Housing Sustainability & Investment Roadmap (HSIR) with an explicit mandate of leading the implementation of the Roadmap and coordinating cross-departmental affordable housing endeavours throughout the City of Hamilton;

WHEREAS, the original rationale of the Housing Secretariat remains important, and it is desirable to focus on mandate clarity, governance alignment and organizational effectiveness within the City of Hamilton's programs and services;

WHEREAS, municipalities serve as Housing Service Managers, responsible for administering social housing programs, meeting housing-related legislative requirements, and stewarding housing resources within their service areas – a mandate which is already being fulfilled by the Housing Services Division; and,

WHEREAS, both the Housing Secretariat and the Housing Services Division work with residents and community partners on housing programs and initiatives, and a review of governance alignment and reporting structure will provide clarity.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

That the City Manager BE REQUESTED to review Housing-Related Services and report back to the General Issues Committee on the following:

(a) Assess role differentiation, accountability, and reporting relationships between the Housing Secretariat and Housing Services Division;

(b) Evaluate options to optimize strategic and operation alignment;

(c) Review the financial, operational implications of any potential structural adjustments;

(d) Assess the opportunities and risks associated with structural change, including impacts on residents, community partners and service continuity; and,

(e) Prioritize service continuity and community stability.

Please refer to the April 1, 2026 Council minutes for the disposition of these matters.

Result: MOTION, CARRIED by a vote of 12 to 0, as follows:

Absent	-	Mayor Andrea Horwath	
Yes	-	Ward 1	Councillor Maureen Wilson
Yes	-	Ward 2	Councillor Cameron Kroetsch
Yes	-	Ward 3	Councillor Nrinder Nann
Yes	-	Ward 4	Councillor Tammy Hwang
Absent	-	Ward 5	Councillor Matt Francis
Yes	-	Ward 6	Councillor Tom Jackson
Yes	-	Ward 7	Councillor Esther Pauls
Absent	-	Ward 8	Councillor Rob Cooper
Yes	-	Ward 9	Councillor Brad Clark
Yes	-	Ward 10	Councillor Jeff Beattie
Yes	-	Ward 11	Councillor Mark Tadeson
Yes	-	Ward 12	Councillor Craig Cassar
Yes	-	Ward 13	Councillor Alex Wilson
Absent	-	Ward 14	Councillor Mike Spadafora
Yes	-	Ward 15	Councillor Ted McMeekin

10. NOTICES OF MOTION

Councillor Kroetsch introduced the following Notices of Motion:

10.1 Review of Contract Work by The City of Hamilton

That staff BE DIRECTED to conduct a corporation-wide analysis of contract work undertaken since amalgamation, and report back to the General Issues Committee by Q3 2026, with the following:

(a) An overview of how contractors are engaged, the service areas in which contract staff are utilized, and the circumstances under which contractors are retained;

(b) A cost-benefit analysis to determine whether the use of contractors is more advantageous than utilizing City staff; and,

(c) A time-efficiency analysis, including the time required to procure and engage contractors, compared to the time required to recruit and onboard City staff.

10.2 Winter Response for People Living Unsheltered in the City of Hamilton

WHEREAS, as of December 2025, the number of unhoused people living in the City of Hamilton is approximately 1980;

WHEREAS, of those 1980. Approximately 338 are unsheltered, meaning they are not staying in emergency shelters or other temporary accommodations;

Please refer to the April 1, 2026 Council minutes for the disposition of these matters.

WHEREAS, the City of Hamilton provides, operates, and partners with community agencies to offer several drop-in, shelter, and warming spaces for individuals who are unsheltered, with expanded services during winter months;

WHEREAS, drop-ins offer temporary accommodation, access to basic necessities, as well as supports both onsite and in the community to meet immediate and longer-term needs related to overall health, wellbeing, and the ability to acquire housing.

WHEREAS, the current homeless serving system, including winter response overnight drop in and warming spaces, are not sufficient to meet the needs of all people living unsheltered;

WHEREAS, people with pets and couples are not accommodated in the current drop-ins.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

(a) That staff be directed to bring forward a report to General Issues Committee in Q2 2026 outlining a winter response strategy for the 2026/27 winter season that addresses any service gaps in the current system, and details the funding required to operationalize the enhanced service; and

(b) That the report include, but not be limited to:
    (i) An assessment of service quality and capacity to meet the City's evolving needs;
    (ii) Best practices and models from other municipalities; and,
    (iii) A cost analysis of funding required to operationalize a comprehensive winter response strategy.

10.3 Municipal Price Index (City Wide)

WHEREAS, a Municipal Price Index provides a tool for measuring the effects of inflation on the cost of providing municipal services;

WHEREAS, a Municipal Price Index differs from the Consumer Price Index (CPI) because it measures the cost increases to a representative basket of expenditures such as asphalt, steel and cement, that a municipality makes compared with that of the CPI which measures the prices that consumers face when buying a basket of goods for their household;

WHEREAS, municipalities such as Ottawa and Milton have utilized MPI as one tool that helps inform the City's budgetary process of external economic conditions that the City will face;

WHEREAS, the development of municipal price indexes can assist in creating an understanding of how the patterns of local government spending can be different than those of the average household;

WHEREAS, a Municipal Price Index can be used to explain increases in annual budget expenditures attributable to inflation; and

WHEREAS, a Municipal Price Index can aid in the more accurate development of current and multi-year City budgeting forecasts;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

(a) That staff BE DIRECTED to determine the feasibility of developing a Municipal Price Index for the City of Hamilton for incorporation into the Annual Budget Process and report back to the General Issues Committee no later than Q3 2026.

11. PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

(i) Committee determined that discussion of Item 11.1 was not required in Closed Session; therefore, the matter was addressed in Open Session, as follows:

11.1 GIC 26-004 - February 25, 2026 - Closed Session Minutes

(Tadeson/Kroetsch)
That the Closed Session Minutes of the February 25, 2026 General Issues Committee meeting, be adopted and remain confidential.

CARRIED

(ii) (Clark/Jackson)
That Committee move into Closed Session for Items 11.2, 11.3 and 11.4 pursuant to Section 9.3, Sub-Sections (b), (c), (e), and (f) of the City's Procedural By-law 21-021, as amended, and Section 239(2), Sub-sections (b), (c), (e), and (f) of the *Ontario Municipal Act, 2001*, as amended, as the subject matter pertains to personal matters about identifiable individuals, including City or local board employees; a proposed or pending acquisition or disposition of land for City or a local board purposes; litigation or potential litigation, including matters before administrative tribunals, affecting the city or a local board; and the receiving of advice that is subject to solicitor-client privilege, including communications necessary for that purpose.

Result: MOTION, CARRIED by a vote of 12 to 0, as follows:

Absent	-	Mayor Andrea Horwath	
Yes	-	Ward 1	Councillor Maureen Wilson
Yes	-	Ward 2	Councillor Cameron Kroetsch
Yes	-	Ward 3	Councillor Nrinder Nann
Yes	-	Ward 4	Councillor Tammy Hwang

Please refer to the April 1, 2026 Council minutes for the disposition of these matters.

Absent	-	Ward 5	Councillor Matt Francis
Yes	-	Ward 6	Councillor Tom Jackson
Yes	-	Ward 7	Councillor Esther Pauls
Absent	-	Ward 8	Councillor Rob Cooper
Yes	-	Ward 9	Councillor Brad Clark
Yes	-	Ward 10	Councillor Jeff Beattie
Yes	-	Ward 11	Councillor Mark Tadeson
Yes	-	Ward 12	Councillor Craig Cassar
Yes	-	Ward 13	Councillor Alex Wilson
Absent	-	Ward 14	Councillor Mike Spadafora
Yes	-	Ward 15	Councillor Ted McMeekin

The General Issues Committee resolved into Closed Session at 2:53 p.m.

The General Issues Committee meeting reconvened in Open Session at 4:07 p.m.

11.2 PED19141(a)
Acquisition of Land (Ward 15)

(McMeekin/Tadeson)

(a) That the directions provided to staff in Closed Session respecting Report PED19141(a), Acquisition of Land (Ward 15) BE APPROVED AND REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL unless made public as the City's position before the Ontario Land Tribunal as necessary to secure the claimant's withdrawal pursuant to Minutes of Settlement; and

(b) That the balance of Report PED19141(a), Acquisition of Land (Ward 15) and all appendices REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL.

Result: MOTION, CARRIED by a vote of 12 to 0, as follows:

Absent	-	Mayor Andrea Horwath	
Yes	-	Ward 1	Councillor Maureen Wilson
Yes	-	Ward 2	Councillor Cameron Kroetsch
Yes	-	Ward 3	Councillor Nrinder Nann
Yes	-	Ward 4	Councillor Tammy Hwang
Absent	-	Ward 5	Councillor Matt Francis
Yes	-	Ward 6	Councillor Tom Jackson
Yes	-	Ward 7	Councillor Esther Pauls
Yes	-	Ward 8	Councillor Rob Cooper
Yes	-	Ward 9	Councillor Brad Clark
Yes	-	Ward 10	Councillor Jeff Beattie
Yes	-	Ward 11	Councillor Mark Tadeson
Yes	-	Ward 12	Councillor Craig Cassar
Absent	-	Ward 13	Councillor Alex Wilson
Absent	-	Ward 14	Councillor Mike Spadafora
Yes	-	Ward 15	Councillor Ted McMeekin

Please refer to the April 1, 2026 Council minutes for the disposition of these matters.

11.3 LS25015(a)
GFL Legal Strategy Update (Ward 9)

(Clark/Beattie)

(a) That Report LS25015(a), respecting GLF Legal Strategy Update (Ward 9), BE RECEIVED AND REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL; and,

(b) That staff proceed as directed respecting the GFL Legal Strategy.

Result: MOTION, CARRIED by a vote of 12 to 0, as follows:

Absent	-	Mayor Andrea Horwath	
Yes	-	Ward 1	Councillor Maureen Wilson
Yes	-	Ward 2	Councillor Cameron Kroetsch
Yes	-	Ward 3	Councillor Nrinder Nann
Yes	-	Ward 4	Councillor Tammy Hwang
Absent	-	Ward 5	Councillor Matt Francis
Yes	-	Ward 6	Councillor Tom Jackson
Yes	-	Ward 7	Councillor Esther Pauls
Yes	-	Ward 8	Councillor Rob Cooper
Yes	-	Ward 9	Councillor Brad Clark
Yes	-	Ward 10	Councillor Jeff Beattie
Yes	-	Ward 11	Councillor Mark Tadeson
Yes	-	Ward 12	Councillor Craig Cassar
Absent	-	Ward 13	Councillor Alex Wilson
Absent	-	Ward 14	Councillor Mike Spadafora
Yes	-	Ward 15	Councillor Ted McMeekin

11.4 HSC26024
Emergency Warming Centre Health and Safety Implications for City Staff (City Wide)

(Jackson/Pauls)

(a) That the Confidential Memo HSC26024, Emergency Warming Centre Health and Safety Implications for City Staff (City Wide), BE RECEIVED AND REMAIN CONFIDENTIAL.

Result: MOTION, CARRIED by a vote of 12 to 0, as follows:

Absent	-	Mayor Andrea Horwath	
Yes	-	Ward 1	Councillor Maureen Wilson
Yes	-	Ward 2	Councillor Cameron Kroetsch
Yes	-	Ward 3	Councillor Nrinder Nann
Yes	-	Ward 4	Councillor Tammy Hwang
Absent	-	Ward 5	Councillor Matt Francis
Yes	-	Ward 6	Councillor Tom Jackson
Yes	-	Ward 7	Councillor Esther Pauls

Please refer to the April 1, 2026 Council minutes for the disposition of these matters.

Yes	-	Ward 8	Councillor Rob Cooper
Yes	-	Ward 9	Councillor Brad Clark
Yes	-	Ward 10	Councillor Jeff Beattie
Yes	-	Ward 11	Councillor Mark Tadeson
Yes	-	Ward 12	Councillor Craig Cassar
Absent	-	Ward 13	Councillor Alex Wilson
Absent	-	Ward 14	Councillor Mike Spadafora
Yes	-	Ward 15	Councillor Ted McMeekin

12. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the General Issues Committee adjourned at 4:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Angela McRae
Legislative Coordinator
Office of the City Clerk

Deputy Mayor Jeff Beattie
Chair, General Issues Committee

Please refer to the April 1, 2026 Council minutes for the disposition of these matters.

From: City of Hamilton <hello@hamilton.ca>
Sent: Thursday, March 12, 2026 2:43 PM
To: clerk@hamilton.ca
Subject: Webform submission from: Request to Speak to a Committee of Council

External Email: Use caution with links and attachments.

Submitted on Thu, 03/12/2026 - 14:43

Reference number 99923

Submitted on

Committee Requested

Committee
General Issues Committee

Will you be delegating in-person or virtually?
In-person

Will you be delegating via a pre-recorded video?
No

Requestor Information

Requestor Information
Susie Braithwaite
International Village BIA
[redacted]

Preferred Pronoun
she/her

Reason(s) for delegation request
I will be delegating regarding the Downtown Revitalization Plan that is being presented at this meeting.

Will you be requesting funds from the City?
No

Will you be submitting a formal presentation?
No

From: City of Hamilton <hello@hamilton.ca>
Sent: Monday, March 16, 2026 8:08 PM
To: clerk@hamilton.ca
Subject: Webform submission from: Request to Speak to a Committee of Council

External Email: Use caution with links and attachments.

Submitted on Mon, 03/16/2026 - 20:08

Reference number 100237

Submitted on

Committee Requested

Committee
General Issues Committee

Will you be delegating in-person or virtually?
In-person

Will you be delegating via a pre-recorded video?
No

Requestor Information

Requestor Information
Andrew Selman
[redacted]

Preferred Pronoun
he/him

Reason(s) for delegation request
To call on Council to provide a transparent accounting of the full financial cost of the 2024 cyberattack and its downstream costs and impacts

Will you be requesting funds from the City?
No

Will you be submitting a formal presentation?
No

From: City of Hamilton <hello@hamilton.ca>
Sent: Sunday, February 22, 2026 8:39 PM
To: clerk@hamilton.ca
Subject: Webform submission from: Request to Speak to a Committee of Council

External Email: Use caution with links and attachments.

Submitted on Sun, 02/22/2026 - 20:38

Reference number 98399

Submitted on

Committee Requested

Committee
General Issues Committee

Will you be delegating in-person or virtually?
Virtually

Will you be delegating via a pre-recorded video?
No

Requestor Information

Requestor Information
Dr. Zobia Jawed
Clean Air Hamilton
[redacted]

Preferred Pronoun
she/her

Reason(s) for delegation request
To present 2022 and 2023 Progress report for Clean Air Hamilton.

Will you be requesting funds from the City?
No

Will you be submitting a formal presentation?
Yes

From: City of Hamilton <hello@hamilton.ca>
Sent: March 25, 2026 11:06 PM
To: clerk@hamilton.ca
Subject: Webform submission from: Request to Speak to a Committee of Council

External Email: Use caution with links and attachments.

Submitted on Wed, 03/25/2026 - 23:06

Reference number 101107

Submitted on

Committee Requested

Committee
General Issues Committee

Will you be delegating in-person or virtually?
In-person

Will you be delegating via a pre-recorded video?
No

Requestor Information

Requestor Information
Jennifer Bonner
The HUB
[redacted]

Preferred Pronoun
she/her

Reason(s) for delegation request
In response to unsheltered homelessness

Will you be requesting funds from the City?
No

Will you be submitting a formal presentation?
Yes

From: City of Hamilton <hello@hamilton.ca>
Sent: March 30, 2026 3:59 PM
To: clerk@hamilton.ca
Subject: Webform submission from: Request to Speak to a Committee of Council

External Email: Use caution with links and attachments.

Submitted on Mon, 03/30/2026 - 15:59

Reference number 101589

Submitted on

Committee Requested

Committee
General Issues Committee

Will you be delegating in-person or virtually?
In-person

Will you be delegating via a pre-recorded video?
No

Requestor Information

Requestor Information
Jovan Popovic
Break First Entertainment Imc.
[redacted]
[redacted]@breakfirst.ca
[redacted]

Preferred Pronoun
he/him

Reason(s) for delegation request
We are organizing the Route 905 Country Festival, a large-scale 2-day country music event, at the Ancaster Fairgrounds on July 24-25, 2026. Our primary objective is to inform the Council about the scale and scope of this event and to share the significant benefits it is expected to bring to our city. We believe proactive, transparent communication is essential for the success of this project, and we are eager to seek your collective guidance and support to ensure the festival aligns seamlessly with Hamilton's strategic goals. See: https://www.route905.ca/

Will you be requesting funds from the City?

No

Will you be submitting a formal presentation?
Yes

From: City of Hamilton <hello@hamilton.ca>
Sent: March 27, 2026 1:18 PM
To: clerk@hamilton.ca
Subject: Webform submission from: Request to Speak to a Committee of Council

External Email: Use caution with links and attachments.

Submitted on Fri, 03/27/2026 - 13:17

Reference number 101366

Submitted on

Committee Requested

Committee
General Issues Committee

Will you be delegating in-person or virtually?
In-person

Will you be delegating via a pre-recorded video?
No

Requestor Information

Requestor Information
Paul Takala
Hamilton Public Library
55 York Blvd
Hamilton, ON. L8R 2A1
[redacted]

Preferred Pronoun
he/him

Reason(s) for delegation request
Opioid Crisis

Will you be requesting funds from the City?
No

Will you be submitting a formal presentation?
No

From: City of Hamilton <hello@hamilton.ca>
Sent: April 6, 2026 10:47 AM
To: clerk@hamilton.ca
Subject: Webform submission from: Request to Speak to a Committee of Council

External Email: Use caution with links and attachments.

Submitted on Mon, 04/06/2026 - 10:46

Reference number 102114

Submitted on

Committee Requested

Committee
General Issues Committee

Will you be delegating in-person or virtually?
In-person

Will you be delegating via a pre-recorded video?
No

Requestor Information

Requestor Information
Abby Zaitley
[redacted]

Preferred Pronoun
she/her

Reason(s) for delegation request
I would like to delegate on Tammy Hwang's Motion regarding School Board Trustees. Thank you

Will you be requesting funds from the City?
No

Will you be submitting a formal presentation?
No

City of Hamilton

Report for Information

To:	Chair and Members General Issues Committee
Date:	April 15, 2026
Report No:	HSC26029
Subject/Title:	User Fee Framework Project Update and Current State Analysis
Ward(s) Affected:	City Wide

Recommendations

That Report HSC26029 respecting User Fee Framework Project Update and Current State Analysis **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Key Facts

- Through a competitive procurement process, Blackline Consulting was the successful proponent selected to lead the development of a corporate User Fee Framework for the City of Hamilton, with a primary focus on Recreation and Transit services; a multi-departmental staff team has commenced work on this project with the consultant.

- The first phase of the project work with Blackline Consulting, which includes a Current State Analysis, has been completed (See Appendix “A”).

- Public engagement was completed to capture input on current user fees, community benefit, and barriers to accessing services for Recreation and Transit users; a total of 1,658 respondents participated in the Recreation survey, and a total of 748 respondents participated in the Transit survey.

- Updated timelines and deliverables for the remaining phases of the project are detailed within this report.

Financial Considerations

There are no direct financial impacts as a result of this information report. The remaining phases of the user fee framework project include development of preliminary user fees for the Recreation and Transit divisions, which may differ from existing fee structures and practices. Pending approval of subsequent phase deliverables and receipt of the final report and implementation plan, the output of this project will have an impact on future user fees in the Recreation and Transit divisions.

Background

User fees represent a significant non-tax revenue source for the City. Setting user fees at an optimal level that balances the community's need for access to important municipal services with the cost pressures faced by the City is a challenging task that requires a formal framework. In Report FCS24003, it was recommended that an external consultant be engaged to conduct a review of current user fees, with primary focus on Recreation and Transit services, and to establish a corporate user fee framework consistent with the City's organizational goals and priorities centred around community benefit, accessibility, equity and ability to pay. Project leadership was transitioned to the Healthy and Safe Communities department, with approval received for funding and project approach through Report HSC24049.

Analysis

Project Initiation

Through a competitive Request for Proposals procurement process in compliance with the City of Hamilton's Procurement Policy By-Law 20-205, Blackline Consulting was awarded the contract to complete this work with City staff. This phase of the project was completed later than planned due to delays in the competitive procurement process, with full onboarding and project kick-off with the consultant occurring in July 2025.

Current State Analysis

Blackline Consulting has completed a comprehensive Current State Analysis on existing Recreation and Transit user fees, attached as Appendix "A" to Report HSC26029. It includes a thorough review of existing fees and policies, current cost recovery analysis, existing subsidies, utilization rates, and revenue generated from existing user fees. In addition to this internal review, benchmark municipalities were identified and engaged to capture their approach to user fees; comparators were selected based on geographic proximality and relative population and socio-economic conditions. The following Guiding Principles were established with input from leadership in the Recreation, Transit and Financial Planning, Administration and Policy divisions to establish the foundation for the forthcoming user fee framework: Community Benefit, Accessibility, Equity, Affordability.

Public engagement with residents on community benefit, current rates, and service access barriers was completed through an online survey on the Engage Hamilton platform over a three-week period from November 21 – December 5, 2025. The findings from the online survey, which included participation from 1,658 residents for the Recreation portion and 748 residents for the Transit portion, are summarized within the Current State Analysis.

The information gathered and presented in the Current State Analysis, along with the findings from public engagement, will be used to guide the remaining phases of the project.

Next Steps

This project is currently scoped to be completed by September 2026, with four distinct phases of work remaining with Blackline Consulting.

Framework Development (In Progress)

Internal stakeholders will be engaged to develop the preliminary fee structure. Cost recovery targets will be assigned to each service to reflect desired tax subsidization. Target percentages will be applied to each service and sub-category to determine cost-driven user fees. Scenario modelling and price-sensitivity analysis will support recommendations to ensure potential impacts to participation and revenue are accounted for.

Deliverable: Preliminary Fees

Equity and Accessibility Analysis (In Progress)

Formal identification and documentation of barriers to access Recreation and Transit services will be completed. Blackline Consulting will develop strategies to mitigate these barriers. Affordability for low-income households and other vulnerable groups who may face disproportionate impacts will be a primary focus.

Deliverable: Equity and Accessibility Analysis Report

Reporting and Monitoring (April 2026 – May 2026)

Blackline Consulting will work with staff to develop a reporting structure to dashboard and report multiple key metrics, including total fee revenue, cost recovery percentage by service, and tax support required per service. Monitoring tools and governance structures to oversee the process will be established, with clear delineation of staff roles and responsibilities. Qualifying criteria for adjustment of fees will be established.

Deliverable: Monitoring Tools and Processes

Final Report and Implementation (May 2026 – September 2026)

All findings, analysis, and recommendations from each phase of the project will be compiled into a comprehensive final report and presentation to General Issues Committee. A detailed plan for implementing the new user fee framework, and expansion beyond the Recreation and Transit divisions, will be included.

Deliverable: User Fee Framework Final Report and Recommendations

Alternatives

Not Applicable.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

1. Sustainable Economic & Ecological Development
   1.1. Reduce the burden on residential taxpayers.

One of the measures of success for this priority is exploration and introduction of new City revenue models and efficiencies. The final outcome of the corporate user fee framework project will present a new approach to managing user fees, directly impacting revenues and identifying areas for enhanced cost recovery.

2. Safe & Thriving Neighbourhoods
   2.2. Make sure people can safely and efficiently move around by foot, bike, transit or car.

One of the measures of success for this priority is increased transit ridership and accessibility. Transit user fees directly impact ridership and accessibility, and the final outcome of the corporate user fee framework project will propose a new approach to

monitoring and updating fees that will prioritize accessibility and directly incorporate transit ridership into the cost-setting process.

2. Safe & Thriving Neighbourhoods
   2.3. Provide vibrant parks, recreation and public space.

One of the measures of success for this priority is increased access to recreational facilities and services. Recreation user fees directly impact access to services and facilities, and the final outcome of the corporate user fee framework project will propose a new approach to monitoring and updating fees that will prioritize accessibility and directly incorporate facility utilization into the cost-setting process.

Previous Reports Submitted

- HSC24049 – User Fee Framework – Project Overview
- FCS24003 – 2024 Tax Supported User Fees

Consultation

Business Support, Recreation, Healthy & Safe Communities

Transit Support Services, Transit, Public Works

Financial Planning Administration & Policy, Corporate Services

Appendices and Schedules Attached

Appendix A: Blackline Consulting User Fee Review – Current State Report

Prepared by:

Romas Keliacius, Manager – Strategy and Continuous Improvement
Healthy & Safe Communities, General Manager's Office

Kirill Pankov, Senior Project Manager – Divisional Projects and Initiatives

Healthy & Safe Communities, Recreation

Submitted and Recommended by:

Grace Mater, General Manager – Healthy & Safe Communities

BLACKLINE CONSULTING

A Higher Standard

User Fee Review – Current State Report

City of Hamilton

March 2026

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/ EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report explores user fees at Recreation and Transit services

Situation

Departments within the City of Hamilton (the City or Hamilton) review and set user fees on an annual basis, generally with adjustments for inflation.

The City provides qualified residents with programs to reduce fees and improve access to services, such as the Recreation Assistance Program and Fare Assist.

There are no current formal pricing policies or user fee frameworks to coordinate and justify changes to user fees at a corporate level.

Objectives

The objective of this project is to establish a user fee framework for the City's Recreation and Transit Services.

This report documents the current state of user fees at these business areas to inform the development of an equitable, transparent and financially sustainable fee framework.

Future activities include:

- Developing preliminary fees and user fee framework
- Creating an accessibility and equity analysis
- Developing a reporting and monitoring structure
- Providing a final report and implementation plan

Approach

- Blackline reviewed policies, plans and data provided by Recreation and Transit.
- We conducted interviews with representatives from each department and conducted a working session to discuss and confirm the working guiding principles for the user fee framework.
- We conducted a comparison of user fee policies and frameworks with peer Ontario municipalities for both departments.
- Finally, Blackline and the City launched a resident survey to collect detailed impressions regarding user fees for Recreation and Transit.

Recreation’s user fees meet principles with high resident satisfaction

Recreation user fees largely align with the City’s proposed guiding principles

Recreation user fees, including the Recreation Assistance Program (RAP) and targeted subsidies, largely support the City’s proposed guiding principles of affordability, equity, accessibility and community benefit. Cost recovery targets further reflect the City's guiding principles, but the fee structure itself is complex.

While participation in programs and facilities are still rebounding from the pandemic, Recreation recovered 34% of its operating expenses in 2023, though a small number of facilities generate most of the revenue. But data limitations prevent calculating some detailed cost recovery.

Municipal peers have similar principles to guide their recreation user fee approaches. Peers set their user fees using different approaches, but all consider community benefits. A service pricing comparison shows that Hamilton's pricing strategy is strongly aligned to community benefit. Most peers measure cost recovery and have roughly similar results and those who set targets are meeting them.

Program availability, not cost, is the most frequently mentioned barrier by survey respondents

However, lower-income households are more likely to encounter cost barriers.

- Community Recreation Centres show the highest regular usage rates, followed by parks with playgrounds and courts (which do not have fees associated with their use).
- Drop-in fees and participation passes are both the most frequently used fee types and receive the highest fee satisfaction ratings.
- Almost all respondents rate recreation services as good value for money and agree recreation provides important community benefits. But lower-income respondents are less likely to find fees affordable.
- More than half are unaware of RAP, though among those aware or who have used the program, perceptions are positive.
- Respondents with disabilities have more accessibility issues with services.
- Overall, respondents prefer a tiered pricing approach and say discounts should go to low-income households and seniors. Maintaining existing facilities is the most common top-3 priority, over keeping fees low.
- Respondents prefer partnerships and sponsorships over increasing user fees to address funding shortfalls.

Transit fares support accessibility and few residents say cost is a barrier

HSR fare policies, particularly Fare Assist, supports the City's proposed guiding principles

In the past ten years, HSR has created different policies to guide transit fares. There are six major fare categories, with the recent Fare Assist program offering significant discounts to provide greater equity and accessibility.

Cost recovery for fares broadly aligns with community benefit principles, with Adult and Cash fares seeing high cost recovery and making up a majority of revenue.

Peers have similar guiding principles to inform fare pricing decisions, while using different practices and a mix of pricing models. All have various fare equity mechanisms in place, with HSR having the most-comprehensive equity-based fares. Overall cost recovery among peers varies in a range of between 28% and 58% of operating expenses.

Service coverage and frequency are the most cited barriers to transit services, not fare cost

- However, cost barriers are more common in lower-income households. Respondents value keeping fares as low as possible and fare satisfaction dominates perceptions of value for money.
- Nonetheless, most survey respondents are satisfied with current fares and say they get good value for money.
- Support for fee assistance is consistent across income levels. Two thirds are aware of Fare Assist and among those aware, most using it say the program is effective. Fare Assist users are more likely to say fares should be based on ability to pay.
- Almost all say transit provides important community benefits, but only half say it is accessible to all income levels.

However, there are challenges to address in a new user fee framework

Fee assistance programs exist but aren't reaching most eligible residents

Awareness of RAP and Transit's Fare Assist program has room to improve. As there is no corporate user fee policy or framework, this may add difficulties to public communications about how departments set and change user fees.

Cost recovery is the proportion of revenue from user fee or service charges against operating expenses. While the City sets single-year departmental cost recovery targets, there are not other metrics or key performance indicators relating to awareness or use of fee assistance programs or addressing barriers to service use.

As well, limitations of the City's financial systems add barriers and difficulty to making evidence-based user fee pricing decisions, particularly considering the number of facilities and separate user fees for Recreation. Addressing this limitation will require investment in corporate systems.

Metric	Target	Recreation	Transit
Overall cost recovery	▸ Single-year goal	▸ Achieved 34% in 2023 ▸ Different user fee groups have different targets	▸ Achieved 33% in 2023 ▸ Target rising to 48.9% by 2032
Number of user fees	▸ No policy	▸ 307 across five user fee groups	▸ 6 fare categories
Fee assistance program	▸ Developed from departmental policies	▸ Recreation Assistance Program (50-90% discounts)	▸ Fare Assist (50% discount)
Awareness of fee assistance	▸ No target	▸ 43% aware	▸ 68% aware
Top participation barrier	▸ --	▸ Program capacity (24%)	▸ Service coverage and frequency (15% each)
Resident value perception	▸ No target	▸ 86% good/very good	▸ 70% good/very good

/ ASSESSMENT AGAINST GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Guiding principles will establish the foundation of future user fee policy

The City identified four guiding principles for user fee policy

In a cross-departmental workshop, representatives from Transit, Recreation and Finance supported these principles and found them to be applicable to City services.

Participants emphasized that there are trade-offs between cost-recovery goals and broader community benefits when setting user fees. These trade-offs are particularly acute for services with environmental, health and social benefits.

Staff noted that while principles are intuitive and applied in practice, they are not consistently formalized or set across service areas.

Participants indicated agreement that these four principles that should guide user fees framework development, while noting that some flexibility on application is desirable on how they are weighted, depending on service type and individual need.

Hamilton is also currently developing a Community Benefits Framework (CBF), which would guide the application of user fees from Transit and Recreation services to collective wellbeing

The CBF focuses on generating additional social, economic and environmental benefits from public and private infrastructure investments. The City also structures its user fees to reflect how much each service contributes to collective wellbeing.

Principle	Definition
Community Benefit 	▸ The value created when City services contribute to collective wellbeing
Accessibility 	▸ Multiple pathways exist for residents to access services
Equity 	▸ Pricing accounts for systemic barriers faced by different groups
Affordability 	▸ Fees consider real-world financial constraints, not just income thresholds

Recreation user fees are largely aligned with guiding principles

Community benefit and accessibility features are evident within Recreation user fees

The user fee structure differentiates between services that deliver broad community-wide benefit and those that provide more individualized benefit, resulting in lower recovery for highly accessible services such as admissions, programs and rentals. Multiple payment options and a wide geographic distribution of facilities further support participation across diverse groups.

However, alignment is less consistent for equity and affordability

While RAP provides equity and additional pathways to using recreation services, awareness is limited. Affordability pressures also persist for lower-income households, who report higher cost barriers despite overall fee levels remaining affordable for most residents.

Principle	Performance	Evidence	Considerations
Community Benefit	●	▸ Golf (100% recovery) vs. Admissions (35%) reflects individual/community spectrum ▸ Pricing 48% below peers for admissions	▸ Classify user fees to document pricing rationales
Accessibility	●	▸ Multiple payment options (daily, monthly, annual, clip cards) ▸ 300+ fee types across 240+ facilities	▸ Simplify user fee structure to reduce complexity
Equity	●	▸ RAP provides 50-90% discounts ▸ Subsidized rates for youth groups	▸ Low awareness (43%) indicates more outreach needed
Affordability	◐	▸ 80% find fees affordable ▸ Steeper subsidies than peers (33% vs. 22% for admissions)	▸ 27-point affordability gap between income groups ▸ Lower-income households 2x more likely to cite cost as barrier

Legend: Strong ●, Moderate ◐, Low ○

Similarly, Transit fares are well-aligned

Current transit fares support ridership growth while balancing affordability and cost recovery

Fare pricing decisions are made alongside service expansion and investment, recognizing that ridership growth must precede higher recovery expectations.

Currently, HSR's approach reflects transit's position as service and a community benefit. Operating expenses are met with revenue from riders, taxpayers and government funding.

HSR has several programs to support access to transit services and promote equity, particularly Fare Assist. While users of the program are broadly satisfied, there are still opportunities to improve awareness.

Principle	Performance	Evidence	Considerations
Community Benefit	●	▸ Fare split recognizes community-wide benefits (environment, congestion, health)	▸ Framework should formalize yearly target cost recovery by fare type
Accessibility	●	▸ myRide On-Demand ▸ DARTS ▸ Support Person program ▸ Accessible fleet ▸ Free rides for children under 12 and seniors 80+	▸ Continued investment as ridership grows
Equity	●	▸ Fare Assist expanded to 50% discount (Jan 2026); includes refugees, newcomers, household members	▸ Monitor uptake and awareness efforts
Affordability	◐	▸ Youth/Senior discounts (~46%); frequent rider cap (11 rides/week) ▸ 72% of survey respondents say transit fares are affordable	▸ Elasticity may present limits to fare increases

Legend: Strong ●, Moderate ◐, Low ○

/ RECREATION CURRENT STATE

Recreation services align with Hamilton strategic priorities

Through accessible facilities, inclusive programming and shared community spaces, recreation services contribute to resident wellbeing

These services support everyday physical activity, provide safe and welcoming gathering places and foster participation across ages, nationalities and access levels. Recreation's role aligns closely with the mission and many of the priorities from The City of Hamilton's 2016–2025 Strategic Plan, as displayed below.



The strategic direction emphasizes equity, access and community benefit

Recreation service delivery emphasizes access, choice and quality

Hamilton's Recreation Master Plan establishes a set of guiding principles that shape what the department considers when designing and delivering services. As illustrated to the right, these principles position recreation as a public service that focuses on enhancing the quality of life for residents and are intended to align with the upcoming Community Benefits Framework. The following examples reflect how the Master Plan's principles translate into specific strategic directions for recreation services:

- Equity and Inclusion: implement intentional approaches that define what the City will do to include under-represented populations in the design and delivery of recreation services.
- A Spectrum of Recreation Service Choices: support and promote unstructured and structured experiences that encourage physical activity, learning, creativity, self-proficiency, community building, healthy aging fun.
- High Quality Facilities and Services: foster recreation places, spaces and programs that are welcoming, safe and promote a sense of belonging for all residents.
- Partnerships and Collective Impact: work with others to share information, explore new opportunities and address identified community issues.
- Financial Sustainability: bolster long-term financial accountability through the cost-effective and efficient management of available resources.

Guiding principles from Hamilton's 2022 Recreation Master Plan:



Equity and Inclusion

The provision of responsive recreation services is based on the needs of residents and servers all age groups and areas of Hamilton.



A Spectrum of Recreation Service Choices

There is a wide range of affordable and accessible opportunities for active, creative, sports and general interest recreational experiences.



High Quality Facilities and Services

Our recreation system offers high quality, accessible and sustainable facilities and services that enhance the health and wellbeing of residents.



Partnerships and Collective Impact

All relevant community partners are engaged in addressing community issues where recreation and sport can be of added value.



Financial Sustainability

We demonstrate leadership and accountability through responsible fiscal management and the pursuit of creative funding approaches.

The Recreation Assistance Program and targeted subsidies support equity and accessibility

Hamilton intentionally uses subsidies, waivers and fee assistance to reduce financial barriers to participation across its recreation service mix

Hamilton administers the Recreation Assistance Program (RAP), which provides equitable access to recreation services for low-income residents, as summarized right.

Other targeted subsidies encourage participation and support equity objectives.

- Several rentals receive subsidized rates of up to 50%, such as youth groups accessing baseball diamonds.
- Golf fees also vary meaningfully by time of use, with non-peak fees 40% lower.
- Similarly subsidized ice user groups receive 43% off arena bookings. Pricing differentials appear across Hamilton's fee schedule, where children, youth and seniors pay reduced rates relative to standard adult fees.

Beyond fee-level subsidies, the City also has a Corporate Fee Waiver/Reduction Policy, which enables eligible community groups and nonprofit organizations to request reduced or waived fees for facility rentals and recreation services that deliver community benefit.

Recreation Assistance Program Summary

For Families (with children under 18)

Benefits valid from 12 months from approval date:

- Free Family Participation Pass (valid for City wide drop-in recreation programs with no instructor)
- Free Family Skate Pass (valid for City wide drop-in public skates)
- 90% discount off registered programs (up to $150 per child)
- 50% discount off Affiliated Minor Sport league registration fees (up to a maximum of $100 on baseball, soccer, lacrosse or $150 on aquatics, hockey, skating, ringette)
- 65% discount off year-round Camp Kidaca programs

Adults/Seniors (no children at address)

Benefits valid from 12 months from approval date.

Adults/senior can choose one of the following:

- 75% off an Annual Participation Pass
- 75% off an Annual Skating Pass
- 50% off an Annual Waterfit Pass
- 50% off a Monthly Waterfit Passes

Recreation delivers community benefits through a diverse service mix

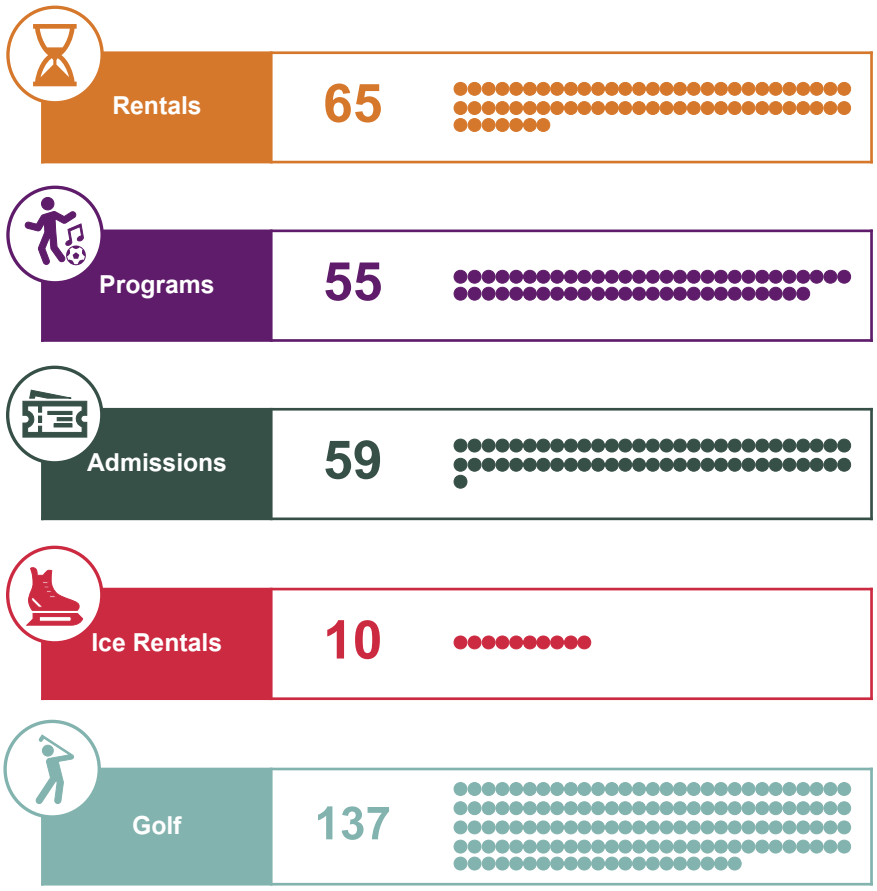
The City offers a wide range of recreation services that cater towards community needs, usage patterns and ability to pay

As of 2025, there are over 300 user fees for services or activities provided at over 240 facilities or locations (including parks and other public spaces).

- Rentals support community organizations, leagues and private users through access to gyms, halls, sports fields and event spaces. This supports community benefit through organized community use and shared access to public recreation spaces.
- Programs include registered offerings such as camps, aquatics, fitness, sport and instructional programs. This provides access to skill development, structured participation and engagement across different age groups.
- Admissions provide access to recreation centres, pools, skating, shinny and waterfit. This supports access to services and facilities across the community.
- Ice Rentals includes user fees related to access to arena ice time for organized hockey supporting leagues, clubs and other structured ice-based recreation. This enables sustained access to organized sport.
- Golf includes user fees related to access to municipal golf courses, including green fees, tournaments and memberships. This promotes both casual play and regular participation.

The graphic to the right illustrates the extent of Hamilton's recreation service mix and the range of user fees that support it.

User Fees by Recreation Service Areas



Cost recovery targets further reflect the City's guiding principles

The City applies informal cost recovery targets across its user fee groups

These informal cost recovery targets align with the direction outlined in the Recreation Master Plan for pricing policies and have been applied consistently in past years. The table below summarizes 2025 targets by service area.

- Rentals, programs and admissions share a 35% target, reflecting their role in providing a greater degree of community benefit.
- Ice services carry a higher 50% target because they apply to organized user groups that reserve dedicated ice time. Drop-in skating and hockey fall under the 'Programs' grouping instead and align with the City's 35% target to support broad community access.
- Golf carries a 100% target because it serves a narrower user group and operates as a more individualized, premium activity. This enables the City to prioritize lower targets for its services that see greater participation from diverse resident groups.

Groups	Example Fees		Target
 **Rentals**	▸ Sports fields ▸ Community rooms	▸ Gyms ▸ Pools ▸ Halls	**35%**
 **Programs**	▸ Aquatic lessons (group, private and semi-private*) ▸ Aquatic leadership	▸ Dance ▸ Art ▸ Music ▸ Camps	**35%**
 **Admissions**	▸ Recreation centre ▸ Pools and arenas single admit ▸ 10 visit clip	▸ Monthly ▸ 3 monthly ▸ Yearly	**35%**
 **Ice Rentals**	▸ Regular ice season rentals ▸ Tournaments	▸ Shooter pads	**50%**
 **Golf**	▸ Green fees ▸ League ▸ Tournament	▸ Disc golf ▸ Membership	**100%**

*Private and semi-private swimming lessons have a higher target of 50% compared to group classes.

But the fee structure is complex

For 2025, the City maintains over 300 distinct recreation user fees across five service areas, with dozens of additional sub-groups

The City further differentiates fees based on space quality (tiered into different categories), subsidized pricing, commercial/non-resident use and peak versus non-peak hours.

The example to the right shows the pricing complexity of hall rentals, where a single sub-group branches contains nine different fees (three room categories with three different fees depending on user group).

Other services have prime-time pricing, such as user group ice rates or golf green fees.

Recreation User Fee Example
User Fee Service Area: Recreation Rentals
Sub-Group: Hall Rentals
Categories: ► Category A – Premium Community Rooms/Auditorium/Lobby ► Category B – Standard Community Rooms ► Category C – Basic Community Rooms
User Fees: ► Hourly Rate – Standard ► Hourly Rate – Subsidized – 50% Discount from Standard ► Hourly Rate – Commercial/Non-Resident

Recreation sets and revises user fees using different policy approaches

Hamilton's recreation user fees align with policy-based approaches

The graphic on the right illustrates recreation services operating under each following policy constraint:

- **Market maximum constraint**: fees that align with what residents can reasonably bear.
- **Market comparable constraint**: fees reflect alignment with peer municipalities or similar service providers.
- **Full cost recovery**: fees aim to recover the complete cost of service delivery.

The City resumed annual fee updates after a pause in user fee adjustments during the pandemic. Rising participation rates and ongoing inflation resulted in operating costs increases, requiring fee adjustments to maintain service levels.

For 2025, most user fees increased by 4%. Recreation applied greater select adjustments where costs or market conditions warranted, including:

- Gym rentals for Category A gyms (6,000 Sq Ft+) increased by 29.2%.
- Gym rentals for Category C gyms (3,000 – 3,499 Sq Ft) increased by 11%.
- Camp specialty and trip add-on fees increased by 10%.
- Private swim lessons (including bi and tri-private) increased by 7%.

Market Maximum Constraint	► Arena Admissions ► Arena Floor Rental Rates ► Aquatic Programs ► Extra Rental Fees ► Hall Rentals ► Parks ► Programs ► Recreation Centre & Pools Admissions ► Senior Facility Admissions ► Sports Field Rentals ► User Group Ice Rates ► Waterfit Admissions
Market Comparable Constraint	► Aquatic Leadership Programs* ► Gym Rentals ► Pool Rentals
Full Cost Recovery	► Golf ► Insurance Fees ► Non-Resident Fees ► Rental Amendments ► Withdrawal/Unenrollment Fees

*Some fees pertaining to aquatic leadership programs are instead set according to the market maximum constraint

Recreation recovered 34% of its operating expenses in 2023

Hamilton calculates recreation cost recovery by comparing user fee revenue against operating expenses

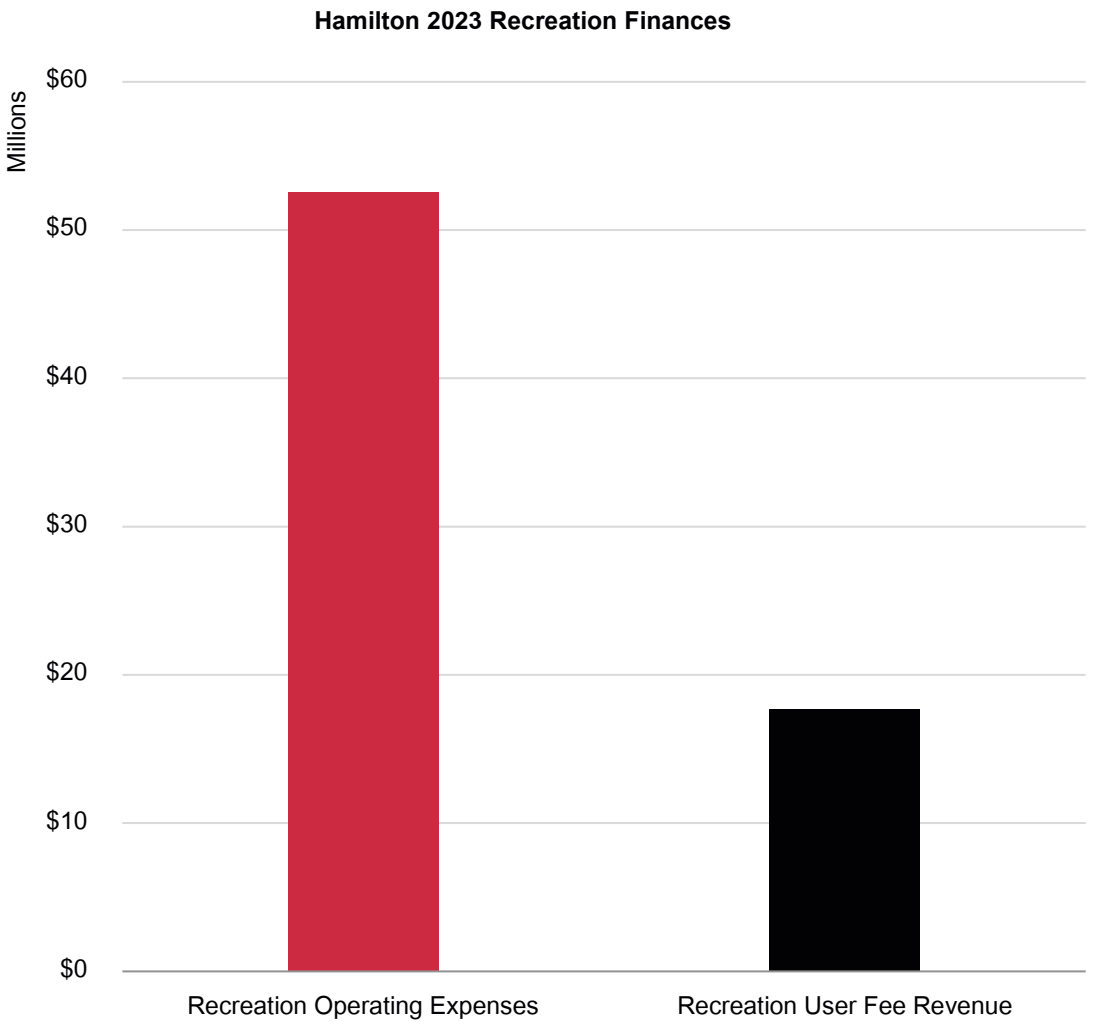
This entails omitting non-user fee driven revenue and revenue generated from Food Services.

Recreation recovered just over a third of its expenditures in 2023

As illustrated to the right, total recreation operating expenses were approximately $52.6 million in 2023, while user fee driven revenue totaled closed to $17.7 million.

The gap between revenue and expenditure is indicative of the typical municipal recreation funding model in Canada, which generally prioritizes community benefit and equitable access for residents instead of cost recovery.

Appendix B contains further financial insights relevant to Recreation at Hamilton.



A small number of facilities generate half of Recreation's user fee revenue

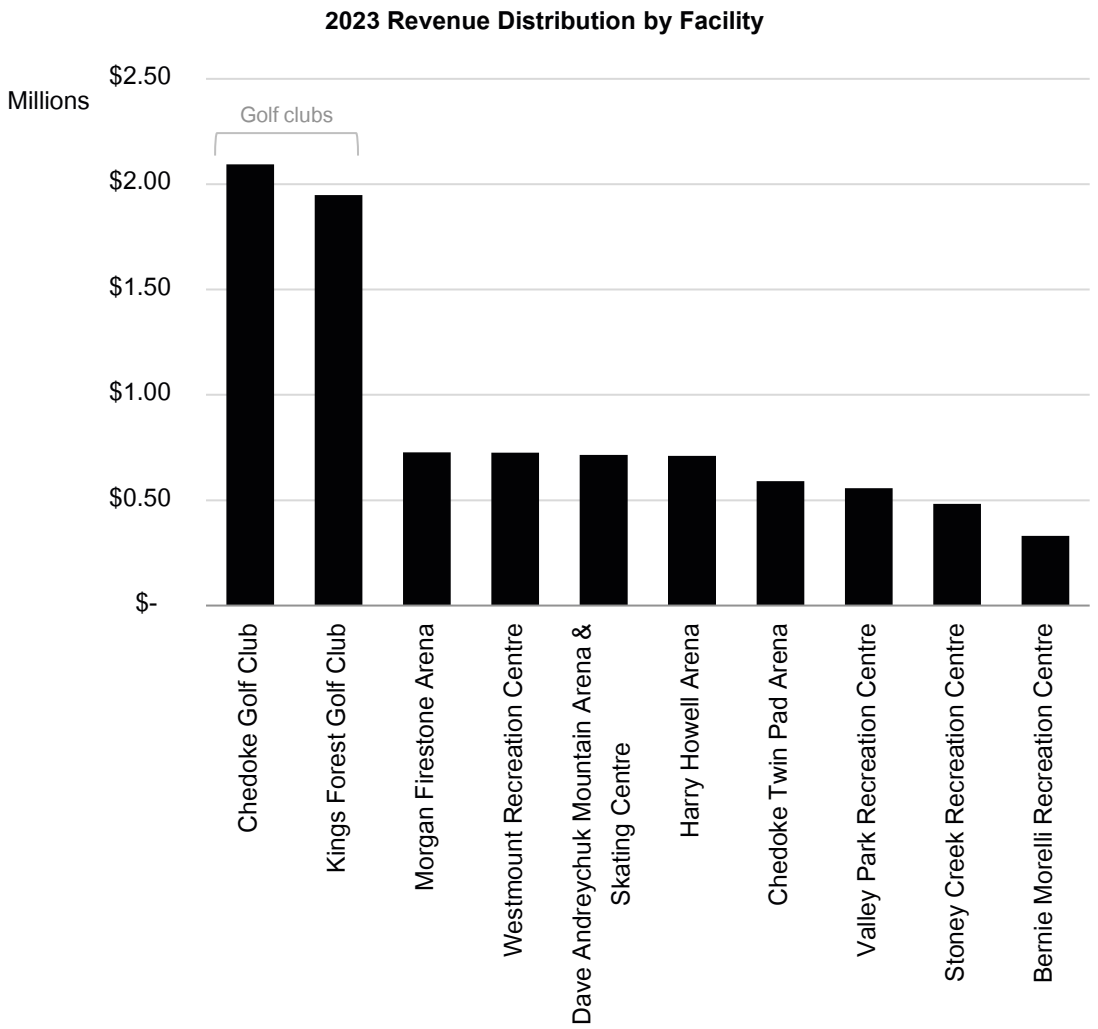
Despite 65 different facilities recording user fee revenue in 2023, the facilities on the right represent Recreation's largest revenue sources

- The two municipal golf clubs alone produced nearly a quarter (23%) of Hamilton's total 2023 recreation user fee revenue.
- The eight other arenas and recreation centres on the chart cumulatively contributed to a significant portion (27%) of the total 2023 recreation user fee revenue.

The concentration of user fee revenue across a limited number of facilities highlights the City's reliance on a small subset of services to bolster overall recovery.

We excluded some facilities from the main body of this analysis:

- The LIUNA 4 Ice Centre has a unique operating model, which we introduce on the next page.
- Major Park Facilities contributed to a sizeable portion of revenue. However, it includes revenues from all parks. It is not a single location but an umbrella category.



Some recreation facilities and services have different operating models

While the City generally directly collects user fees for several services, some facilities and services have different approaches

The approaches used for Seniors Clubs, Seniors Centres, Halls and the LIUNA 4 Ice Centre are detailed at right.

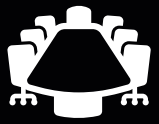
Grant Funded

Due to the community benefit senior clubs provide, usage does not have any associated user fees. Instead, senior clubs rely on grant funding.



Board Involvement

Senior centres receive grants but are operated by non-profit boards. Hamilton only recognizes a portion of membership revenue. The boards realize the remainder of user fees.



Third Party Contracts

Nustadia Recreation operates the LIUNA 4 Ice Centre. The City receives a set amount of hours each year to allocate to user groups, realizing contract revenue instead of user fee revenue.



User Group Agreements

The City has agreements with user groups in some Halls to generate increased utilization and community benefit. These groups may access these spaces at a subsidized rate.



… which leads to varying degrees of cost recovery attained across Recreation's services and programs

The table to the right shows 2023's cost recovery metrics across Recreation's portfolio

- Golf achieves the highest cost recovery since it is an activity with higher individual benefit and more specialized use.
- Due to the third-party contractual revenue for Liuna 4 Ice Centre, the Quad Arena category has a unique recovery position.
- Community Arenas slightly exceed the 50% target for ice rentals.
- Senior Clubs recover just under half of their costs, but through grants instead of user fees.
- As a result of the agreements for Halls, cost recovery is lower at 29%.
- Recreation Facilities provide a high degree of community benefit and prioritize accessibility instead of cost recovery maximization.
- Since Senior Centres only collect a portion of user fee revenue, cost recovery is lower.
- Outdoor pools have a short operating season to recover operations and also prioritize accessibility as opposed to cost recovery maximization.
- While Aquatic Leadership has strong cost recovery, not all expenses (e.g. maintenance or building staffing) are coded back to the program.
- Camps recover close to half of their costs but face the same coding challenges as the Aquatic Leadership program.

We analyzed the cost recovery of programs and services by facility

The City's financial data supports this level of analysis for most locations and services where underlying records align. Appendix C contains cost recovery analysis of specific services. We excluded outdoor sports fields as the City records associated revenues within Recreation while related expenditures sit with the Parks division in the Public Works department.

Recreation Services	2023 Revenue	2023 Expenditure	2023 Cost Recovery
Golf	$4,147,628	$3,981,367	**104%**
Quad Arena	$3,933,809	$3,997,618	**98%**
Community Arenas	$5,845,819	$11,376,179	**51%**
Senior Clubs	$299,761	$636,668	**47%**
Halls	$91,661	$310,924	**29%**
Recreation Facilities*	$4,723,199	$18,039,380	**26%**
Senior Centres	$322,706	$1,331,765	**24%**
Outdoor Pools	$78,488	$1,134,286	**7%**

*Includes recreation centres and indoor pools

Recreation Programs	2023 Revenue	2023 Expenditure	2023 Cost Recovery
Aquatic Leadership	$145,439	$88,902	**164%**
Camps	$495,393	$1,031,567	**48%**

But data limitations prevent calculating cost recovery at the user fee group level

Recreation's user fee data does not follow the same grouping as its financial data

Recreation structures user fees into the groupings of rentals, programs, admissions, ice and golf (which inform targets). The associated general ledger codes capture revenue only when mapped into the financial dataset. This means that cost recovery cannot be calculated consistently at the user fee grouping level.

Instead, financial data aligns to the recreation sub-sections listed to the right. This groups multiple activities together within broader location- or function-based categories.

To ensure consistency between revenues and expenditures, we rely on financial sub-sections to calculate and analyze cost recovery, rather than the user fee groupings.

This limits the City's ability to analyze recreation financial data as per their cost recovery target grouping

Enabling this level of analysis will require data infrastructure investment.

Hamilton Financials Recreation Sub-Sections

- Arenas – CS
- Arenas – Quad
- Camps
- CW – Operations & Administration
- Div. Operations & Administration
- Food Services
- Golf
- Halls – CS
- Indoor Pools
- Other Services
- Outdoor Pools – CS
- Recreation Operations & Administration
- Recreation Facilities – CS
- Senior Centres
- Senior Clubs
- Sports Facilities
- Sub Committees

/ RECREATION PEER APPROACHES

Blackline surveyed Hamilton's peers for a comparator study

Blackline surveyed Hamilton's peers to understand their recreation user fee policies, cost recovery practices and equity considerations

We uncovered the methodologies, principles and approaches different municipalities use to balance accessibility, equity and financial sustainability in setting recreation user fees.

Particularly, we inquired about:

User fee frameworks
Guiding principles
Pricing models
Discounts, subsidies and waivers
Cost recovery targets

Four peer municipalities participated in this study

Hamilton confirmed the selection of municipalities to participate based on characteristics that align closely with the City, population, demographics and similarity in recreational service offerings. Of the eight municipalities that fit the criteria and were contacted, the four municipalities that participated in the comparison are:

- Burlington
- London
- Oakville
- Windsor

Municipal peers have similar themes to guide their recreation user fee approaches

The themes illustrated below represent some of the factors that influence how peers design and deliver recreation user fees



Societal Benefit

- Peers recognize recreation services as contributing to overall community wellbeing



Financial Sustainability

- Peers aim to ensure recreation services support long-term corporate goals



Equity and Inclusion

- Peers emphasize fairness, ensuring services remain accessible for all residents



Participation and Retention

- Peers prioritize long-term engagement and strive for recurring resident visits

Peers set their user fees using different pricing techniques

Peers referenced a mix of approaches when describing pricing models

While terminology and application vary, most combine multiple pricing techniques to balance cost recovery, equity and market competitiveness.

Peers also take into consideration council-approved financial parameters and annual budgeting cycles when setting or updating fees.

The table at right categorizes the predominant techniques mentioned by peers.

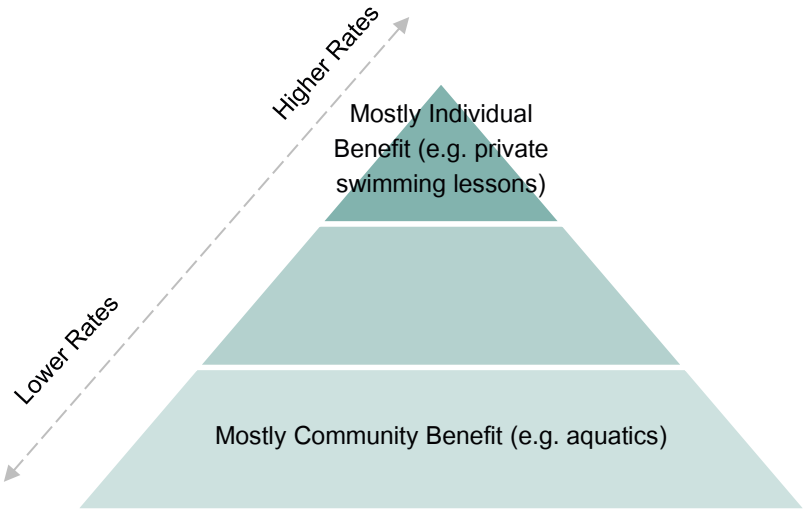
Comparative 	▸ Peers reference using comparable municipalities and market rates to validate or benchmark recreation fees, ensuring alignment with regional affordability expectations.
Cost-Based 	▸ Peers consider the full or partial recovery of direct and indirect service costs when establishing fees, balancing fiscal accountability with accessibility goals.
Differential 	▸ Peers vary fees based on user characteristics such as age, residency and facility type, recognizing differences in benefit, ability to pay and demand.
Traditional 	▸ Peers use historical data to inform fee adjustments, referencing past rates and inflation trends to guide decisions.
Modelling 	▸ Hamilton mentioned running different cost recovery models based on the level of expenses to be included in cost recovery analysis. For example, using expenses associated strictly with direct program delivery; adding to that incorporating the expenses associated with maintaining the building where the program was delivered; and finally, all costs within Recreation. ▸ Windsor in particular uses scenario modelling to assess how fee changes might affect participation among vulnerable groups. Hamilton intends to implement the same once there is a more holistic understanding of costs.

All peers consider community benefits to set user fees

In alignment with incorporating accessibility and inclusion, most peers consider perceived benefits when setting recreation user fees

Peer municipalities generally keep rates lower for programs that deliver broader community benefit, as shown at right. The examples below outline how peers differentiate fees based that principle:

- During the pandemic, Hamilton paused recreation user fee increases to preserve access to services with collective community benefit, prioritizing participation and equity over short-term cost recovery.
- London recently expanded subsidies for Indigenous groups from the City and surrounding areas to increase participation in programs and the utilization of facilities. The City is considering a more comprehensive user fee policy to further consider community benefit.
- Windsor has a 'Not Yet 3 - You Are Free' policy for admission into its water park. The City also assesses which recreation facilities serve the greater number of people and provides subsidies accordingly.
- Burlington offers an 'Active5 Pass' which gives Grade 5 students free access to drop-in recreation activities. The City is also finalizing a departmental master plan for release that will refresh its user fee strategy to strengthen community impact and value.
- Oakville groups recreation programs into categories (e.g. Aquatics A–K, Fitness A–E) based on specialization level and staggers the user fees accordingly.



Hamilton's pricing strategy is strongly aligned to community benefit

We benchmarked peer municipalities 2024 recreation pricing using a consistent, like-for-like approach

- Our review focused on standard resident rates, excluding youth, senior, non-resident, commercial or other discounted categories to ensure simplicity.
- For fee types with multiple tiers or room sizes (e.g. small, medium, large community rooms), we selected the mid-point rate.

This resulted in a dataset of about 30 representative fees across major service areas, providing a balanced basis for comparing pricing levels with peers. Appendix D lists all the fees we assessed.

Hamilton's average rates are higher for Rentals, Parks and Golf, but sit below the peer average for programs and admissions

This keeps broadly used services affordable while charging more for individualized or premium offerings. Specifically:

- Prime-time ice rental rates sit 28% higher than peers. Exclusive park use sits 48% higher as well. These are services that primarily provide individual benefit.
- Widely used services remain more affordable. Yearly admissions for recreation centre access are 66% lower. Dance and fitness programs are 54% cheaper. These are services that enable greater community participation.

Recreation Service Area	Hamilton versus Peers
Rentals	↑ 19% higher
Parks	↑ 35% higher
Programs	↓ 16% lower
Admissions	↓ 48% lower
Golf	↑ 34% higher

The peers in the table below measure cost recovery

Peers have different approaches to setting cost recovery targets

All peers who track cost recovery review their targets annually, but as displayed to the right, not all have multi-year targets.

While Oakville does not have multi-year targets, the Town has two levels of cost recovery targets:

- Program: Higher cost recovery target for programs with individual benefits
- User group: Cost recovery targets group (e.g. youth, adult, commercial) within each program

Windsor's Parks & Recreation User Fee and Pricing Policy supports modelling scenarios where fees are adjusted to meet varying cost recovery thresholds (e.g. 100% of direct costs vs. partial recovery for public-benefit programs).

Burlington has not set cost recovery targets but is considering doing so in their upcoming masterplan.

The table to the right summarizes peer approaches to target setting.

Municipality	Multi-Year Targets	Target Exclusions	Target Inclusions
Hamilton	No	--	► Operating expenses
London	Yes	► Corporate overhead costs from support services (ITS, finance) ► Capital renewal costs	► Management, union and casual staff personnel costs ► Direct operating costs of each service
Windsor	Yes	--	► Staffing ► Facility rentals (rooms) ► Program supplies & utilities
Oakville	No	► Costs for capital and building replacement (e.g. equipment, turf, lighting, etc.)	--

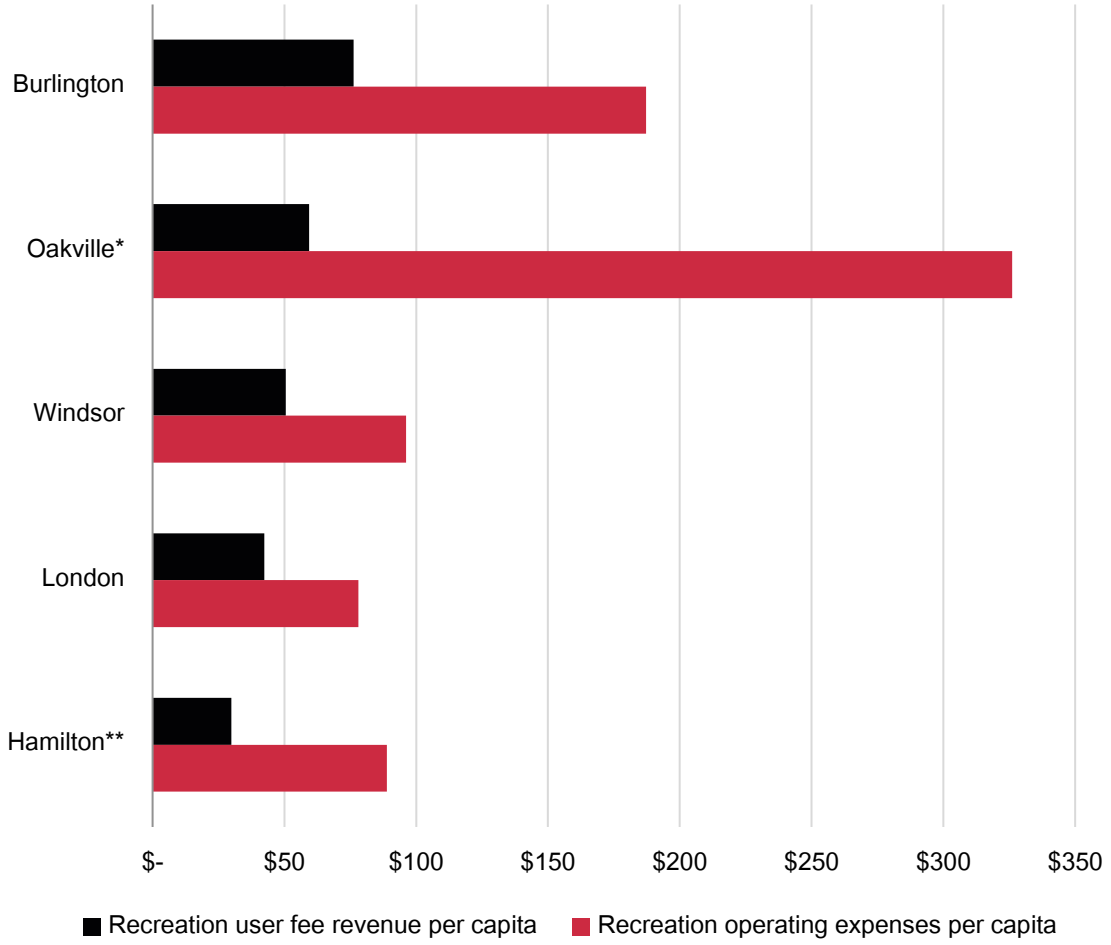
No municipality is fully recovering their costs…

We compared the City's per capita recreation user fee revenue and operating expenditure against its peers

We used peer-provided data and Ontario's Financial Information Return (FIR). Every municipality spends more per capita on recreation than it recovers through user fees.

Results should be interpreted with caution as not all municipalities provided complete data. As detailed in Appendix E, municipalities maintain comparable indoor recreation space per capita but operate with materially different staffing levels, which directly influences operating costs and further warrants caution when interpreting per-capita cost recovery comparisons.

2024 Recreation User Fee Revenue and Operating Expenses per Capita



*Oakville data from 2024 FIR

**Hamilton data from 2023

…but most of those who set targets are meeting them

Most peers report achieving set annual cost recovery targets

- London reports meeting its annual target cost recovery level. The City applies an average 63% target across Recreation & Sports services, based on operating expenses. This excludes certain corporate allocations (e.g. life-cycle renewal and utilities, repairs and maintenance).
- Windsor also reports meeting its cost recovery expectations. User fees generally recover at least 100% of direct costs for programs and services. The 2024 overall cost recovery level for the Recreation & Culture department is 45%.

While we don't have data on Oakville's attained recovery, the City publicizes its user group target recovery ratios for the services in the table at right. However, Hamilton sits below its yearly cost recovery targets.

Oakville Service Area	Oakville User Group Target Recovery Ratio
Ice rentals	50% for youth, 100% for adult/community, 125% for commercial
Pool rentals	50% for youth, 100% for adult/community, 125% for commercial
Community rooms	25% to 50% for not-for-profit groups, 75% to 100% for commercial
Recreation memberships	64% weighted for all user groups
Programming	25% to 50% for children/youth, 75% to 100% for adult/community
Camps	50% for children, 75% for specialty programs

Peers have different approaches to increase recreation use

All peers follow at least some common practices that help balance financial sustainability with equity and accessibility

Typical examples include demographic discounts, family/group rates, increased non-resident fees, corporate sponsorships and time-based pricing.

Municipality	Equity and Inclusion Tactics
Hamilton	► The Recreation Assistance Program (RAP) – provides subsidized access to recreation programs, passes and camps for low-income residents, with discounts ranging from 50–90% depending on age group and program type. ► Corporate Fee Waiver/Reduction Policy – allows eligible community groups and nonprofits to request reduced or waived fees for facility rentals and recreation services to support community-benefit activities.
London	► Request Waive or Reduce Facility Rental Fees (WORF) Policy – enables nonprofits and community-focused organizations to apply for reduced or waived facility rental fees when programs align with London's community development priorities. ► Play Your Way Fund – provides program subsidies for low-income and priority-population residents (e.g., Indigenous residents, Ontario Works clients), reducing financial barriers to participating in recreation programs.
Windsor	► Pathway to Potential (P2P) – offers significant program-fee subsidies for individuals and families receiving Ontario Works or ODSP, with eligible participants paying only 15% of listed fees. ► Seniors receive a 10% discount on most recreation programs and services.
Burlington	► Halton Region Subsidies – grants financial support for low-income residents across the region, enabling participation in municipal recreation programs. ► City Fee Assistance Program – offers reduced rates for Burlington residents who meet income-eligibility criteria to improve access to recreation programs and services. ► Fee Waiver Program – enables community groups to request waived facility fees when launching new recreation or community-benefit programs.
Oakville	► Recreation Connection Subsidy – offers eligible low-income residents an annual credit (typically $400 per person) to reduce the cost of recreation programs, memberships and passes.

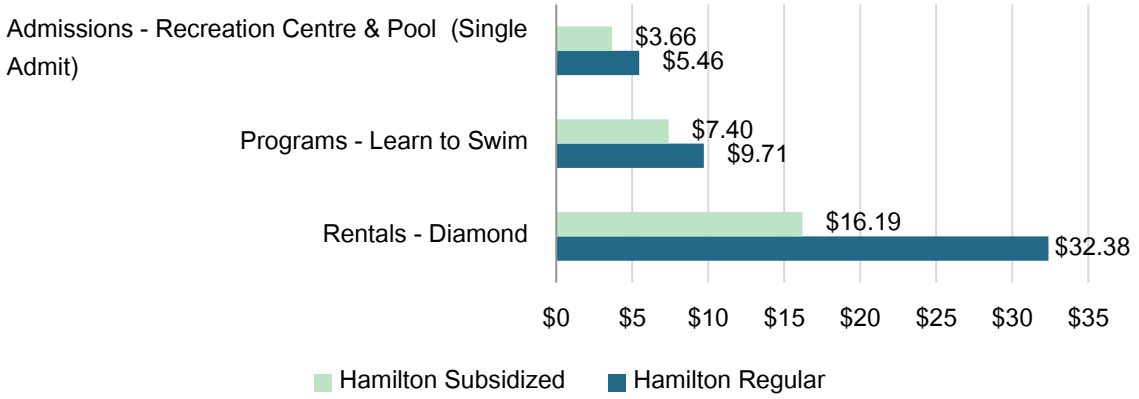
Hamilton provides more access through subsidies than peers

We compared three services across major service areas to understand how Hamilton structures its subsidies

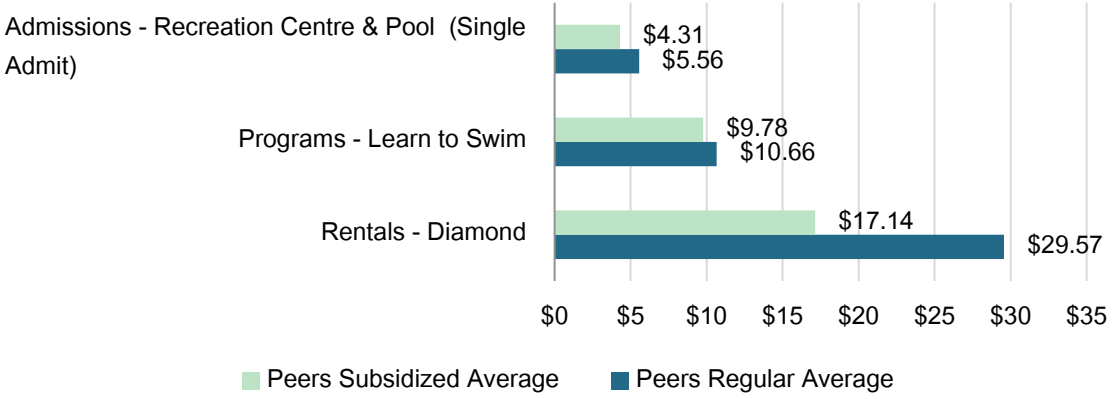
To contextualize Hamilton's subsidy approach, we reviewed one representative fee from admissions, programs and rentals and compared the regular and subsidized prices against peer averages.

- Hamilton reduces the price by 33% for a single-admission fee, compared to peers who reduce the fee by only 22% on average.
- Programs follow a similar pattern. Hamilton discounts learn-to-swim classes by 24%, while peers discount them by only an average of 9%.
- Rentals show the most pronounced gap. Hamilton discounts diamonds and other rentals by 50%, versus a 42% discount among peers.

Hamilton Subsidy Price Comparisons



Peers Subsidy Average Price Comparisons



/ RECREATION SURVEY FINDINGS

This section presents findings from the Recreation User Fees Survey

A total of 1,658 respondents provided feedback

The online, non-probability survey covered recreation fees, fee assistance programs and priorities for service delivery.

Key Findings

- Strong perceived value: 86% of respondents rate recreation services as good or very good value for money.
- Affordability varies by income: 80% find current fees affordable, but this masks a 27-percentage-point gap between lower-income (62%) and higher-income households (89%).
- Support for ability-to-pay pricing: 68% support fees based on ability to pay.
- Low fee assistance awareness: 57% of respondents are unaware of the Recreation Assistance Program.
- Capacity, not cost, is the top barrier: 24% cite programs being full as their primary barrier, compared to 10% citing cost.

Overall satisfaction is high but not universal

- While almost all rate positively, the 14% who perceive poor value are concentrated among lower-income households.

Capacity constraints outweigh cost barriers

- Program availability (24%) surpasses cost (10%) as the primary barrier.

Fee assistance awareness is insufficient

- With 57% unaware of the program, significant potential exists to improve access.

Three distinct constituencies exist

- Quality-Minded Moderates, Equal-Fee Supporters and Affordability Advocates have different priorities and will respond differently to policy changes.

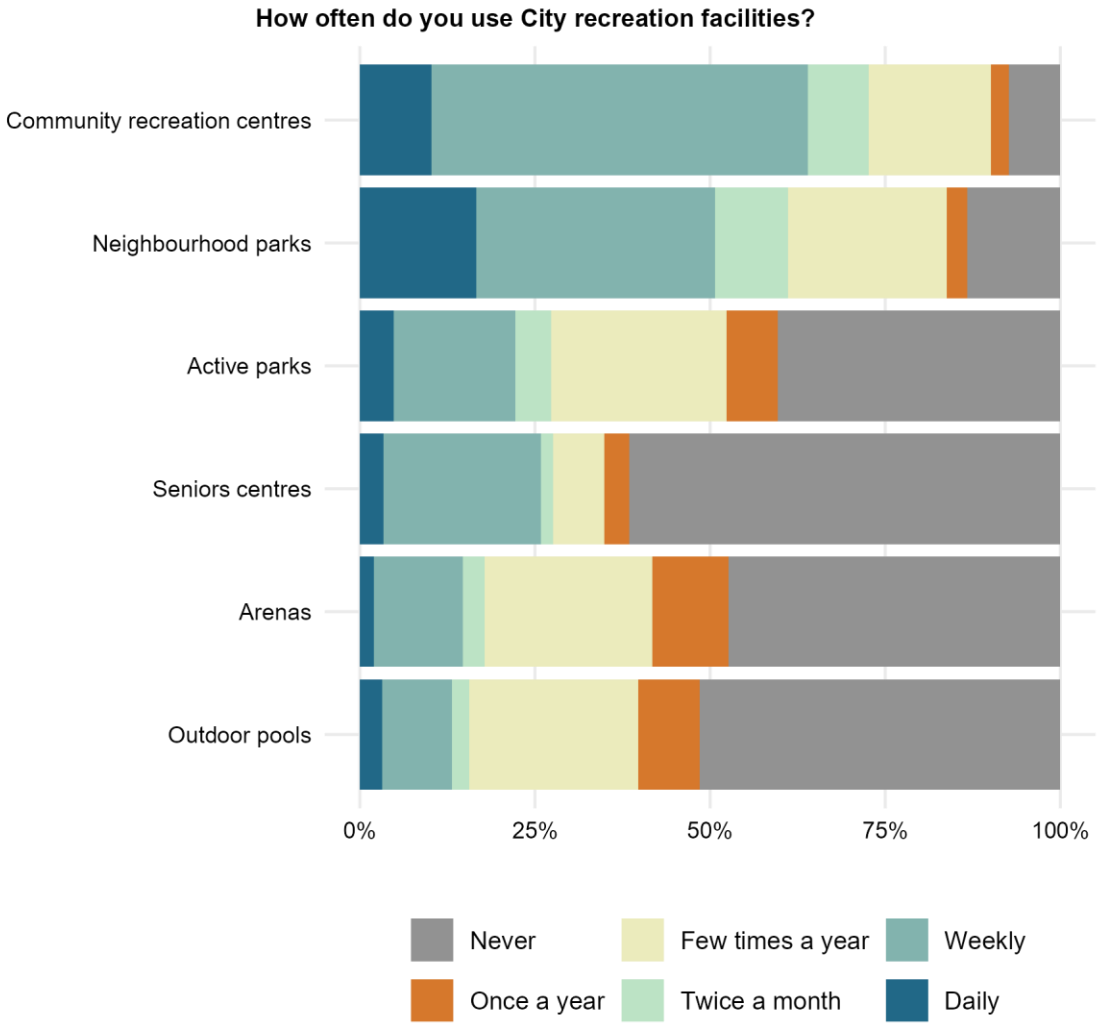
Partnerships are the preferred funding solution

- The strong preference for partnerships (43%) over fee increases (13%) suggests residents want to maintain accessibility through alternative revenue.

Community recreation centres are the most frequently used paid recreation facility

Community recreation centres show the highest regular usage rates, followed by parks with playgrounds and courts which don't have associated fees

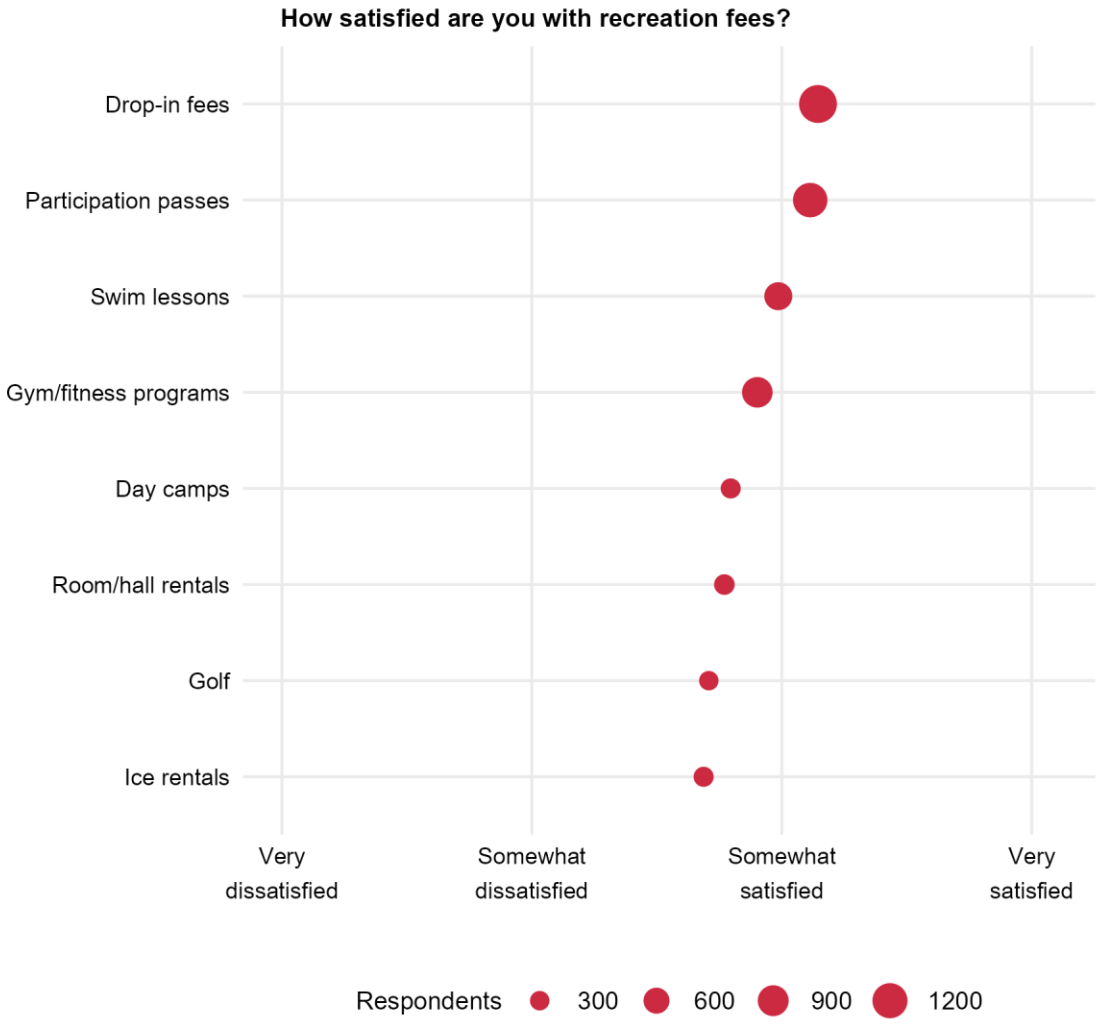
Specialized facilities like arenas, seniors' centres and golf courses have lower overall usage but serve dedicated user populations.



Drop-in fees and participation passes receive the highest user fee satisfaction ratings

The most-used fee types (drop-in fees, participation passes and swim lessons) have the highest satisfaction ratings

Respondents provide the lowest satisfaction ratings with fees for ice rentals and golf. This aligns with community benefit guiding principles for user fees.



Almost all rate recreation services as good value for money

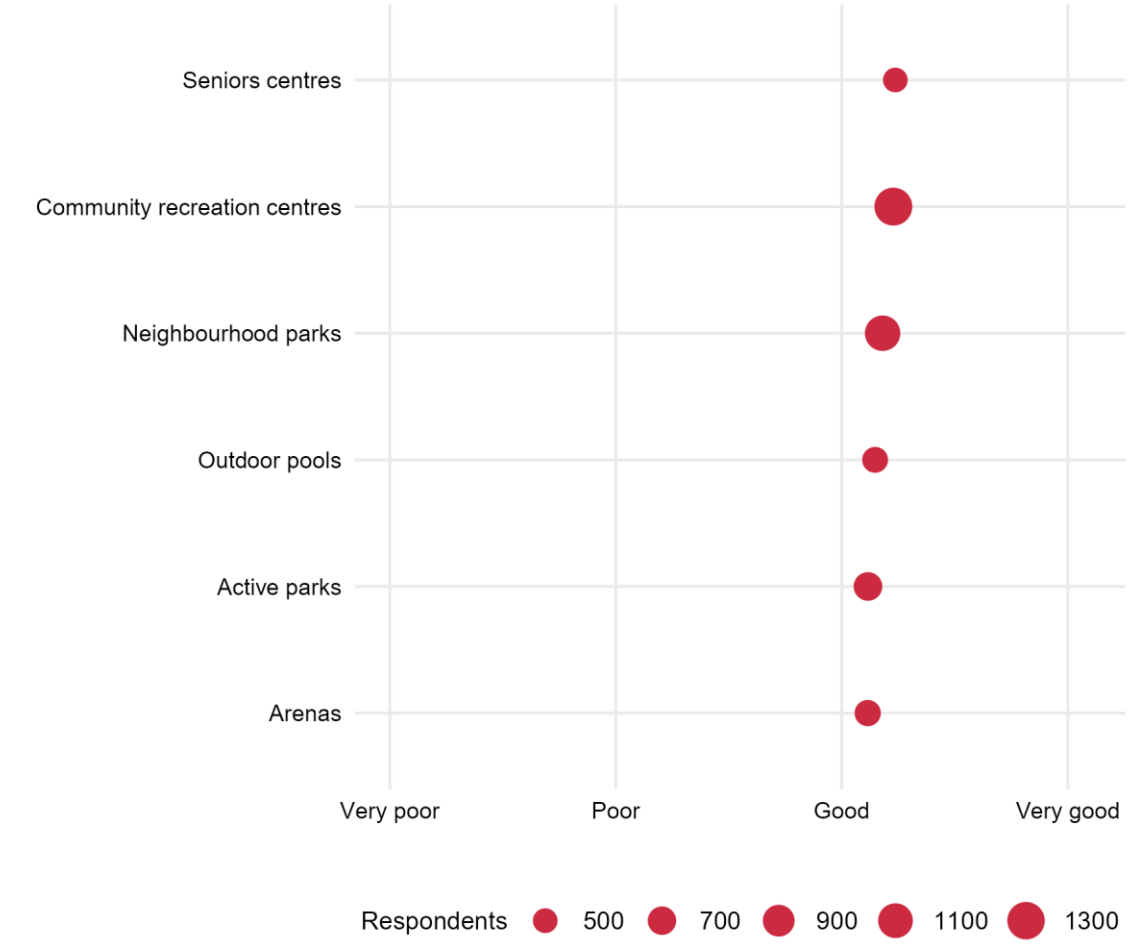
Value perceptions are consistent across facility types

Almost all value as “good” or “very good.” Only 3% rate the value as “very poor.”

Users of different facility types report similar value-for-money assessments, suggesting the positive value perception is broad-based rather than driven by specific services.

Value for money by facility type used

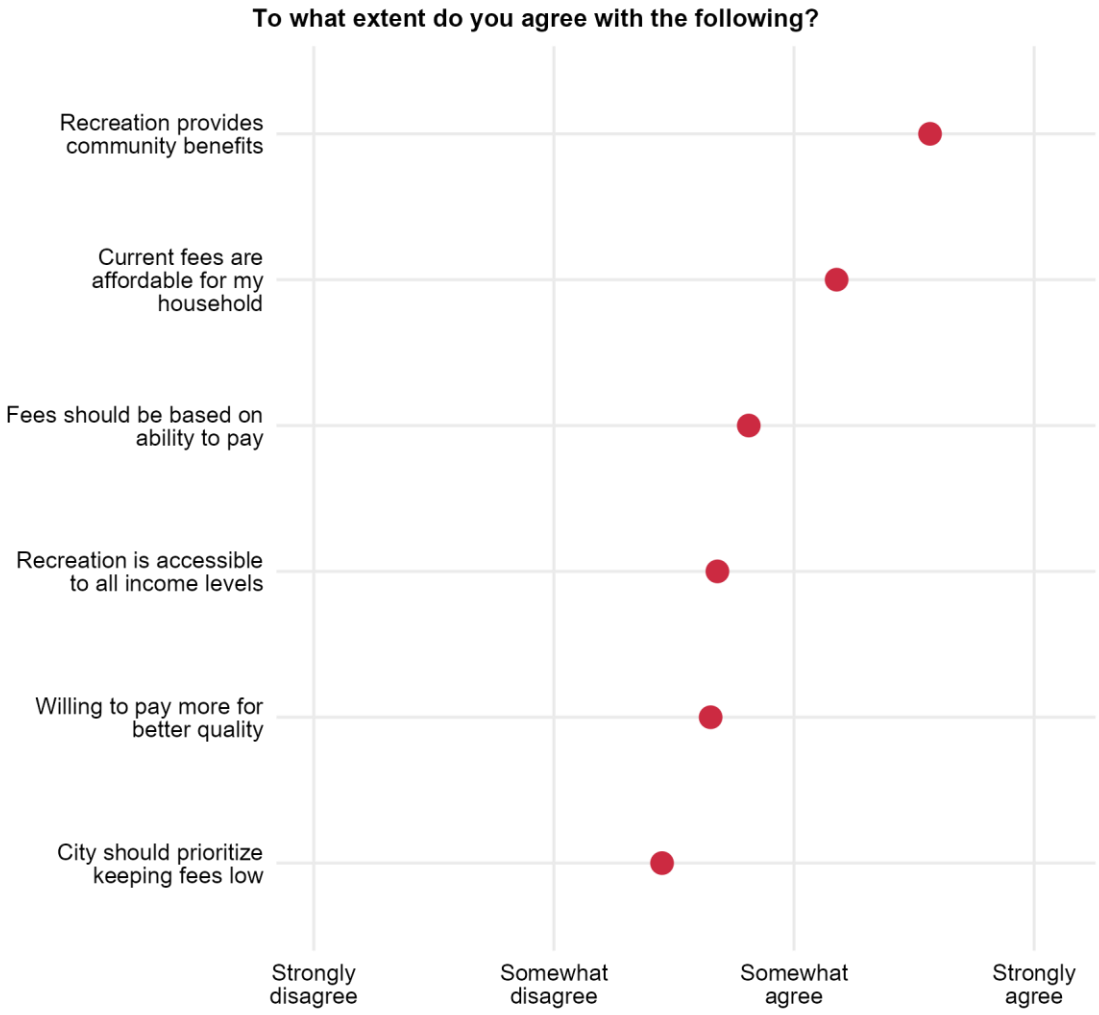
Among respondents who use each facility at least a few times per year



And almost all agree recreation provides important community benefits

But only 60% believe services are accessible to all income levels

- This 33-percentage-point gap between recognizing public value and perceiving equitable access represents a key tension in the data.
- Agreement that current fees are affordable (80%) exceeds agreement that services are accessible to all incomes (60%), suggesting respondents recognize their own affordability while acknowledging others may face barriers.
- Agreement is lowest that the City should prioritize keeping fees low.



But lower-income respondents are less likely to find fees affordable

62% of those in households with income under $70K find fees affordable

However, nine in ten respondents in households earning $100K+ agree that fees are affordable.

Almost all respondents agree that recreation provides community benefits.

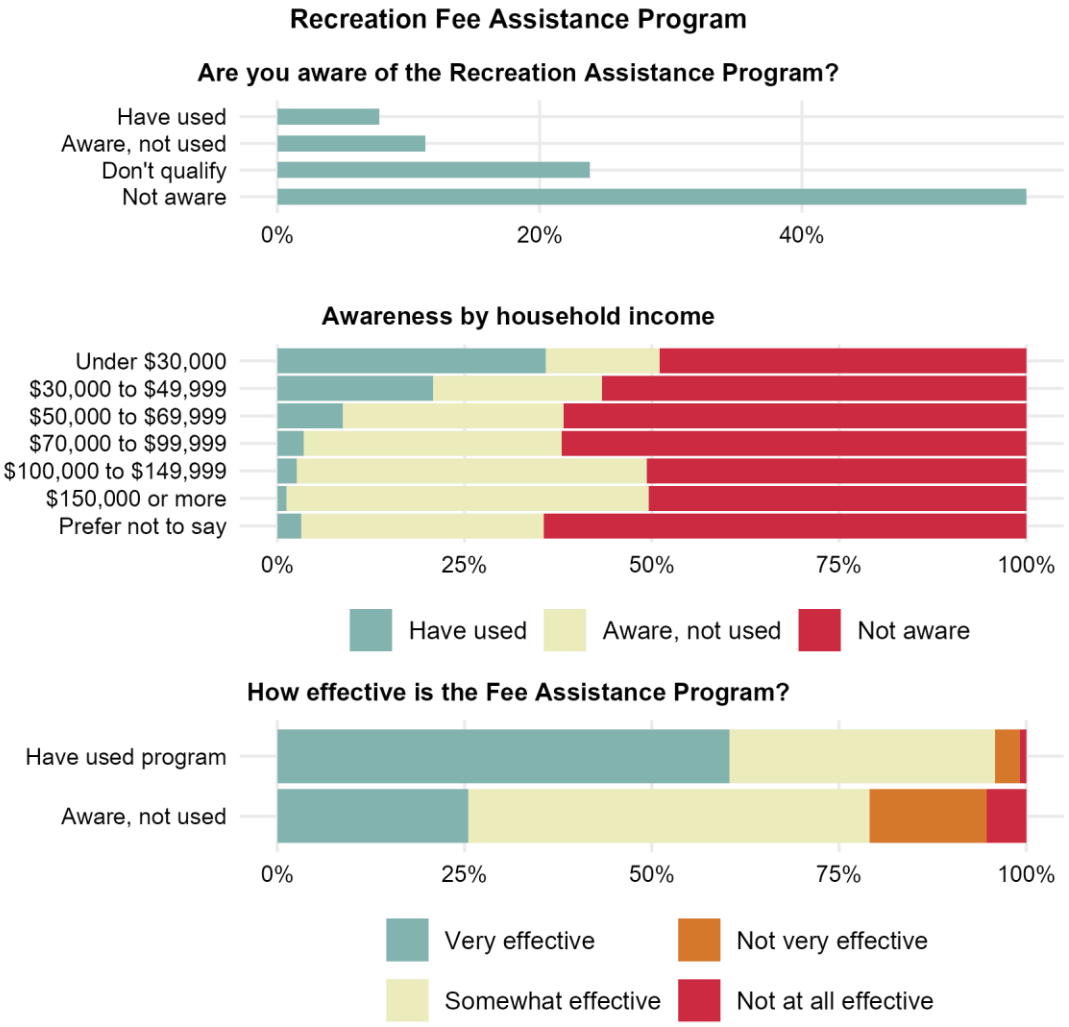
Lower-income respondents also show equity concerns through stronger support for ability-to-pay pricing and keeping fees low (overall agreement is lower for this item).



More than half of respondents are unaware of RAP

Fee assistance awareness does not differ substantially by income level

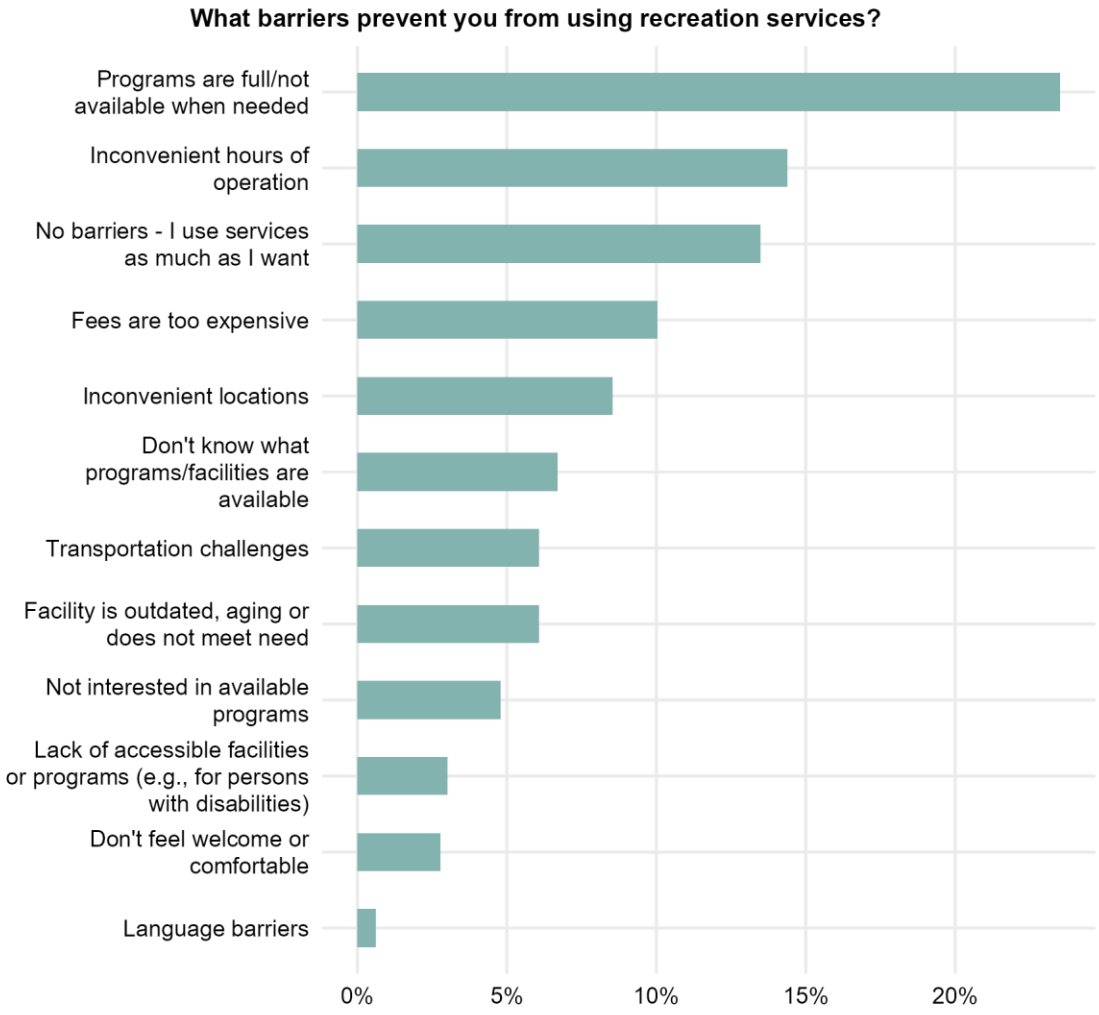
- Of those who are aware of the program, 24% don't meet program requirements, 11% haven't used it and only 8% have actually used the program. This suggests significant untapped potential for the program to reach eligible residents.
- Lower-income residents, who would benefit most from the program, show similar overall awareness rates to higher-income residents. This represents a missed opportunity for targeted outreach. However, larger proportions of lower-income respondents have used the program.
- More than half of those who use the program say it is very effective. However, perceptions of effectiveness are much lower among people who are aware of, but have not used, it. This is a potential area to improve perceptions of the program with an aim to drive use among eligible residents.



Program availability, not cost, is the most frequently mentioned barrier

Accessibility issues, such as available programs and hours of operation, are the most mentioned barriers

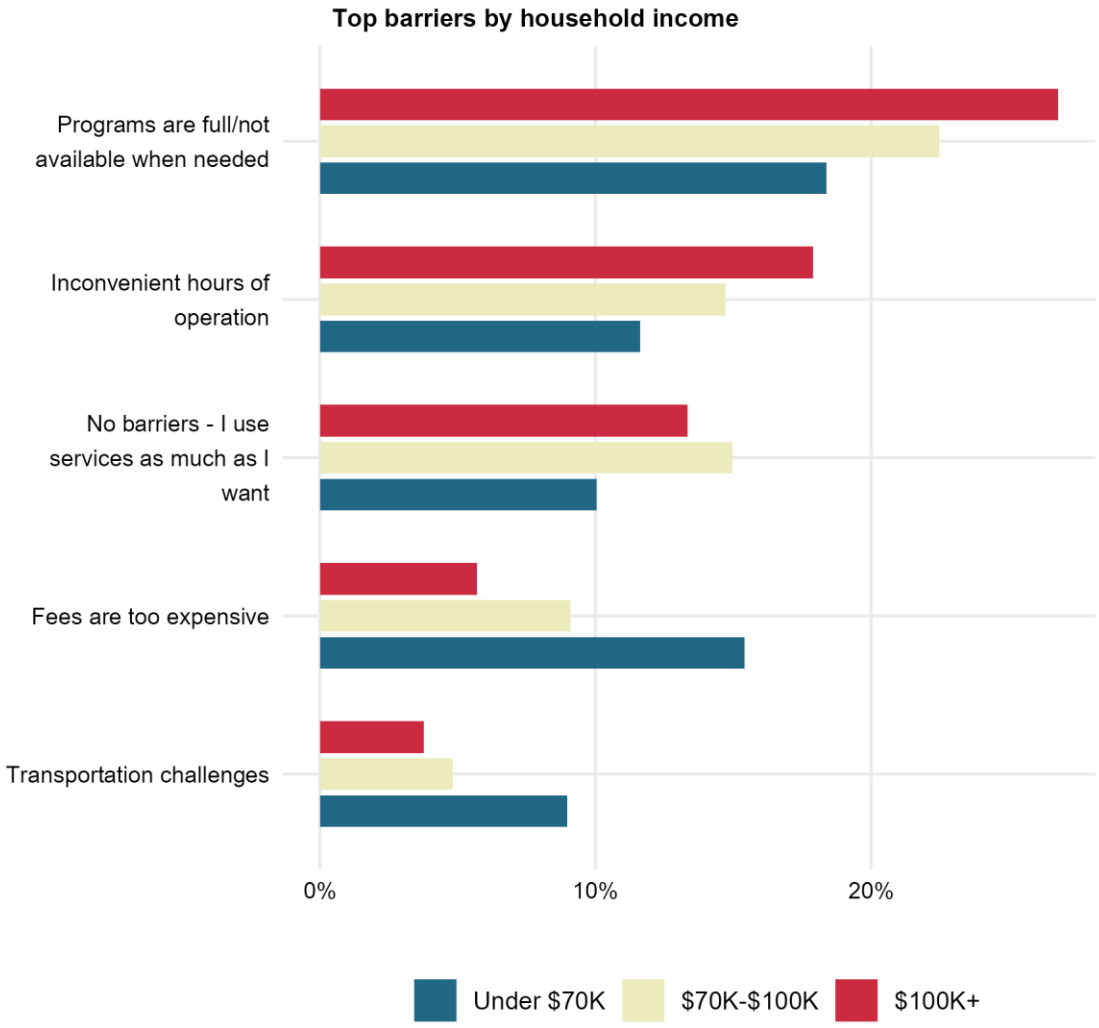
- 24% of respondents cite “programs are full or not available when needed” as a barrier, followed by inconvenient hours (14%).
- Cost barriers (10%) rank fourth, below capacity and scheduling issues.
- 13% report no barriers at all.



Lower income households are more likely to encounter cost barriers

Lower-income households are approximately twice as likely to cite fees as a barrier compared to higher-income households

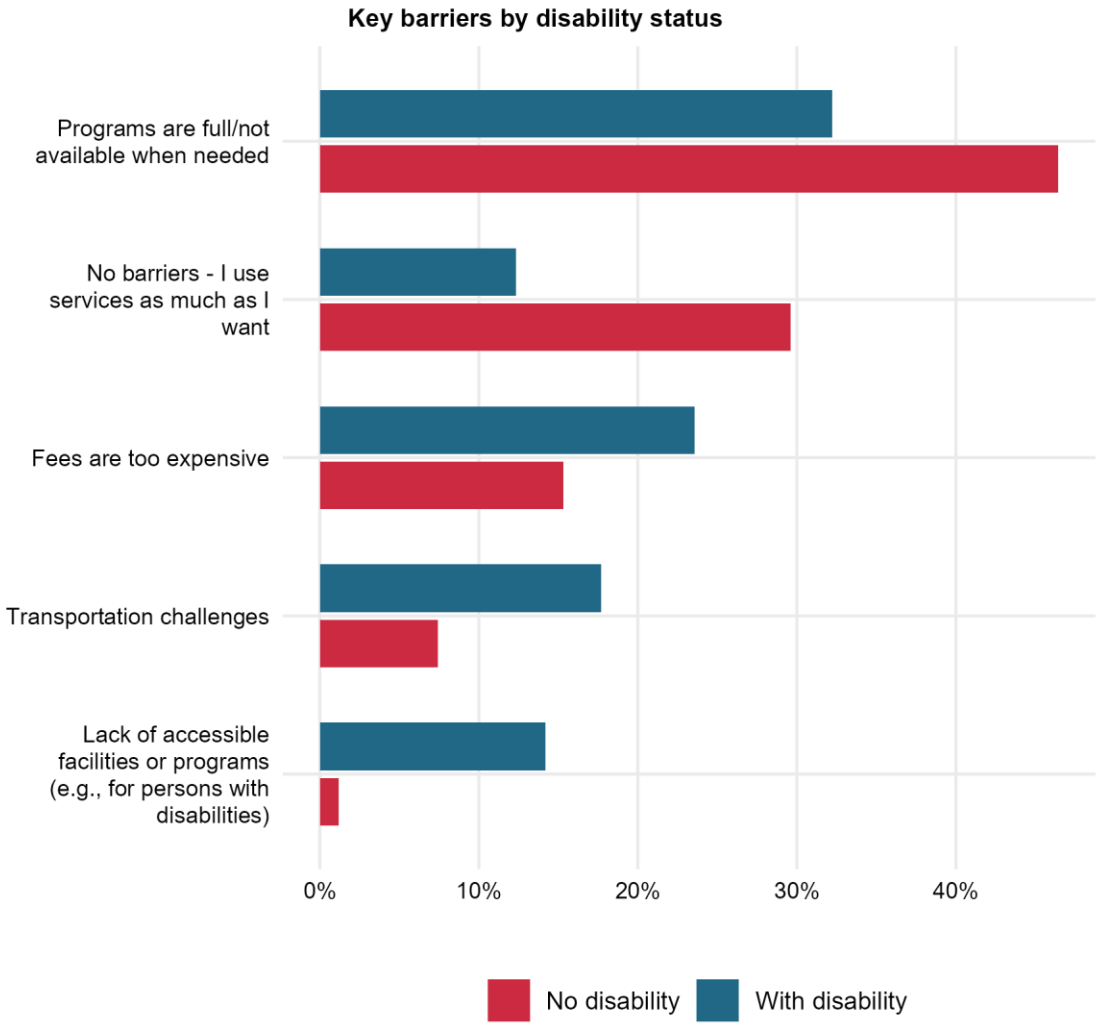
Meanwhile, higher-income households more often cite capacity issues, suggesting they participate more frequently and encounter accessibility issues.



Respondents with disabilities have more accessibility issues with services

Respondents who are disabled are more likely to encounter accessibility-specific barriers and transportation challenges

Respondents without disabilities are more likely to say they encounter no barriers to accessing services.

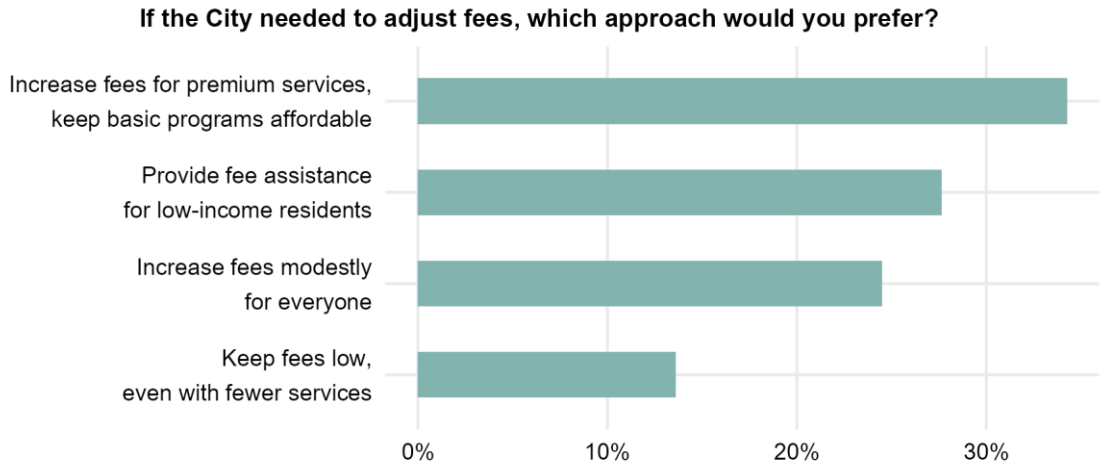


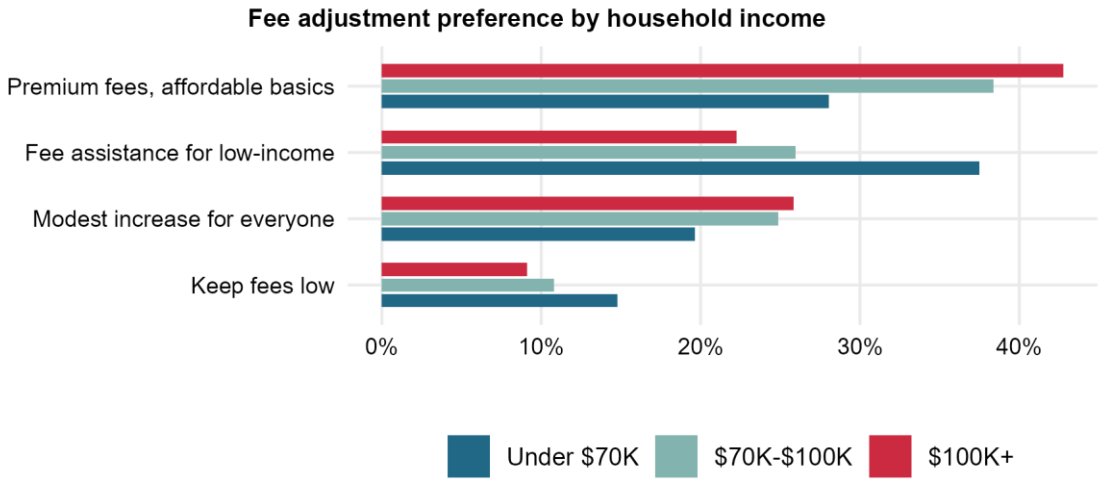
Respondents are most likely to prefer a tiered pricing approach

34% prefer increasing fees for premium services while keeping basic programs affordable

Fee assistance for low-income residents (28%) and modest increases for everyone (24%) follow. Only 14% prefer keeping fees low even with reduced services.

Higher-income respondents are more accepting of fee increases. They show greater preference for modest universal increases, while lower-income respondents more strongly favour fee assistance approaches. This divergence reflects different stakes in fee policy outcomes.



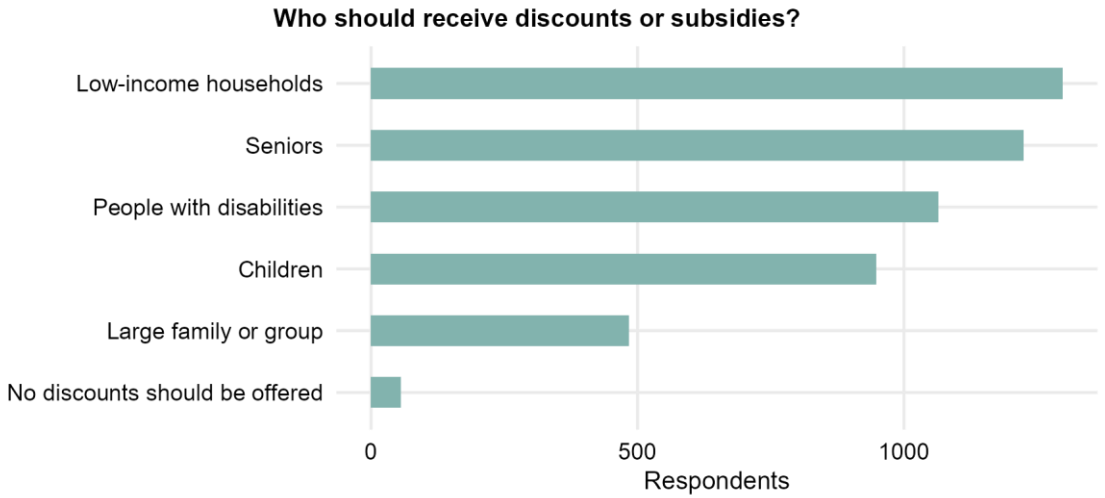


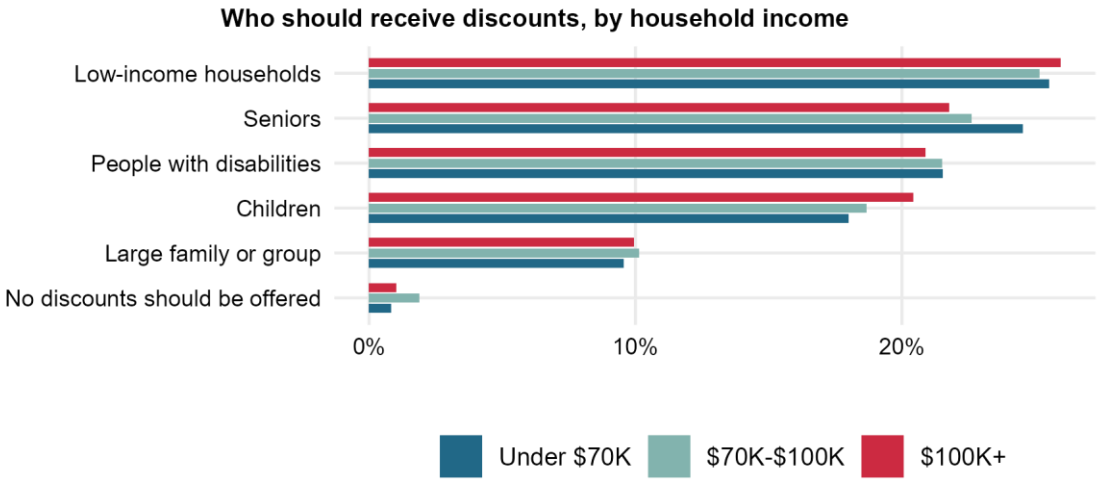
Respondents are most likely to say discounts should go to low-income households and seniors

Only 1% believe no discounts should be offered, indicating broad support for some form of targeted assistance

26% of mentions favour low-income household discounts, 24% favour seniors and 21% favour people with disabilities.

There is cross-income consensus on discount priorities. Both lower and higher-income respondents prioritize similar groups for discounts.

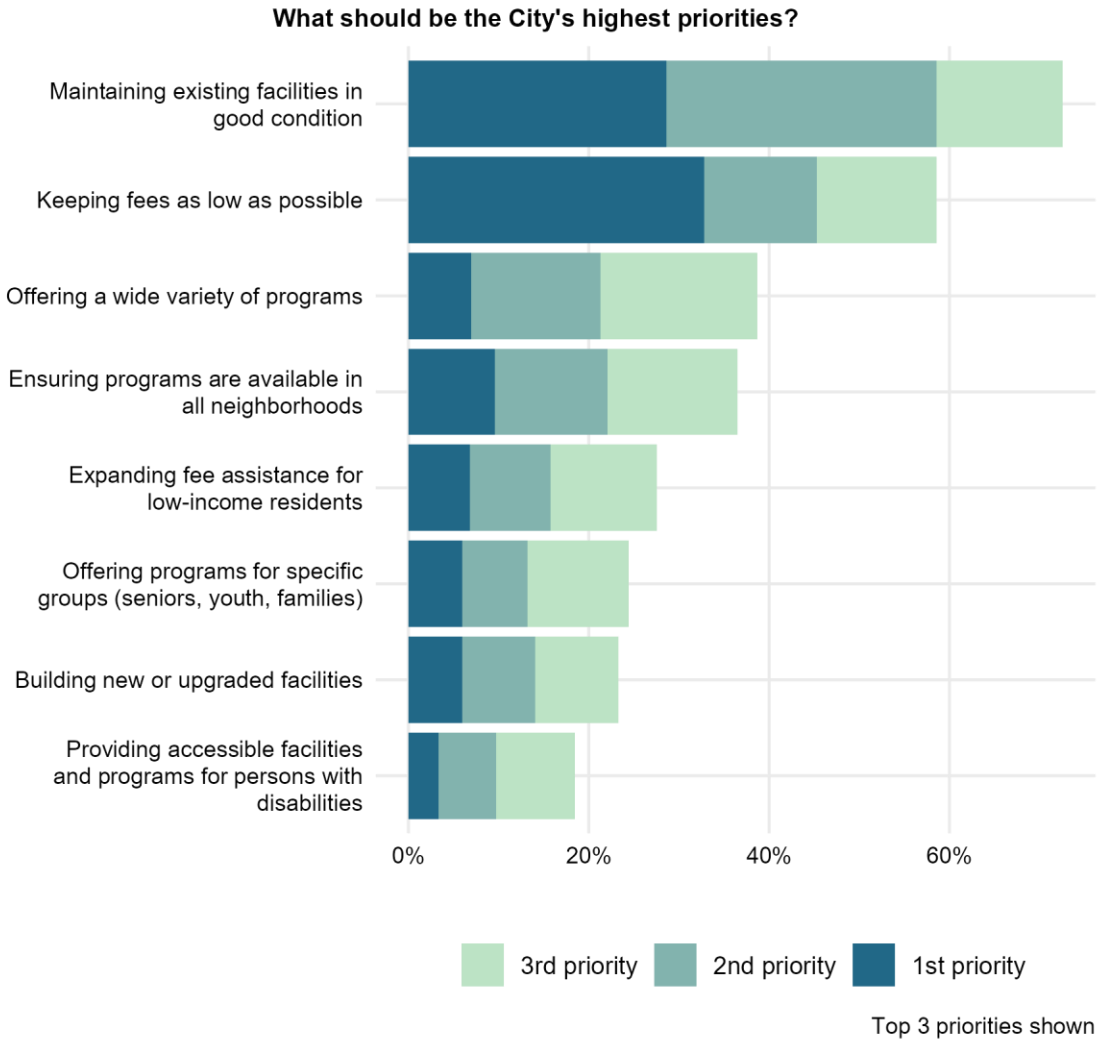




Maintaining existing facilities is the most common high priority, over keeping fees low

The most frequently mentioned top priority is keeping fares as low as possible, followed by maintaining existing facilities

- 70% of respondents say facility maintenance is a top 3 priority, followed by keeping fees low (57%). Offering a wide variety of programs (37%) and ensuring programs are available in all neighbourhoods (35%) have a similar number of mentions.
- Expanding fee assistance is a top 3 priority for 27% of respondents, with many prioritizing current infrastructure and low fees.

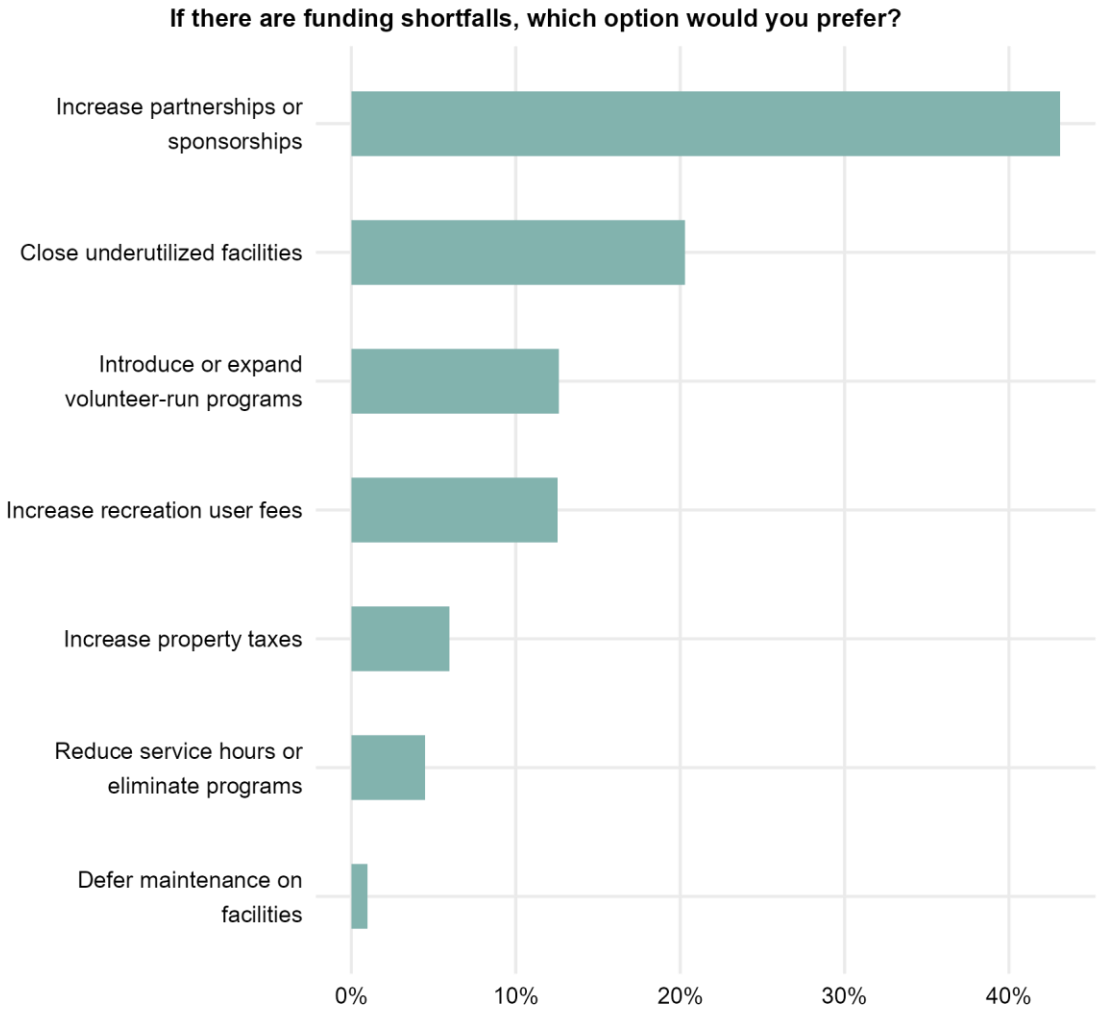


Respondents prefer partnerships and sponsorships over increasing user fees to address funding shortfalls

More than four in ten prefer partnerships to address funding shortfalls

This is much more frequent than closing underutilized facilities (20%) or increasing user fees (13%)

This suggests residents want to protect both service levels and affordability through alternative revenue sources.



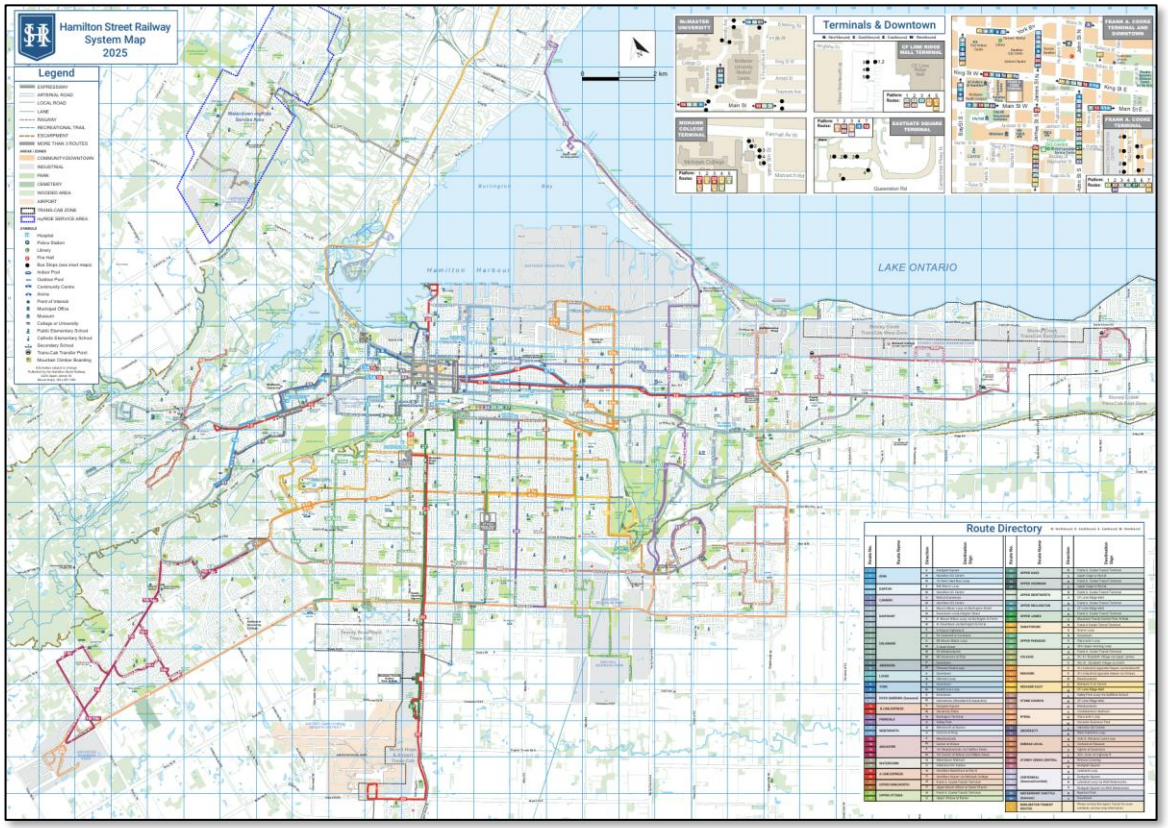
/ TRANSIT CURRENT STATE

Transit services are provided through the Hamilton Street Railway

The Hamilton Street Railway (HSR) serves a population of over 500k residents and 243 km² across Hamilton, Dundas, Flamborough, Ancaster and Stoney Creek

The HSR aims to fulfill the City's overall vision of being the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

- The HSR operates within the City of Hamilton's Public Works Department.
- Within the HSR's operating area, there are 35 routes that operate 7 days a week.
- HSR employs 961 full-time and 64 part-time employees, made up of operators, mechanics, maintenance and administrative staff.
- The City has a fleet of 305 buses, with 49 being articulated and the remaining buses standard.
- With Hamilton's population set to grow to over 660,000 by 2031, the City has engaged in several transit infrastructure projects to sustain its expansion, most recently through HSR Next (2025). This includes adding an additional 450 employees and a 55% increase in service hours over the next 7 years.



HSR has six core fare categories

Fares are split by demographic and payment type

HSR offers different fares by classification. Fares are generally split into both demographic and length (single use, monthly pass, annual pass).

All cash fares are assessed at the same rate, regardless of demographic. Cash fares can be paid using exact change, a paper ticket or tapping your debit or credit card. Residents save when they use PRESTO rather than paying with cash or card. For adults, the savings amount to $0.90 per ride.

- Children 5 and under ride free, and those between 6-12 ride free with a PRESTO card. Seniors 80+ are eligible for a “Golden Age Pass”, which also grants free rides.
- Seniors 65+ and Youth between 13-19 with a PRESTO card are offered a discounted fare of roughly 46% on each trip.
- Post-Secondary (and Columbia College) passes are included with the cost of tuition.
- HWSTS provides a School Hour pass to public board students that live more than 3.2km from their school.

We collated each fare type into six categories:

Child

- Child under 5*
- Child 6-12 (with)

Youth (13-19)

- Youth Ticket
- Youth Monthly Pass
- Youth – Fare Assist

School

- Columbia College (includes off-campus, on-campus and non-residence)
- School Hour Only
- School Plus

Post-secondary

- McMaster Graduate Students Association
- McMaster Student Union
- Mohawk College
- Redeemer College

Adult

- Adult Cash
- Adult Ticket
- Adult Monthly Pass
- Adult – Fare Assist
- Employer Commuter Pass

Seniors (65+)

- Senior Ticket
- Senior Monthly Pass
- Senior Annual Pass
- Senior – Fare Assist
- Golden Age Pass (80+)

HSR piloted Fare Assist in 2024, making it permanent in 2026

From 2007 until 2024, HSR offered an Affordable Transit Pass

This program allowed residents to purchase an Adult Monthly Pass at half price based on eligibility. The program was then replaced with the pilot Fare Assist program launching in 2024, providing a 30% discount off Adult, Youth and Senior fares.

As of January 1st, 2026, the discount increased to 50% off and has become permanent.

Fare Assist follows a “pay as you go” format, where participants can load funds only as needed on their PRESTO Card. This gives financial autonomy to many users of the program, without having to commit to placing the full amount on their PRESTO account each month.

The program also extends to household members including spouse/partner and children, something the Affordable Transit Pass did not have.

This is also the opinion of many respondents of our survey, with over 70% who believe that Fare Assist is effective and just over half that are in favour of expanding it for low-income residents.

HSR determines eligibility for Fare Assist based on having a household income at or below the Low-Income Measure After Tax

This also includes those receiving support payments like

- Ontario Works
- Ontario Disability Support Program
- The Canada Pension Plan Disability Benefit
- Employment Insurance
- Workplace Safety and Insurance Board

Additionally, the program has also expended to refugees and newcomers to Canada.

HSR programs give everyone the opportunity to use transit

HSR has implemented alternative programs to ensure neither cost, geography nor ability is a barrier to transit

One of HSR's goals is to provide barrier-free access to transit for all. To implement this, HSR created accessible transit policies and priorities as shown to the right.

In addition to the Fare Assist, each program created by HSR contributes to one or more guiding principles.

These programs provide community benefit by enabling mobility for residents who may be excluded otherwise.

The HSR Support Person program helps to make sure there is equality of access regardless of ability.

In addition to these programs, HSR has also rolled out accessible low floor buses, safely allowing individuals using PMDs and wheelchairs to access transit. If an individual has difficulty using HSR buses, Accessible Transportation Services provides equitable coverage through its DARTS and Taxi Scrip program.

Program	Description
TransCab	Shared ride service between HSR and Blue-Line taxi in areas of Hamilton that are not serviced by transit. This service is fully accessible for residents with mobility needs. There is a 50-cent surcharge.
Accessible Transportation Services (ATS) - DARTS	ATS contracts DARTS, a non-profit organization that provides door-to-door shared paratransit services. Fares are the same as conventional transit.
HSR Support Person	Allows a support person to accompany an eligible rider at no cost.
Taxi Scrips	A discount taxi program which allows registered residents to receive a 40% discount on trips. This program is intended for persons with physical or functional disabilities that are unable to use fixed-route transit.
myRide On-Demand	Similar to ride hailing, customers can book through an app or by calling to be picked up in designated areas by optimizing routes based on demand. This service will ultimately replace the TransCab service.

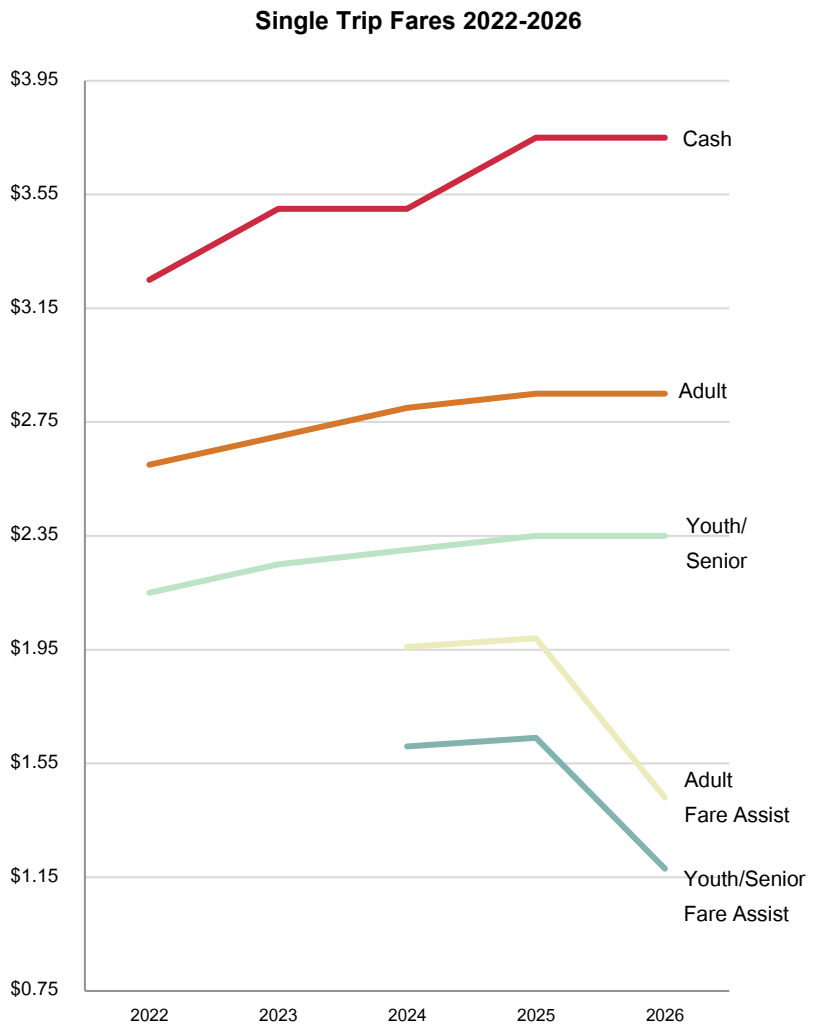
Fare assist provides greater discounts to improve accessibility

Fare Assist now provides a 50% discount off each respective fare as of this year

To determine fares for each group, the City currently uses traditional, differential and comparative pricing.

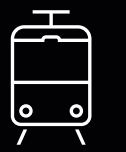
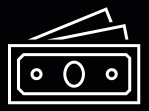
HSR's 10-Year Transit Strategy and the 2023 Fare Policy report prescribed a minimum annual increase equivalent to the Consumer Price Index, combined with other per-fare increases as approved by Council.

- Differential pricing refers to determining fees based on user characteristics, such as age and income level. HSR's Guiding Principles outlines who fees affect and benefit.
- HSR also established a comparative pricing principle to encourage alignment with peer transit agencies.
- Between 2022 and 2026, fares increased from 9%-14%. This is modestly above cumulative inflation over the same period, at 7.8%.
- Adult and Youth/Senior Fare Assist trips now are set at a 50% discount to regular fares to promote equity and inclusion.
- Post-secondary and school fares are negotiated through agreements with their respective educational institutions or associations and do not have a single trip fare cost.



In the past ten years, HSR has created policies to guide transit fares

In support of the City's strategic goals, HSR developed documents to guide transit planning and service delivery. Each document addresses different aspects of network growth, rider experience and service planning, while reinforcing the principles of equity and accessibility. Below are the documents that are contributing to the City's transit philosophy and are relevant to the creation of future fee policies.

	**HSR Next: Moving Hamilton Forward** (2025)	→	HSR's has an implementation plan for the (Re)Envision network over the course of seven years, with implementation beginning in 2027. This significantly expands transit services across Hamilton and particularly in high-growth areas that are poorly connected today.
	**HSR Fare Policy** (2023)	→	The most current iteration of the HSR's fee policy, which outlines policies that make transit equitable and remove barriers based on HSR's current Guiding Principles. Notably, this introduced the new Fare Assist Program.
	**Transforming the HSR Network – (Re)envision the HSR** (2019)	→	A review of HSR's conventional bus service to design a network and reaching modal split targets set in the TMP. Proposed network design informed by significant public consultation and technical expertise from McMaster University.
	**Transportation Master Plan: City in Motion (TMP)** (2018)	→	Strategic planning framework for future transportation related studies and projects. Acts as a transportation blueprint and catalyst to achieve the goals from the City's 2016-2025 strategic plan.
	**10-Year Local Transit Strategy Report** (2015)	→	Discusses Hamilton's Long Term Rapid Transit System and the Rapid Ready plan for transit.

HSR's Guiding Principles are outlined in HSR Next

In 2021, HSR updated the six guiding principles as a part of the (Re)envision the HSR project and extend into the HSR Next

These principles contribute directly to shaping the future of the HSR's user fee policy, placing in perspective what is important for residents and riders. It prescribes how user fees and subsidies are applied to different groups, based on what matters most to residents. They relate to the proposed guiding principles of community benefit, accessibility, equity and affordability. The six current guiding principles are:

		
Customer experience is at the heart	**Honour equity, diversity and inclusion**	**Deliver on promises**
► Ensure a smooth customer journey. ► Be open to feedback and complaints and exceed the expectations of riders. ► Drive positive change through continuous improvement and outreach, including on where user fees are directed.	► Implement fare policies to ensure every group can afford to take transit when they need it. ► Provide barrier-free transit that is accessible for all, including through reduced fares.	► Provide reliable and comfortable transit to riders. ► Ensure that all parts of the journey are smooth, from stops and shelters to a clean and enjoyable ride.
		
Connect, innovate and evolve	**Engage with employees to improve customer experience**	**Make a positive impact on communities, environment and economy**
► Integrate mobility for customers to connect to other forms of transportation, such as the One-Fare Program using. ► Appeal to new riders and make transit the first choice when taking a trip.	► Integrate mobility for customers to connect to other forms of transportation, such as the One-Fare Program using. ► Appeal to new riders and make transit the first choice when taking a trip.	► Design a transit-first philosophy. ► Have a strong partnership with businesses and support advocacy within communities. ► Acting on climate change, including having one of the greenest transit fleets in Canada.

Ridership has been steadily recovering since 2021

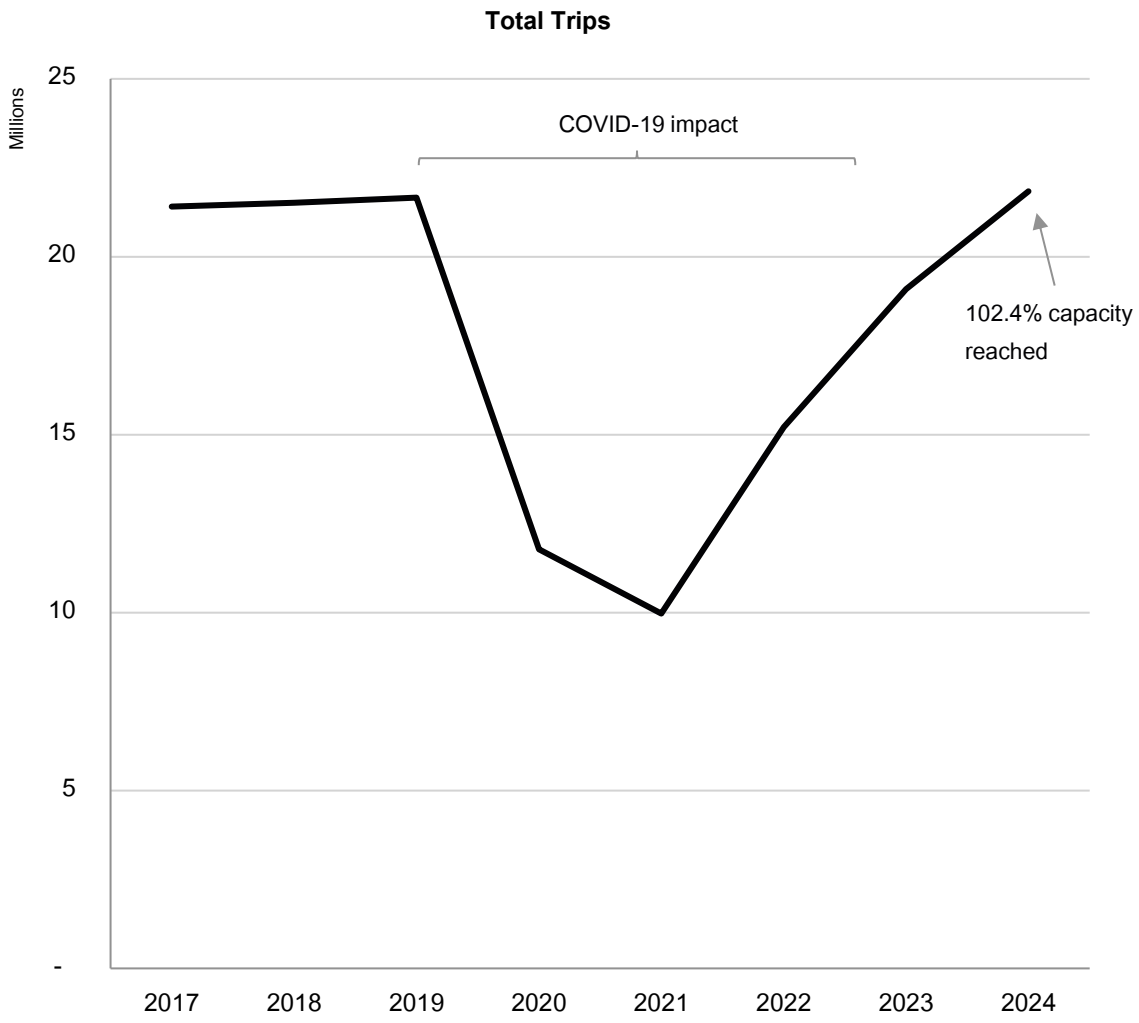
Despite prescribed CPI-linked fare adjustments, total boardings continue to grow and surpass pre-pandemic levels

This suggests that price sensitivity has not materially constrained demand at current levels.

HSR has implemented service and fare initiatives to help with ridership recovery across all groups. In 2024, HSR introduced the Fare Assist program as an equity measure, for those at or below the low-income measure (LIM) and were disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

Despite a brief pause during the pandemic, HSR continued to increase transit service hours and capacity through the 10-Year Local Transit Strategy.

Fare assist programs, such as the ones discussed here aim to improve access to ridership. This follows one of the City's Guiding Principles that affordability supports ridership rather than eroding it.



Cost recovery for fares broadly aligns with community benefit

2024's recovery outcomes are generally aligned with their intended design

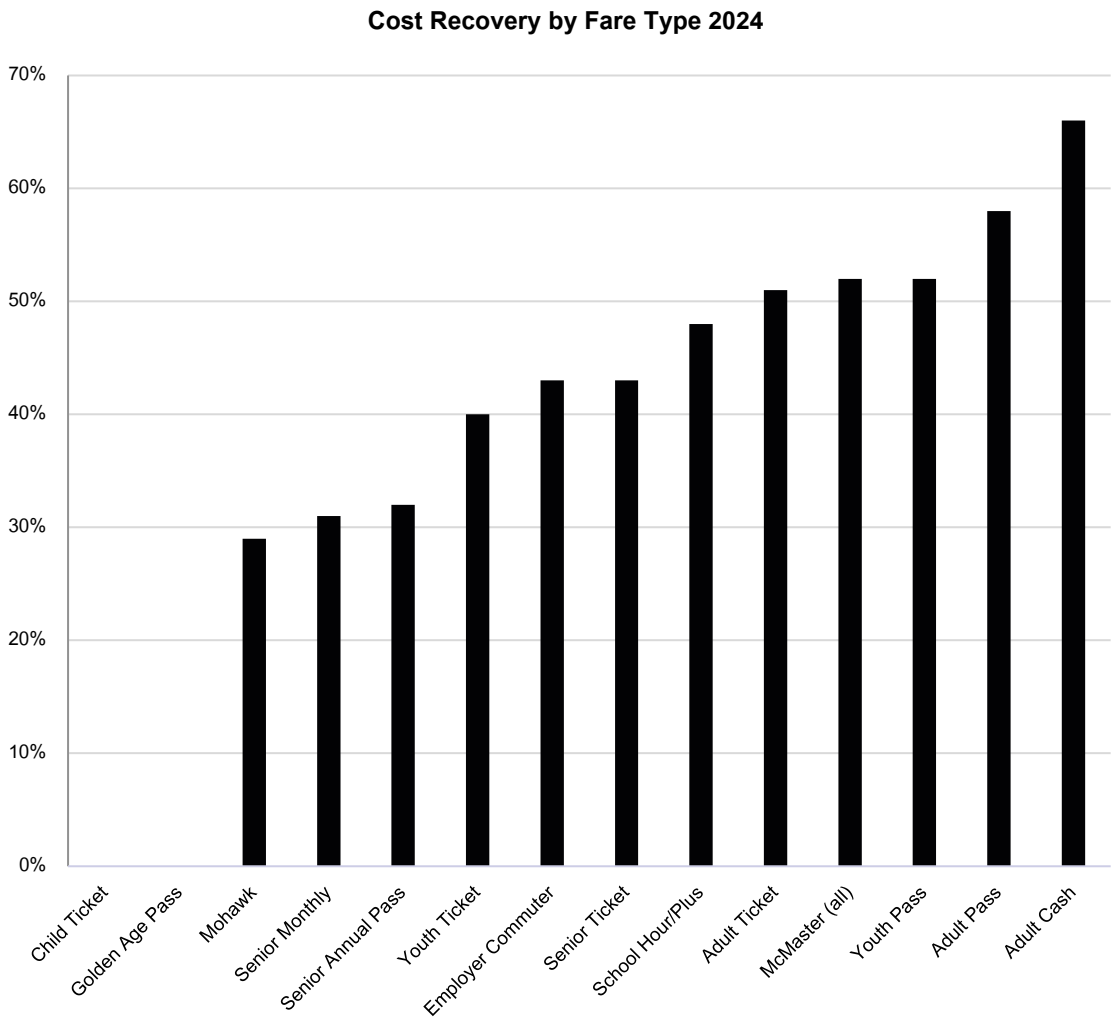
Child tickets and Golden Age Passes make up 0% of cost recovery, which makes transit more accessible for those groups.

Certain subsidized groups, such as Senior tickets, Youth passes and Youth tickets meet or exceed the average cost recovery mark.

Adult and Cash fares came in at 59% and 65% respectively, helping to balance the overall cost recovery as core fares.

Outside of fee groups with no intended cost recovery, Mohawk College has the lowest cost recovery percentage in 2024, which is due to high ridership in comparison to fees paid.

Both Redeemer College and Columbia College had over 350% cost recovery and are not included in the graph. Students in these categories pay upfront for transit costs but are using the system less overall.

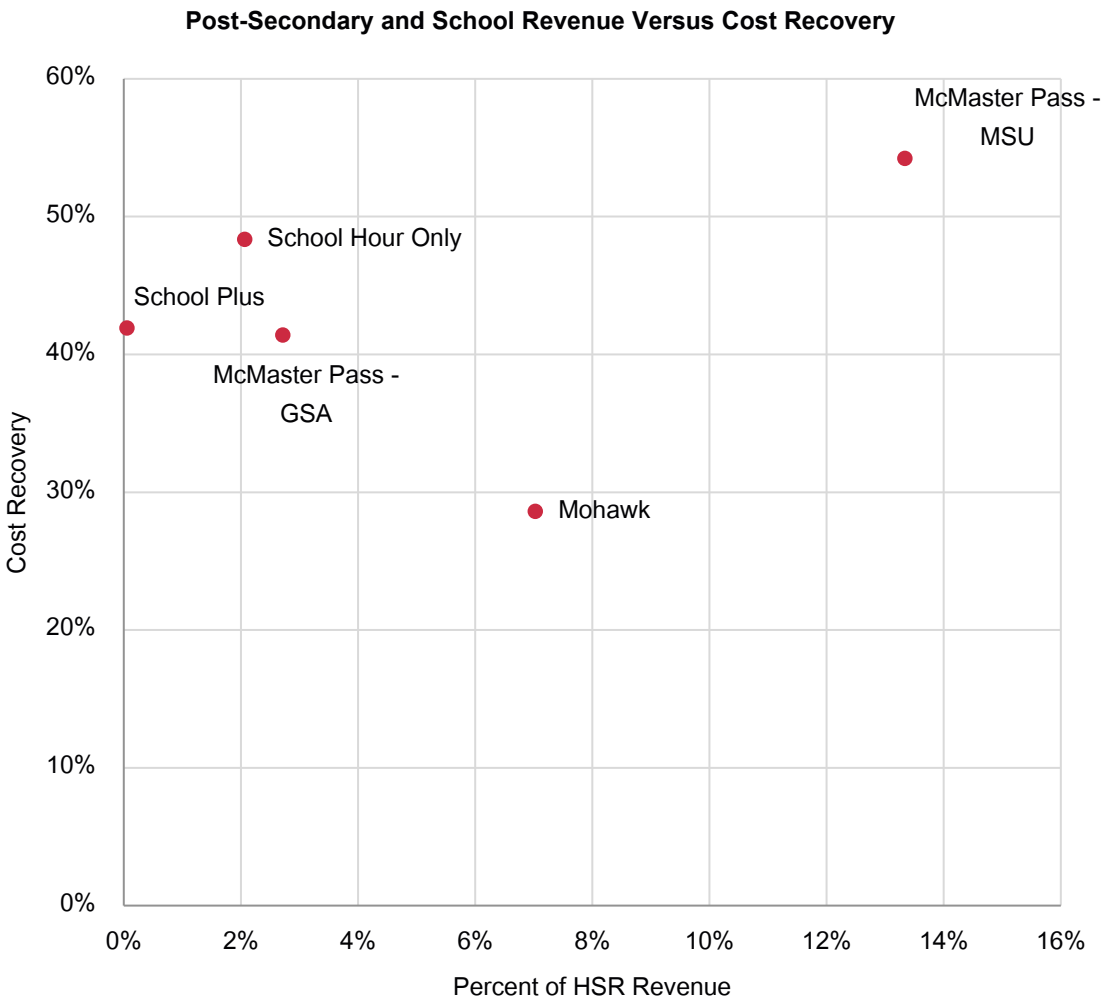


Post-secondary and School have high-cost recovery, but only make up 25% of revenue

Post-secondary institutions and schools assess the levy at the beginning of the year

This model of paying up front has led to higher recovery rates.

- With 27,000 students, the McMaster Student Association (consisting of undergraduate students) accounted for most school and post-secondary revenues.
- Columbia College had a recovery rate at 355% and Redeemer College at 348%, but each account for a small proportion of revenue (0.4% each). These colleges are excluded from the chart as costs for these services are not fully recorded against revenues, including costs providing additional transportation services.
- While post-secondary passes generate under 25% of revenue, reliance on these passes comes with risk. As of 2026, the federal government has placed a cap on the number of international students in Canada. This may affect the HSR's overall revenue received from post-secondary institutions.



The relative fare index shows most fares are recovering in proportion to usage (1/2)

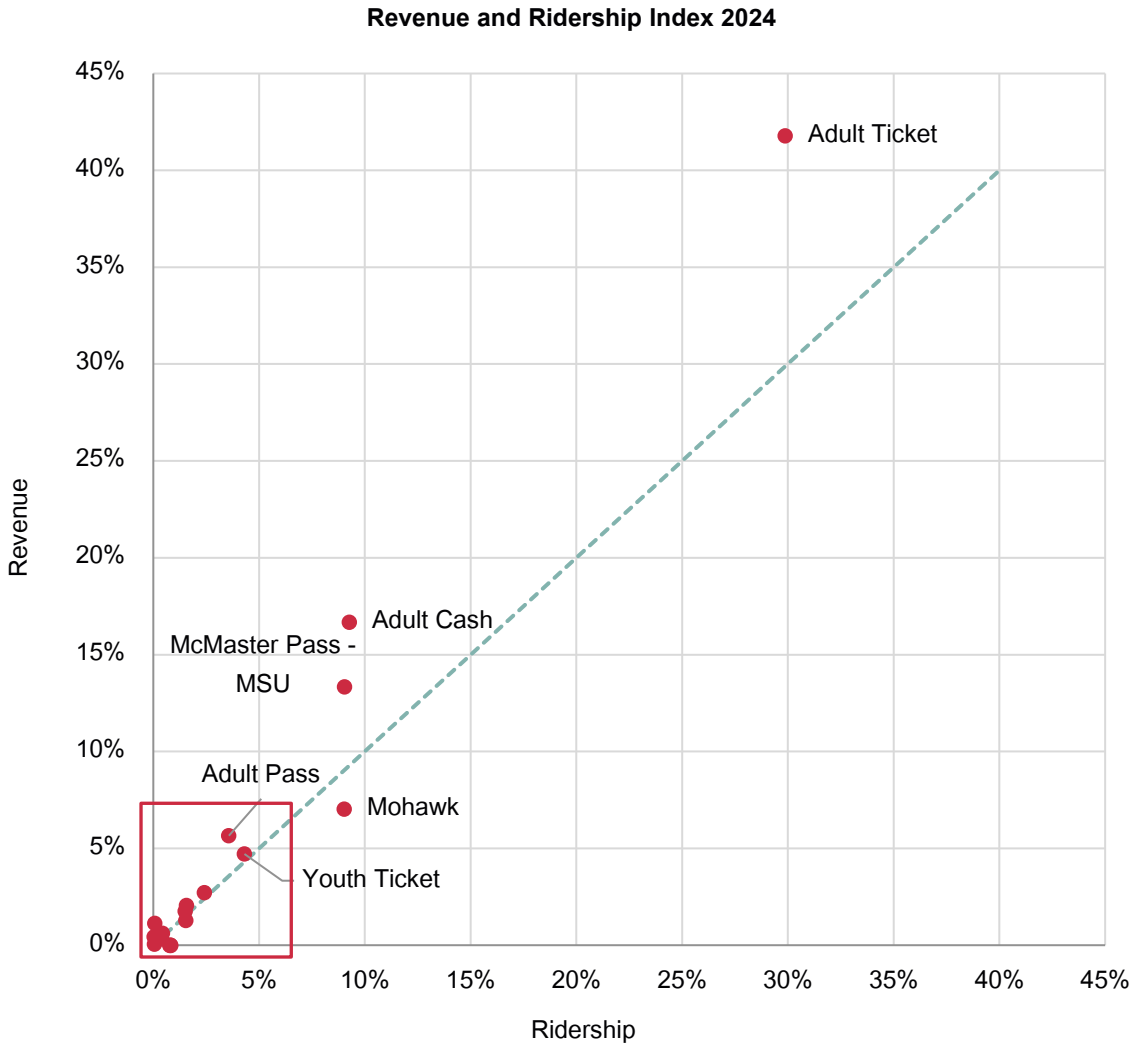
Several fees pull more than their share of weight

The relative fare index was calculated by taking the percentage of total revenue for each fare type, divided by the percentage total ridership attributed to each fare.

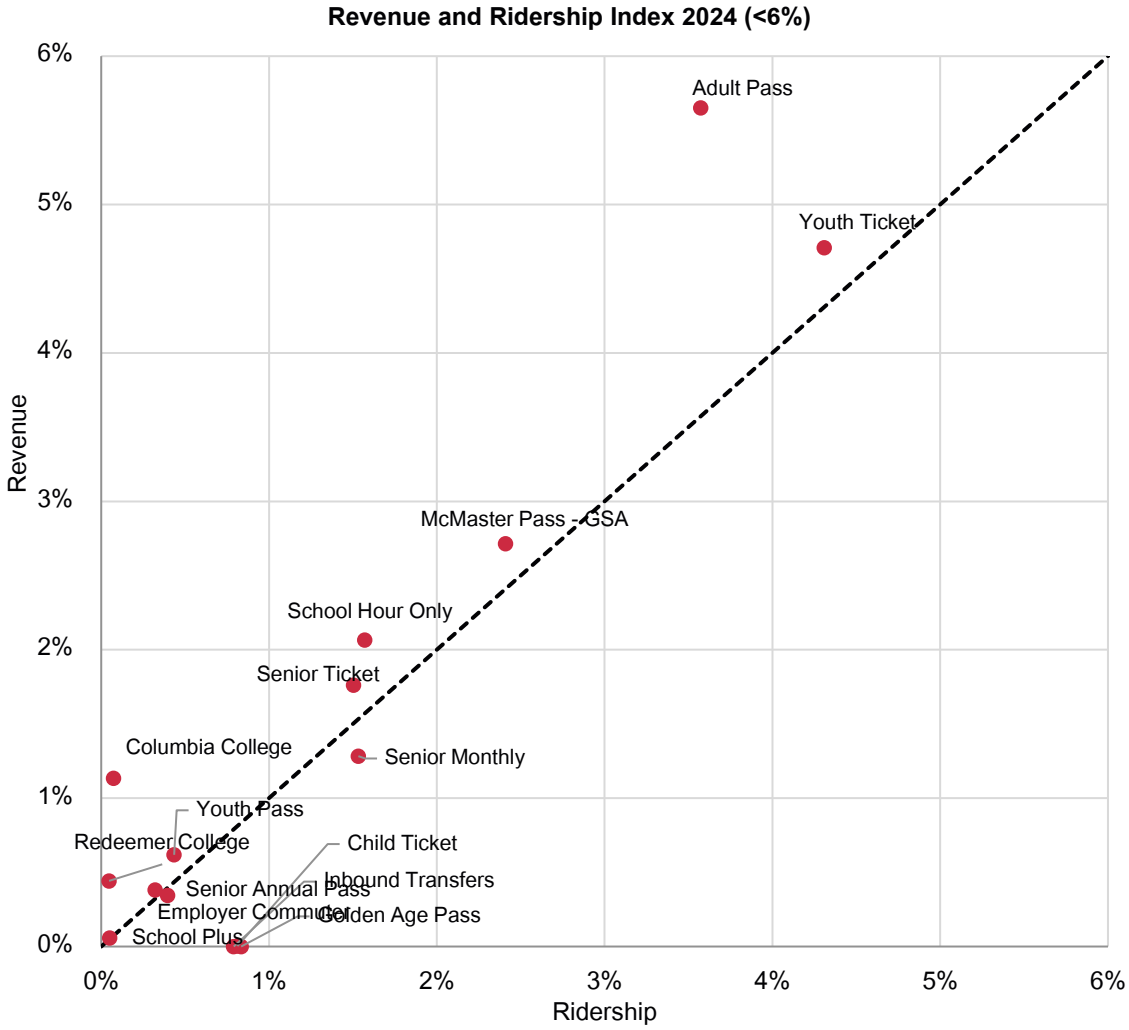
- Points on the trendline indicate revenue generated is exactly in proportion to use. The red chart inset is broken out on the following page.
- Points above the trendline indicate the fare contributes more revenue than trips.
- Points below the trendline indicate the fare contributes less revenue than trips.

Fares that are paid up front, such as passes or tuition generate revenue regardless of actual trips taken.

Subsidized groups will generally have a lower ratio as they are designed to improve overall access to transit and increase ridership.



The relative fare index shows most fares are recovering in proportion to usage (2/2)



/ TRANSIT PEER APPROACHES

Peers have similar guiding principles

We selected four municipalities to compare Hamilton against – Burlington, Brampton, Mississauga and Oakville

These peers were chosen based on proximity and shared regional context in the GTHA.

However, there are some differences to consider, as each network has a different level of system maturity, urban density and service intensity. These factors affect cost recovery performance and ridership levels. Comparisons should be interpreted within that context rather than as direct equivalents.

All municipalities broadly create and run their transit operations under four values.

The chart to the right shows the common principles that peer municipalities use to set user fees.

These values can conflict, such as when balancing equity with long-term financial sustainability. This issue is especially relevant for subsidized fares.



Affordability

- Keeping fares affordable for children, youth, seniors, students and low-income riders.
- Ensuring routine fare increases do not create extra barriers.



Ridership Growth

- Trying to increase ridership post-pandemic, while balancing the current cost-of-living conditions.
- Using fare structure adjustments to influence ridership patterns (e.g., time-based transfers, loyalty programs).



Financial Sustainability

- Aligning fare adjustments with the annual budget process.
- Setting expectations for farebox recovery tied to service growth and affordability.
- Generating funds through user fees to offset subsidies.



Access

- Integrating PRESTO fares across the GTHA.
- Removing fares for residents who face extra barriers or challenges, such as for: persons with vision loss, veterans, support persons, children, youth or seniors.

We identified different practices when designing a user fee framework

There are three main factors that contribute to how peers set fares

According to the Canadian Urban Transit Association (CUTA), fare frameworks must balance affordability, simplicity, equity, financial sustainability and ridership growth[1]. However, these goals are often at odds with one another.

Policy priorities



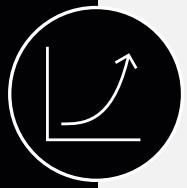
- Policy goals are generally derived from municipal- or transit-wide goals, such as Hamilton's Transit Vision 2040, Oakville's accessibility priorities or Burlington's Transit 5-Year Business Plan.
- Councils often provide direction on determining concession groups. These priorities will determine which groups are subsidized and how deeply.

Fare design



- Most contacted peers operate under a flat-rate pricing scheme. While concession categories are consistent, municipalities may choose how to apply pricing to these categories.
- Some peers offer time-based flat-rate pricing, such as Mississauga and Hamilton who provide a 2-hour transfer window through PRESTO.

Cost recovery and modelling



- Methods to determine cost-recovery targets vary by municipality. Some use scenario modelling an elasticity analysis; others rely more on annual budget cycles, forecasting and benchmarking.
- Ensuring cost effectiveness based on municipal investment and supporting financial sustainability was also a priority when determining recovery targets.
- Few peers set cost recovery (farebox) targets. Brampton currently sets their farebox recovery at 50%.
- Mississauga and Oakville both project multi-year revenues, while Brampton projects revenues and targets

[1] Fare Recovery Issue Paper, Canadian Urban Transit Association

Peers also use different pricing models

Peers referenced a mix of approaches when describing pricing models

While terminology and application vary across transit services, most combine elements of multiple pricing techniques to balance cost recovery, equity and regional expectation. The table below categorizes techniques mentioned by peers.

Comparative 	▸ Setting fares by benchmarking against neighboring transit systems or regional averages to remain competitive and align broader affordability goals. ▸ This method is used to ensure fares remain in-line with regional expectations and to maintain affordability for residents. ▸ Brampton, Burlington, Mississauga, Oakville
Cost-Based 	▸ Considering the direct operating costs, such as for labour, fuel and maintenance when assessing fare adjustments. This ensures revenue keeps pace with rising costs. ▸ Brampton, Oakville
Differential 	▸ Fees are varied based on user characteristics, offering discounted or free fares for groups such as youth, seniors and low-income riders. ▸ Used by many peers to encourage ridership growth and promote transit equity, ▸ Brampton, Hamilton, Mississauga, Oakville
Traditional 	▸ Applying inflationary or planned adjustments to maintain consistency and predictability year over year. ▸ Brampton, Hamilton, Oakville

Peers have various fare equity mechanisms in place

Each municipality has identified different groups to promote fare equity in their region

Additionally, all municipalities offer discounted transit fares for post-secondary students.

Municipality	Equity and Inclusion Tactics
Hamilton	▸ Children (0-12) and Seniors (80+) ride for free with a PRESTO card. Youth (13-19) and Seniors (65+) pay a discounted fare. ▸ Loyalty program that offers free trips after eleven paid trips in a week. ▸ Fare Assist program based on total household income that gives a 50% discount on single-ride PRESTO fares.
Brampton	▸ Seniors 65+ (with a Brampton Transit Senior Identification Card) and children (0-5) ride free. ▸ Veterans, as defined by Veterans Affairs Canada who reside in Brampton are eligible to ride for free. ▸ Participates in the Peel Affordable Transit Program (ATP), which subsidizes 50% of the cost of an adult monthly PRESTO pass. ▸ Loyalty program that offers free trips after your 11th paid trip in a week. ▸ Those registered with the Canadian Institute for the Blind (CNIB) as a person with vision loss can ride free.
Burlington	▸ Seniors 65+ and children under 12 ride free with a PRESTO card. Youth (13-19) pay a discounted fare before 6pm on weekdays. Occasionally Burlington offers free fares for youth (e.g. in summer). ▸ Participates in Halton Region's Subsidized Passes for Low-Income Transit (SPLIT) Program based on eligibility.
Mississauga	▸ Seniors 65+ and children under 12 ride free with a PRESTO card. Youth pay a discounted fare ▸ Participates in the Peel Affordable Transit Program, which subsidizes 50% of the cost of an adult or senior monthly PRESTO pass. ▸ Launched the “Sauga Summer Pass” where youth 12-16 rode the bus for free in the summer. ▸ Those registered with the Canadian Institute for the Blind (CNIB) as a person with vision loss can ride free.
Oakville	▸ Seniors, youth and children ride free in Oakville with an age-verified PRESTO pass. ▸ Oakville takes part in the Halton SPLIT fare program for low-income riders. ▸ Free transit through Care-A-Van service, a door-to-door specialized transit service for persons with disabilities.

Fares vary across peers

Municipalities have different fares for the same demographics, selecting different groups to subsidize

- Not every peer sets a fare for every demographic. The only comparator that has a child fare is Brampton, while only Hamilton has a senior fare for 65–80-year-olds. Oakville allows youth to ride free with a PRESTO, as well.
- Even though peers use similar fare categories (adult, youth, senior, child), the subsidy applied to each group varies. This reflects policy choices about who should receive financial support.
- Some municipalities charge higher fares for fee paying groups to subsidize non-paying, such as Oakville and Brampton.
- Many charge a cash price, for those without PRESTO, by paying by either cash or contactless debit/credit. Some cash prices differ based on demographic, such as the Brampton $1 senior cash fare.

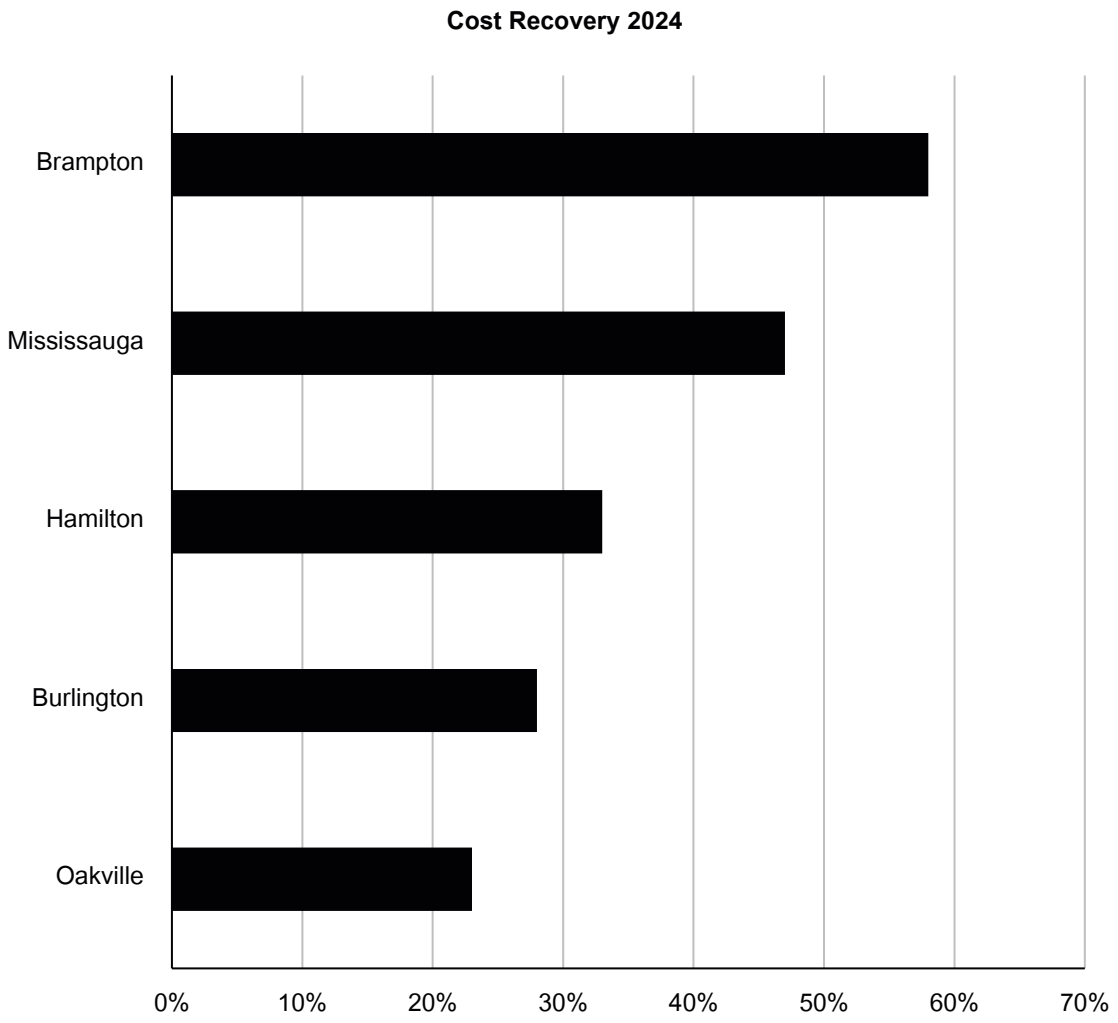
Municipality	Cash	Adult	Senior	Youth	Child
Hamilton	$ 3.75	$ 2.85	$ 2.35 (65-80) Free (80+)	$ 2.35	Free (0-12)
Brampton	$ 4.50	$ 3.40	$ 1.75 (65+)	$ 2.80	Free (0-5) $ 2.00 (5-12)
Burlington	$ 3.50	$ 2.75	Free (65+)	$ 1.90	Free (0-12)
Mississauga	$ 4.25	$ 3.40	Free (65+)	$ 2.65	Free (0-12)
Oakville	$ 4.00	$ 3.40	Free (65+)	Free (13-19)	Free (0-12)

Peers recover between 28% and 58% through fares in 2024

Recovery levels vary as municipalities prioritize affordability differently

Recovery rates are not directly comparable, as differences in urban density and service coverage influence recovery patterns. This comparison remains valuable in understanding regional recovery targets and policy choices. Hamilton's cost recovery uses CUTA data from 2023; peer information is from 2024.

- Burlington and Oakville subsidize the highest percentage of transit, at 72% and 77%, respectively. Both municipalities offer some of the lowest fares and deepest concessions, leading to lower cost recovery.
- Mississauga and Hamilton have maintained mid-range recovery levels, with moderate discounts and fees.
- Brampton's cost recovery is high as it offers fewer free-fare programs, only offering free transit for senior riders.
- The average cost recovery between all five peers was 41%. The overall average across Canada based on data from CUTA was 36.6%.



/ TRANSIT SURVEY FINDINGS

This section presents findings from the Transit User Fees Survey

A total of 748 respondents provided feedback

The online, non-probability survey covered transit fares, the Fare Assist program and priorities for service delivery.

Key Findings

- Moderate value perception: 71% rate HSR as good or very good value, notably lower than recreation (86%).
- Strong income gradient in affordability: 72% find fares affordable overall, but only 59% of lower-income riders vs. 84% of higher-income riders agree.
- Fee assistance is the preferred policy response: 48% favour expanding Fare Assist as the primary fare adjustment approach.
- Higher Fare Assist awareness: 66% are aware of Fare Assist, substantially higher than recreation fee assistance (43%).
- Service issues rival cost as barriers: Route coverage (15%) and frequency (15%) are cited as barriers more often than fare cost (10%).

These survey findings align with previous survey findings by the City of Hamilton and HSR. While cost is often an important concern, particularly for lower-income riders, service frequency and route coverage are often rated as higher-priority considerations.

Value perceptions are dominated by fare satisfaction

- Fare-related changes will have outsized effects on how riders perceive the system overall.

The affordability gap is an equity concern

- The large gap between lower-income (59%) and higher-income (84%) affordability perceptions indicates current fares are regressive in their perceived impact.

Fee assistance is the consensus policy preference

- Fare Assist expansion is the top choice across income groups, compared to recreation where preferences diverge.

Fare Assist awareness is relatively strong but could improve

- At 66% overall and nearly 70% among lower-income riders, awareness exceeds recreation. However, 30% of eligible residents remain unaware.

Service barriers rival cost barriers

- Route coverage (15%) and frequency (15%) are cited more than cost (10%), indicating that fare policy alone will not address all access issues.

Three distinct segments require different approaches

- Service Investors want quality improvements; Equal-Fare Advocates want universal treatment; Cost-Burdened Riders need affordability relief

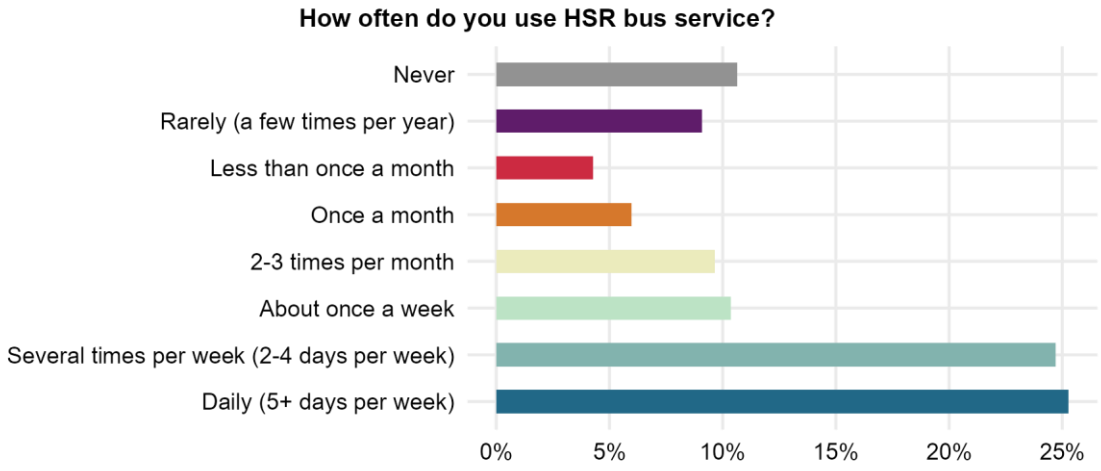
Usage frequency is distributed across occasional and regular riders

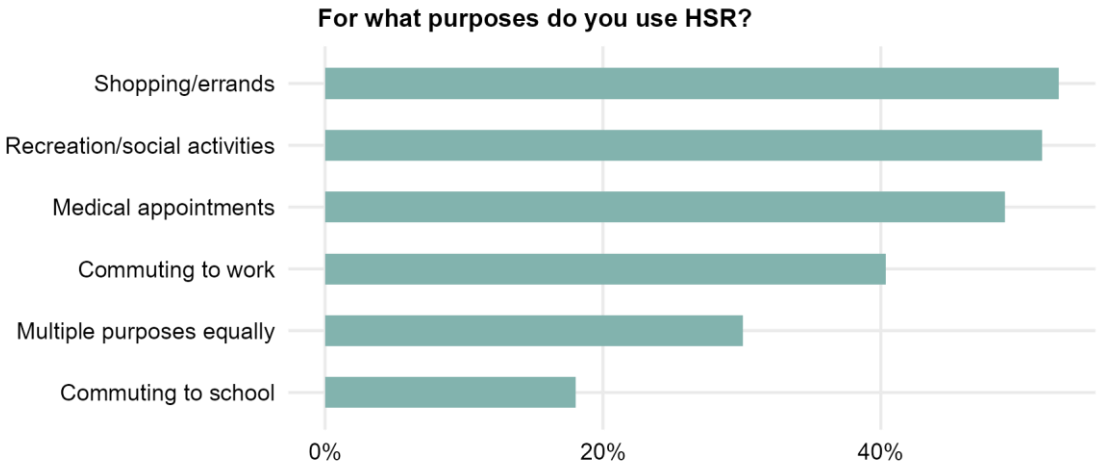
Respondents say that shopping/errands and recreation are the most common trip purposes

About eight in ten survey respondents use HSR bus service, with more than half using it weekly or more frequently.

Shopping and recreation/social activities lead, followed by medical appointments and work commuting.

Only 18% cite school commuting, suggesting the non-representative sample underrepresents student riders.

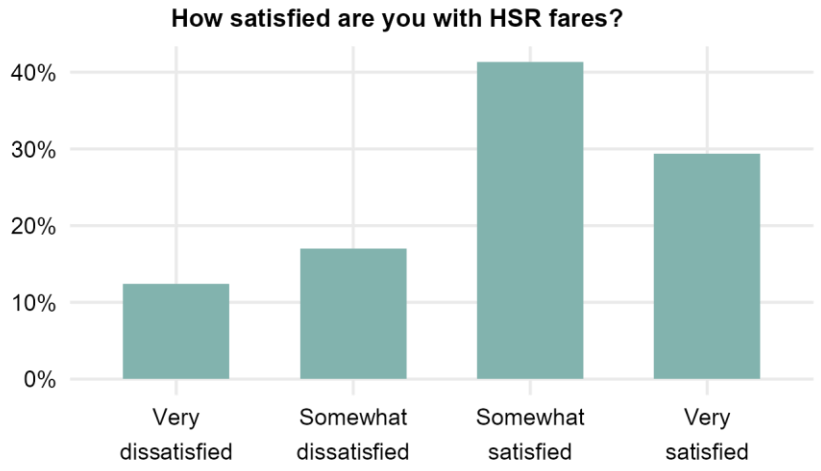


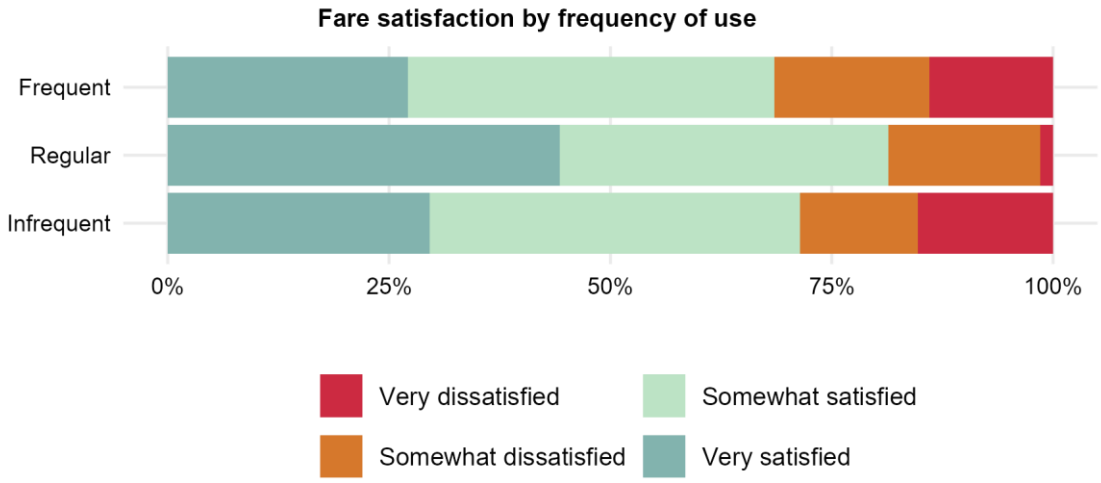


Most respondents are satisfied with current fares

Satisfaction does not vary dramatically by usage frequency

Frequent, regular and infrequent riders rate their satisfaction with fares similarly, suggesting fare perceptions are relatively consistent regardless of how often respondents ride.

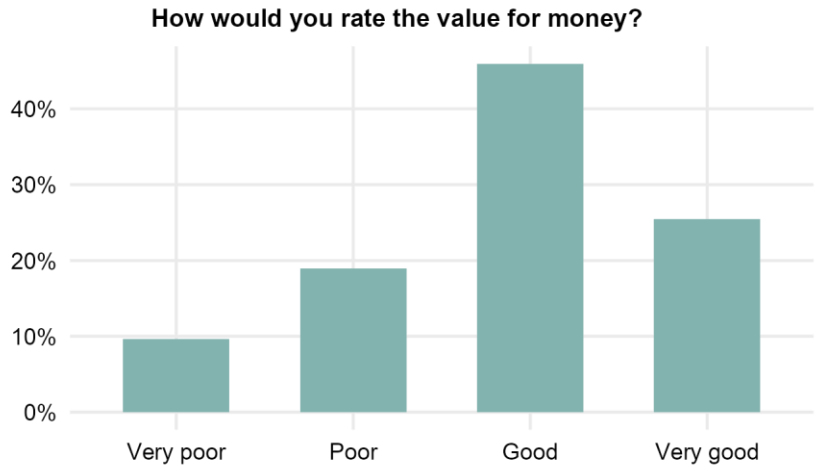


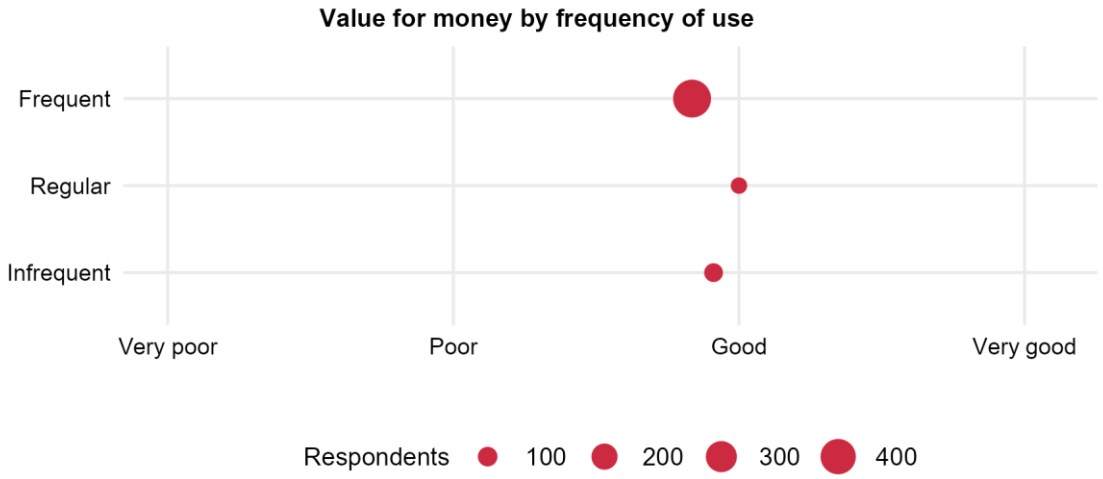


Most respondents say they get good value for money

Value perceptions are similar across usage frequencies

Frequent, regular and infrequent users rate value for money similarly, suggesting fares are perceived consistently regardless of how often respondents use HSR.





Two thirds of respondents are aware of Fare Assist

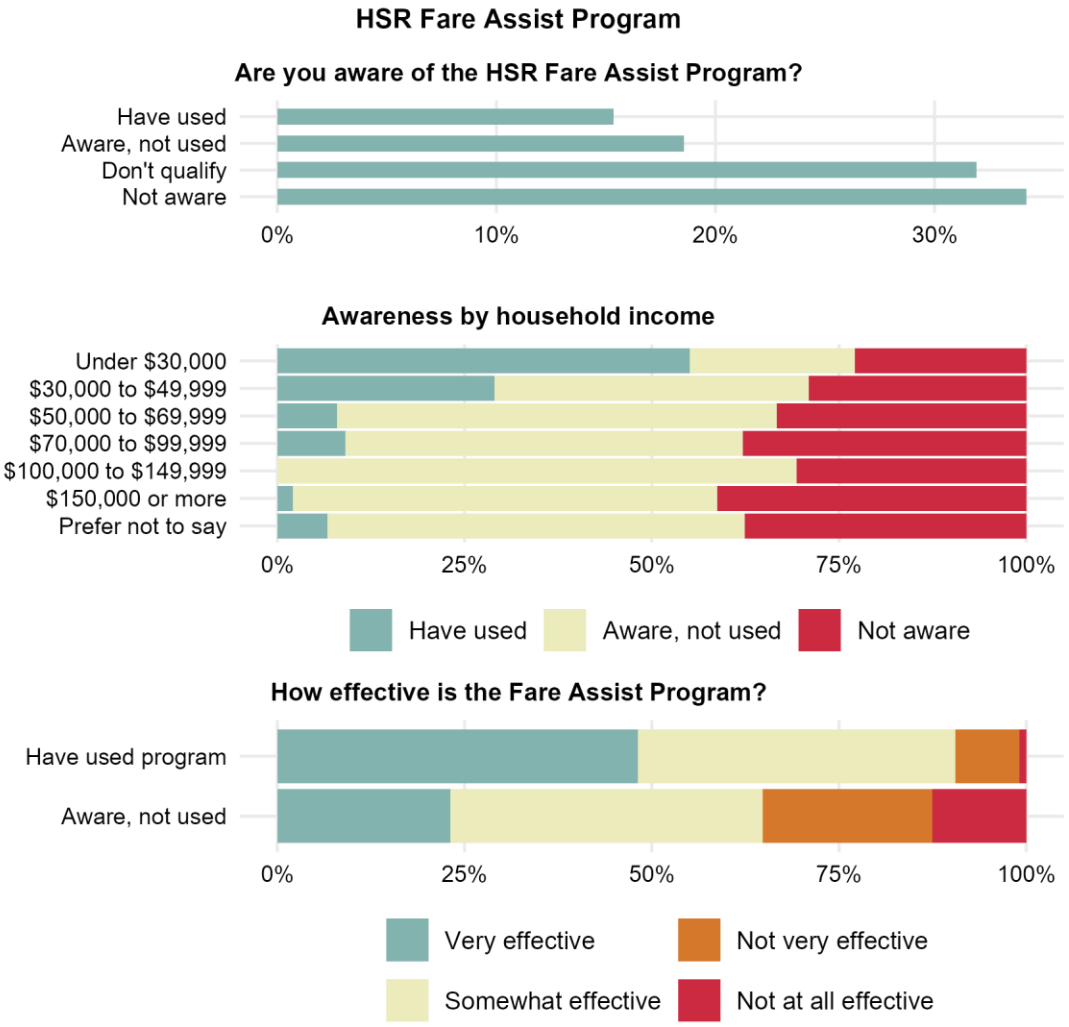
Fifteen percent of respondents have used Fare Assist

One-third of respondents say they do not meet program requirements for Fare Assist.

Use of Fare Assist is substantially higher among lower-income respondents, but overall awareness is similar.

Seven in ten respondents say Fare Assist is somewhat or very effective in helping low-income residents access transit. Perceptions of effectiveness are higher among people who have used the program.

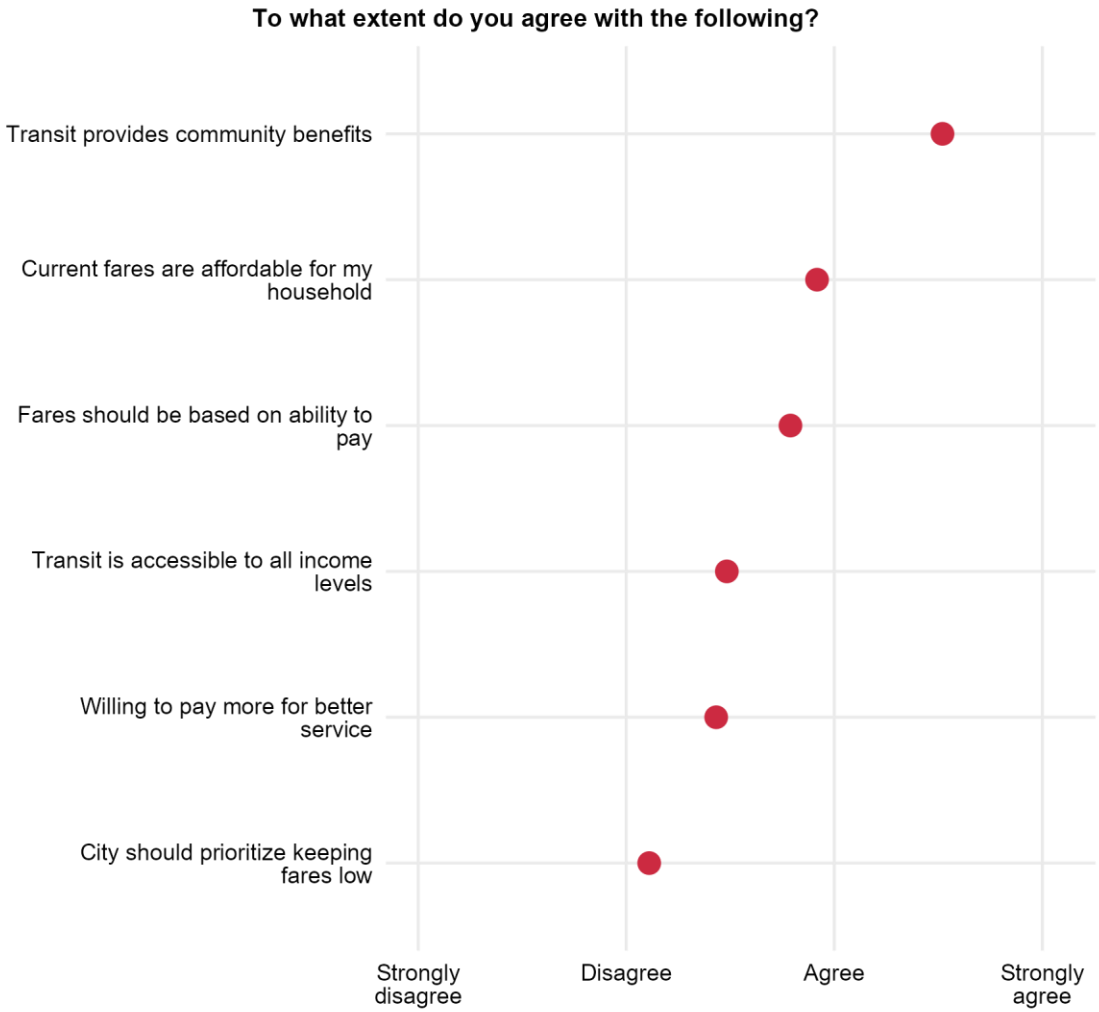
Fewer respondents report being unable to assess effectiveness compared to recreation.



Almost all say transit provides important community benefits, but only half say it is accessible to all income levels

This gap is even larger than recreation's 33-point gap, indicating stronger concerns about transit equity

Only 29% agree the City should prioritize keeping fares low, suggesting other priorities (service quality, coverage) compete for attention.

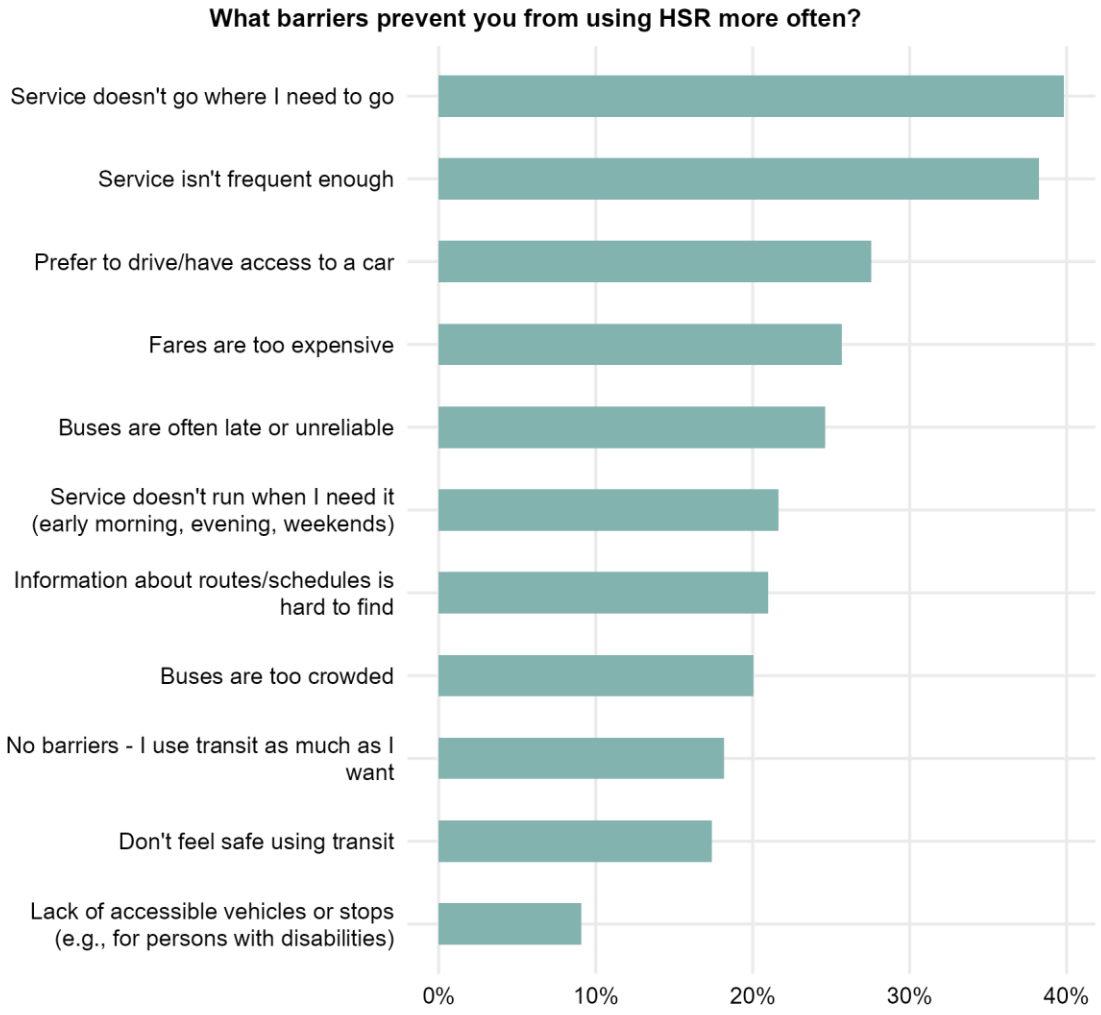


Service coverage and frequency are the most cited barriers, not fare cost

Respondents say service coverage and service frequency are the top barriers to using HSR more often

Fare cost (26%) ranks fourth, below service issues (40%, 38%) and preference for driving (27%). Only 18% report no barriers.

Note that question wording did not include or ask about destinations for the “Service doesn’t go where I need to go” option.

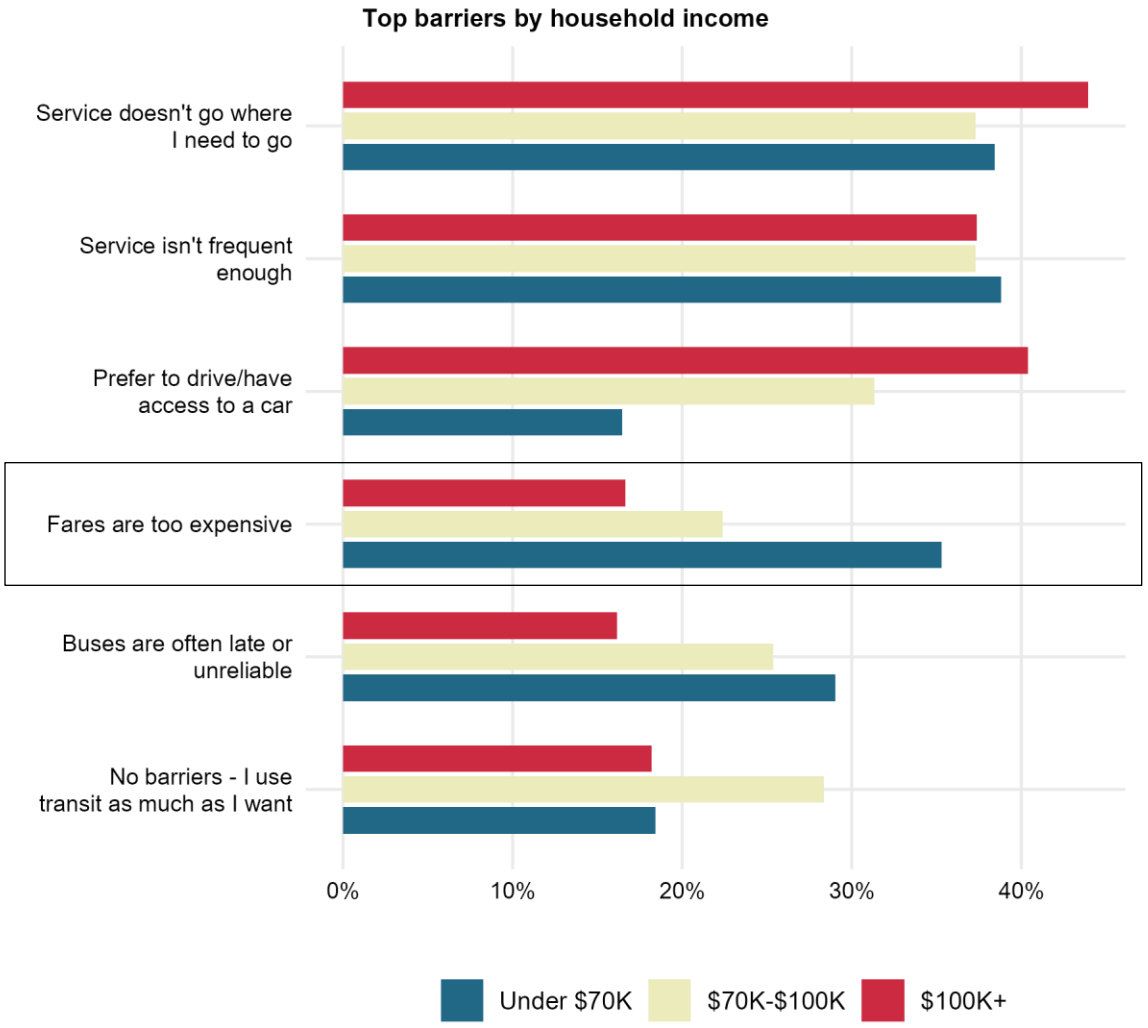


Cost barriers are more common in lower-income households

However, service barriers are most frequently mentioned for all groups

Lower-income riders are more likely to cite fare cost as a barrier, but frequency and coverage issues are prominent across all income levels.

Higher-income riders more often cite preference for driving.

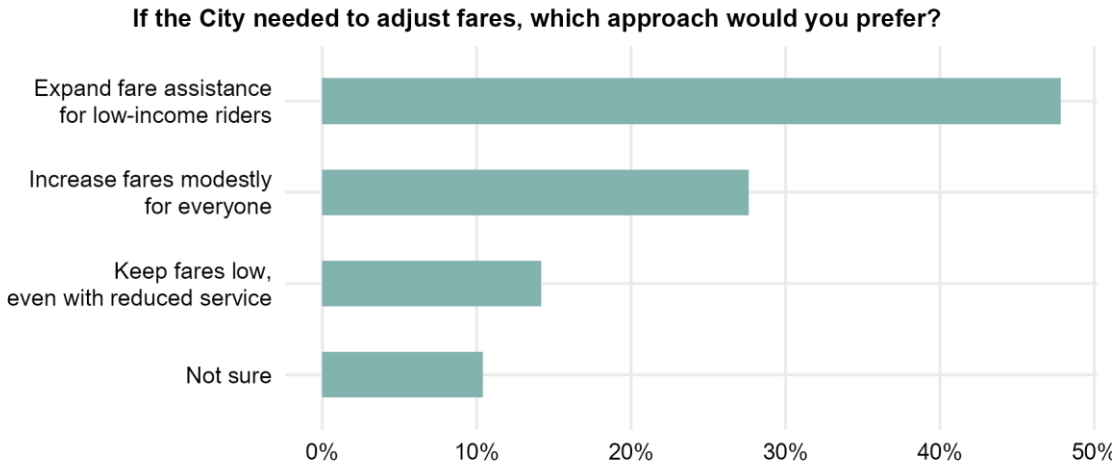


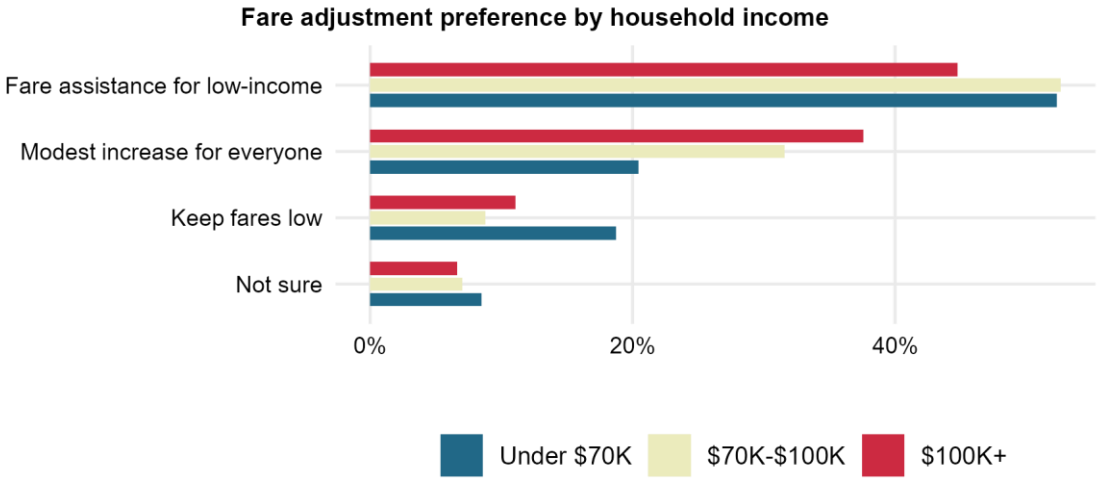
Support for fee assistance is consistent across income levels

Fee assistance is the strongly preferred fare adjustment approach

About half of respondents favour expanding Fare Assist for low-income riders, ahead of modest increases for everyone or keeping fares low with reduced service. Only 10% are unsure, indicating clear preference for means-tested approaches.

Unlike recreation, where preferences diverge by income, transit respondents across income groups support Fare Assist expansion.



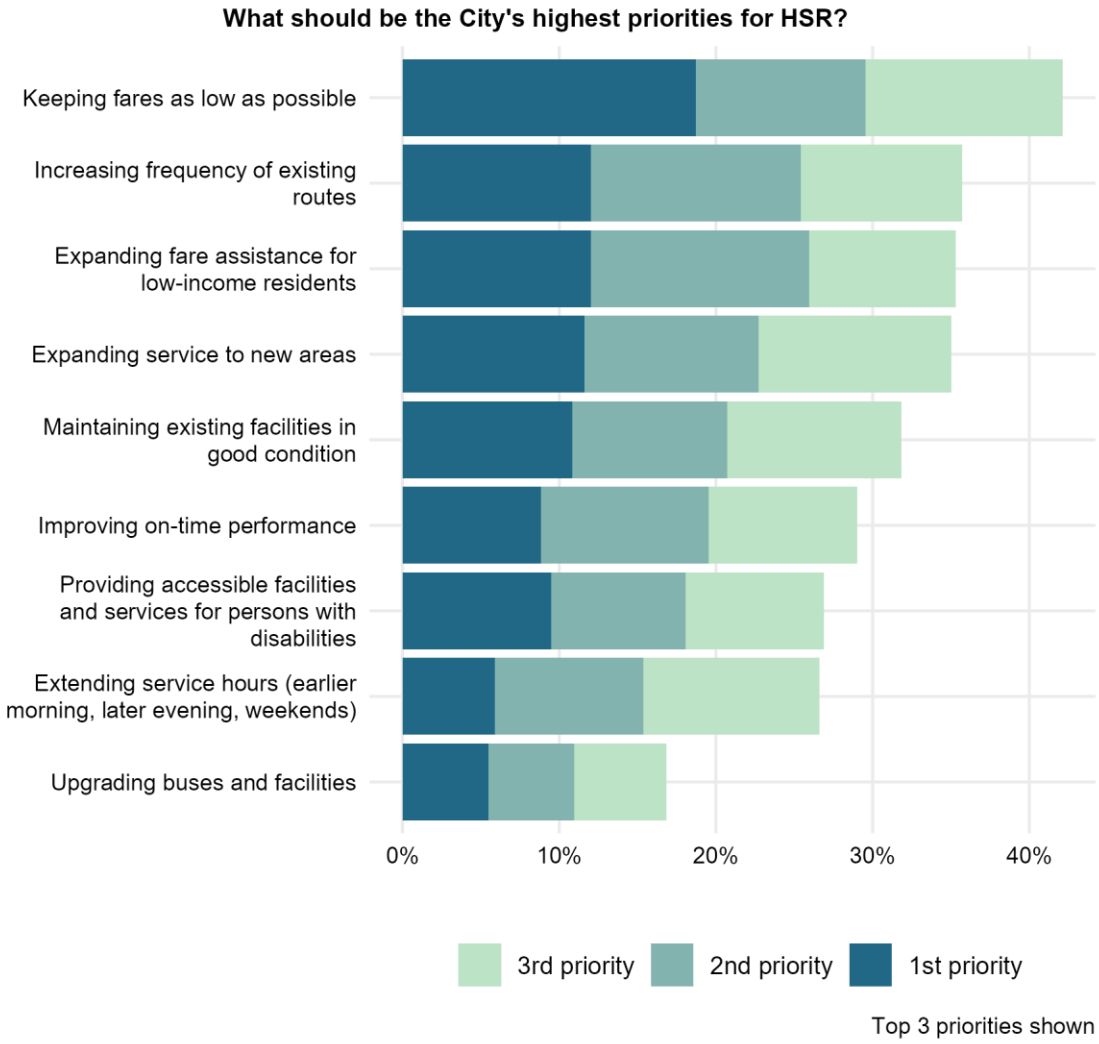


Respondents value keeping fares as low as possible but many also prioritize expanding fare assistance

Keeping fares low is selected as a top 3 priority by 42% of respondents

Other choices selected as a top 3 priority include increasing frequency of existing routes (36%), expanding Fare Assist (35%) and expanding to new areas (35%), all ranking closely.

Improving frequency, on-time performance and extending service hours follow. This balance suggests no single priority following respondent concerns about fares.



/ NEXT STEPS

Data and financial information limitations constrain evidence-based fee setting

Hamilton already applies differential cost recovery based on perceived benefit

This is similar to other peers who apply a similar approach. For example:

- Golf: 100% target (individual benefit, premium activity)
- Ice: 50% target (organized groups, dedicated use)
- Programs/Admissions/Rentals: 35% target (broad community access)

Residents are supportive of tiered pricing models, with one third (34%) preferring to "increase fees for premium services while keeping basic programs affordable“. But there is no formalization of these principles as a decision-making tool.

Further, Hamilton's general ledger codes do not align with user fee service groupings. Recreation structures fees into five groups (Rentals, Programs, Admissions, Ice, Golf), but financial data is organized by facility location and function. Cost recovery cannot be calculated consistently at the user fee group level, and analysis relies on facility-level data, which obscures detailed facility- and service-level performance.

- The City cannot definitively answer questions like, "Are we meeting our targets for programs vs. rentals?“.

Any new framework will require investment in the City’s technology infrastructure to improve tracking and accountability.

Current recreation fees are very complex, with 300+ distinct recreation fees across five service areas

There is currently no simplified tier structure that residents can easily understand, with limited public-facing documentation explaining the rationale for fee levels. Fee changes are currently not tied to guiding principles (e.g. simple, one-sentence explanation).

- Hall rentals alone branch into 9 different fees (3 room categories × 3 user types)
- Variations of prime-time vs. non-peak, subsidized vs. standard, resident vs. non-resident rates add additional complexity

While this review focuses on Recreation and Transit services, approaches around simplified and accessible fee structures may be applicable for other business areas of the City.

Both Recreation and Transit have room to improve awareness and uptake of fee assistance programs

Fee assistance is a core equity tool but low awareness of programs means eligible residents face unnecessary financial barriers

Both RAP and Fare Assist use the Low Income Measure After Tax to determine program eligibility, but Hamilton does not have consistent corporate standards to, proactively reach to eligible populations, simplify application processes or regularly monitor awareness.

The City has departmental guiding principles with limited formality, not corporate-wide. Departments currently have flexibility to set fees, with approvals as necessary. The City may wish to consider documented rationale when fee changes diverge from policy and consider regularly assessing performance against the user fee framework.

	Recreation Assistance Program	Transit Fare Assist
Overall awareness	43%	68%
Aware and haven't used	11%	19%
Aware and have used	8%	15%
Awareness by respondents in households with under $70k income	44%	73%
Usage by respondents in households with under $30k income	36%	55%
Usage by respondents in households with income between $30k and $70k	21%	29%

/ APPENDICES

The ten most frequented facilities accounted for nearly half of Recreation's total visits in 2023

The facilities displayed in the chart to the right account for 47% of all visits

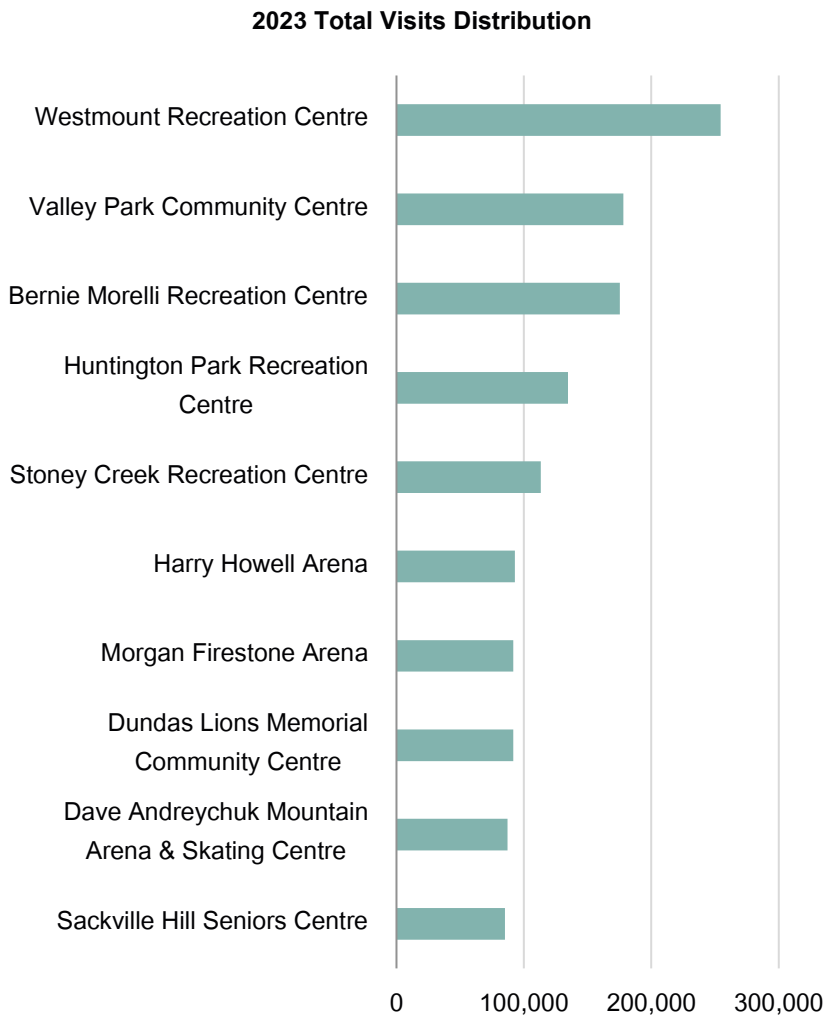
Despite considering 76 recreation facilities with recorded participation data in 2023, a small number of facilities account for a significant portion of total visits.

- Recreation centres and community arenas generate higher visitation because they deliver broader community benefits through diverse programming, drop-in access and shared community spaces. Facilities that provide multiple pathways to participate attract repeat and sustained use, reinforcing the relationship between community benefit and overall visit volume.

Despite generating significant total revenue, the two municipal golf clubs do not rank among the most visited facilities, reflecting their more specialized, individualized use.

We excluded the following facilities from our participation analysis.

- Due to the number of parks and playgrounds, the City groups them under umbrella categories.
- Community groups have agreements at the Winona Community Centre to use the rooms as office space, elevating the visit count.
- Even though the LIUNA 4 Ice Centre did not appear in the top ten, we did not consider its participation data due to its unique operating model.

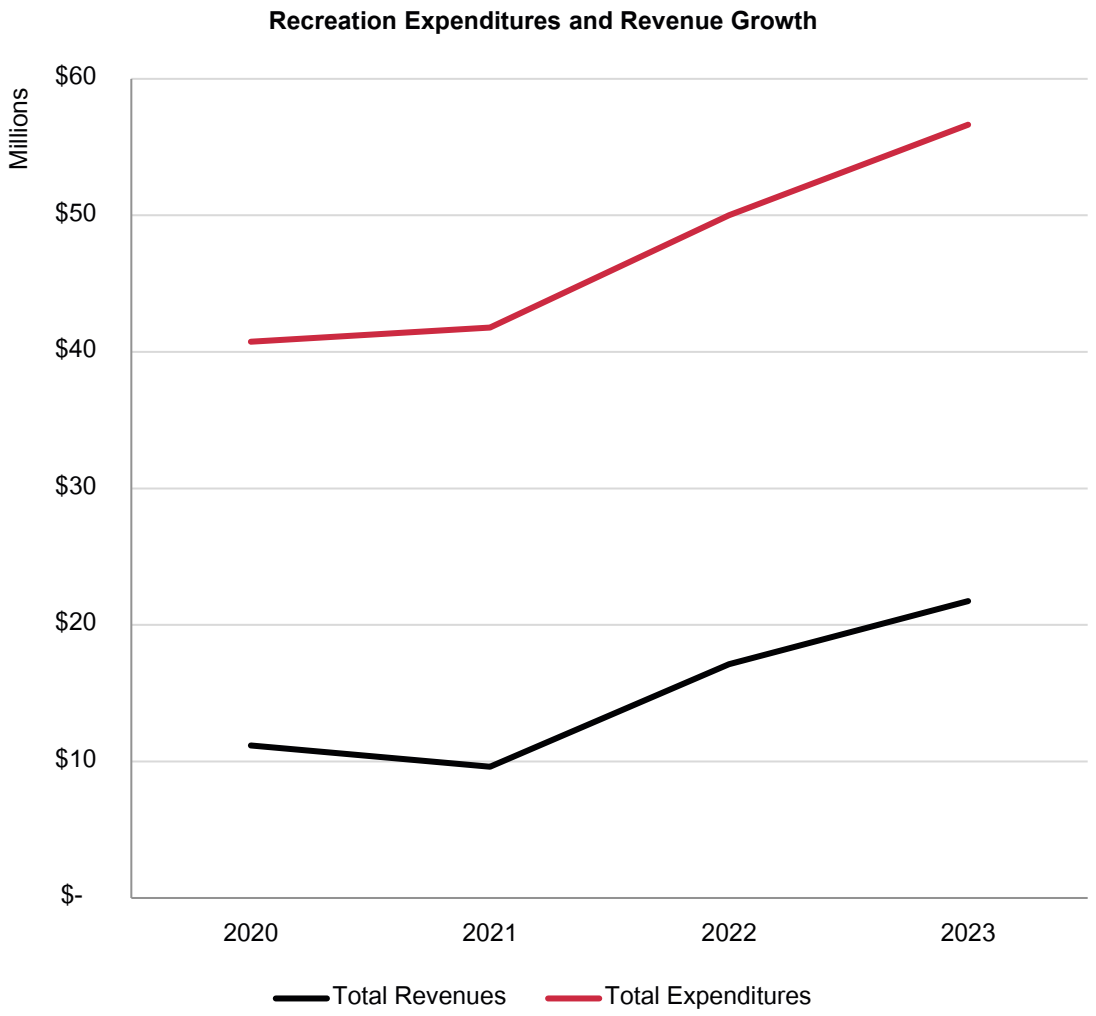


Recreation expenditures and revenue are growing in parallel

We reviewed Hamilton's Recreation revenues and expenditures from 2020 to 2023 to assess how financial performance is evolving over time

As shown to the right, both revenue and expenditures increase steadily over this pandemic and post-pandemic period, indicating:

- Proportional scaling rather than a widening gap over the period shown.
- Service recovery following the pandemic, with a return toward greater participation.
- Inflationary pressures contributing to higher operating costs and in turn, revenue growth driven by corresponding user fee revisions.



Appendix B: Financial Performance Insights (2/2)

Per visit revenue and expenses are correlated

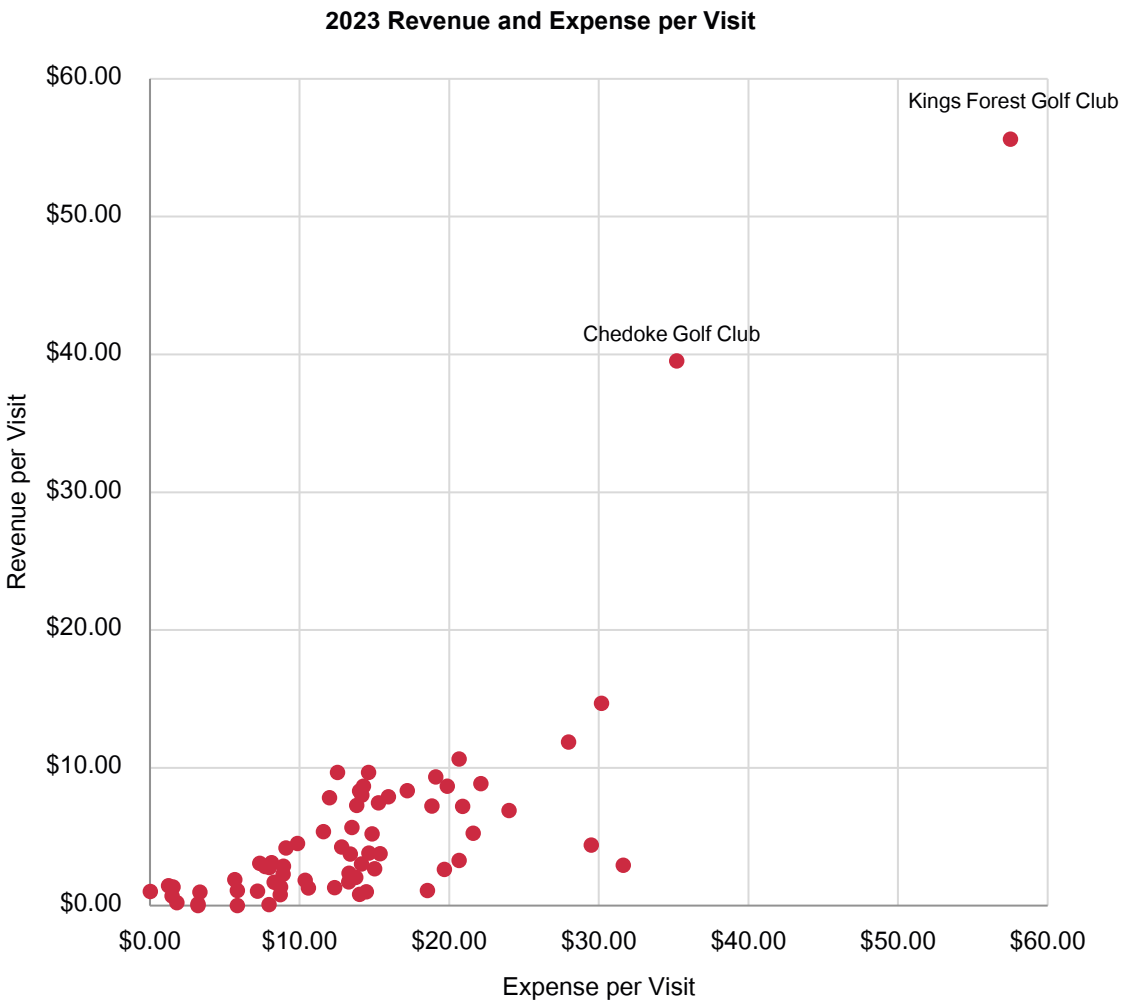
Hamilton's 2023 financial and participation data shows a clear positive relationship between expense and revenue per visit

As displayed to the right, facilities with lower expense per visit cluster at lower revenue levels, while higher cost facilities generally demonstrate stronger revenue capture on a per visit basis.

This suggests that higher operating costs tend to accompany amenities and service offerings that enable higher pricing and revenue intensity.

Due to their individualized nature and higher pricing structure, the two municipal golf clubs appear on the upper end of both expense and revenue per visit.

We excluded the LIUNA 4 Ice Centre due to the visits in the City's dataset reflecting only the rentals for the set number of hours allocated from Nustadia Recreation.



Appendix C: Cost Recovery by Recreation Service (1/7)

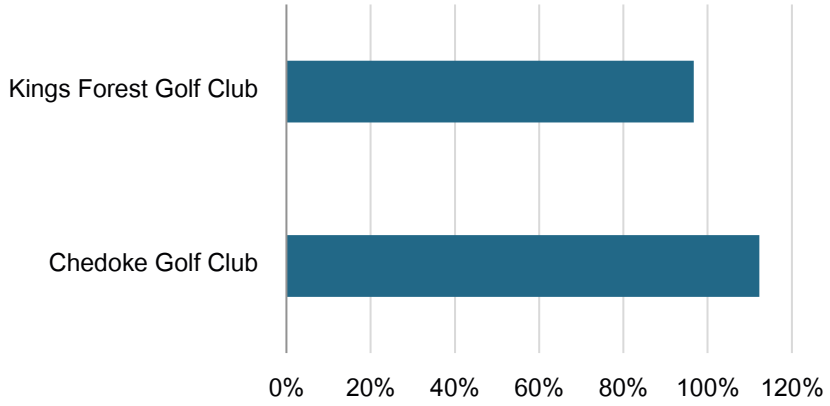
Golf is the only recreation service with cost recovery greater than 100%

Kings Forest falls just short of golf's 100% cost recovery target, although Chedoke exceeds it

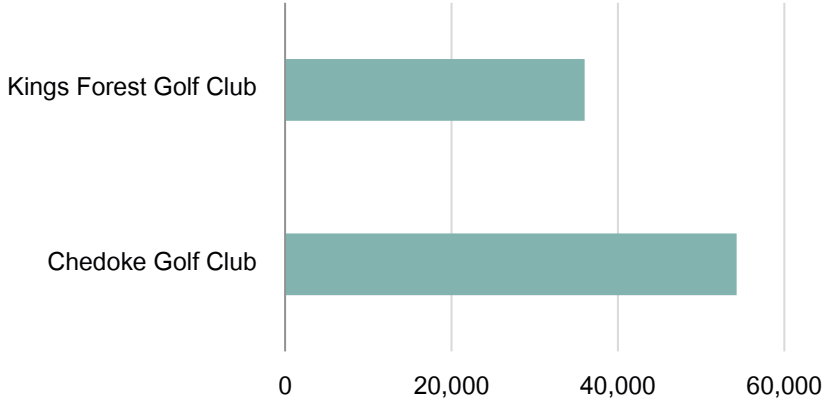
In 2023, Kings Forest's operating expenditures were approximately $158K higher than Chedoke's, while its revenues were about $145K lower. These differences align with the final cost recovery results: 97% for Kings Forest versus 112% for Chedoke, as displayed to the top right.

- Kings Forest generates revenue from alcoholic beverages and confectionaries, while Chedoke's coding shows no equivalent activity. While this increases expenditures, it improves the clubs cost recovery position.
- The primary driver of the difference in cost recovery relates to service revenue. Green fees at Chedoke exceed Kings Forest by more than $500K, with a further excess of $250K when factoring in equipment rentals too. This stems from stronger participation at Chedoke in 2023, with nearly 20,000 more visits than Kings Forest. Chedoke operates two 18-hole courses, compared to a single course at Kings Forest. Chedoke also has lower user fees than Kings Forest.
- Kings Forest performs better in terms of membership fees, earning $150K more than Chedoke. Kings Forest earned nearly $150K from special events, while Chedoke recorded only $2K.

2023 Golf Clubs Cost Recovery



2023 Rounds Played



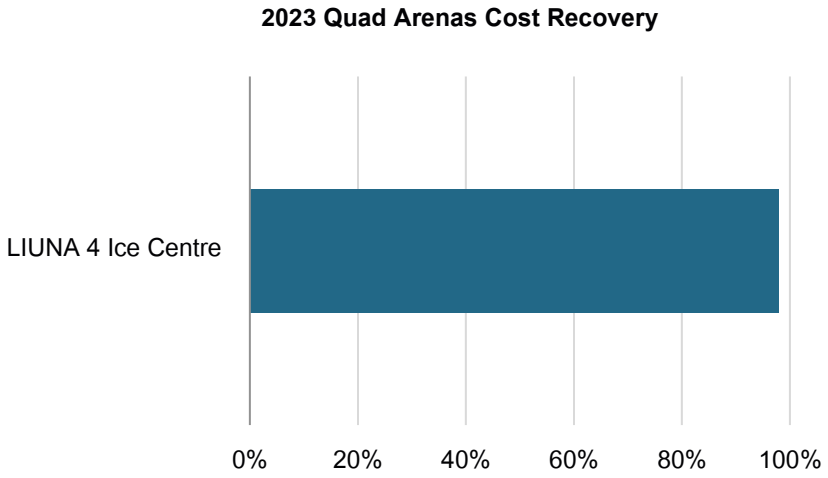
Appendix C: Cost Recovery by Recreation Service (2/7)

The LIUNA 4 Ice Centre attains close to full cost recovery

The LIUNA 4 Ice Centre achieves 98% cost recovery

As displayed to the top right, the arena recovered nearly all of its costs in 2023. Hamilton employs a third-party partnership model with Nustadia Recreation where the City does not operate the arena but contractually allocates ice time for user groups. This operating model drives stronger cost recovery.

- Nustadia Recreation generated roughly $2.70M in rental revenue, and the City generated an additional $460K in rental revenue.
- The cost associated with this revenue, including all operating expenditures, is $3.22M.
- The arena recorded just over 50,000 visits across the City's 2,506 allocated hours at LIUNA 4 Ice Centre.

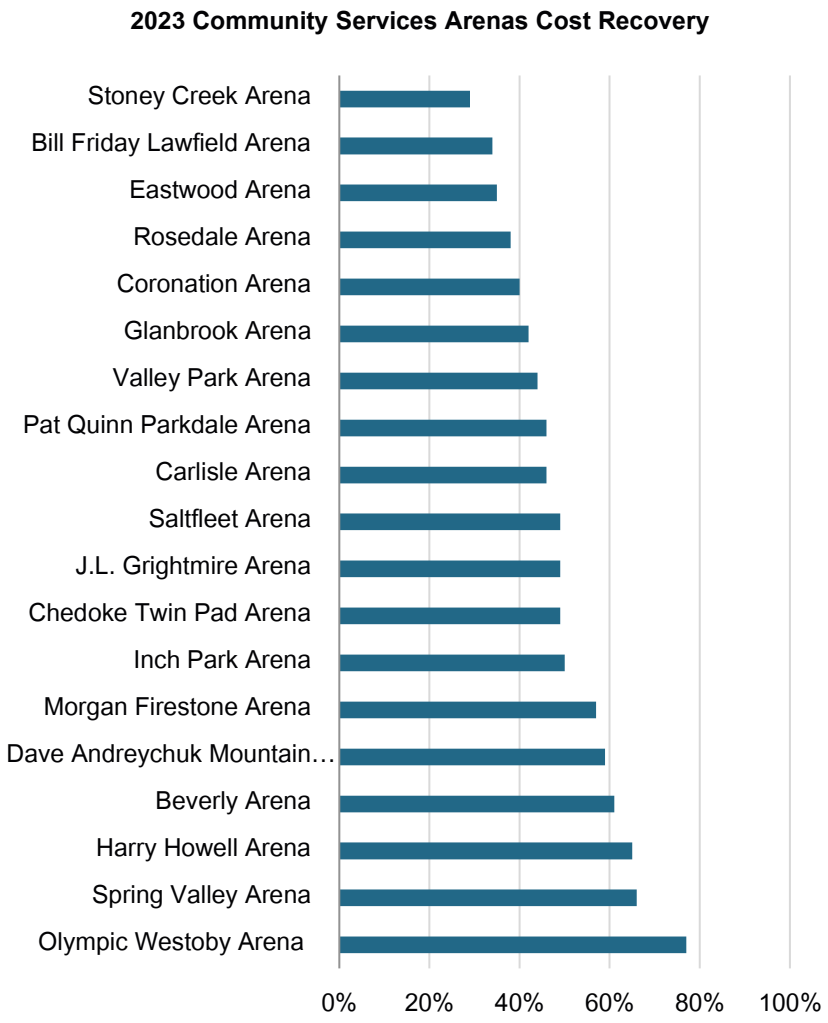


Most community arenas recover roughly one-third to one-half of their costs

Hamilton-owned arenas show varied cost recovery performance, with most recovering between 30 to 60 percent

These results reflect the balance the City strikes between generating revenue and covering facility costs, while maintaining affordable and accessible services.

- Arena expenditures stem mainly from payroll (~$4.6M), Hydro (~$2.1M), direct facilities recovery (~$1.6M) and water and sewer charges (~$400K).
- Revenue primarily comes from ice rentals (~$5.4M). Smaller drivers include admissions such as ice skating (~$110K) and hall rentals (~$75K).
- Stoney Creek, Bill Friday Lawfield and Eastwood spend close to $950K cumulatively but earn just under $300K combined. All three sit among the lowest total recorded visits in 2023 (~11K-23K), which aligns with their lower recovery. The Recreation Master Plan identified both Eastwood and Stoney Creek for decommissioning. Eastwood's ice pad has since closed, reinforcing the direction to consolidate lower-performing facilities.
- Saltfleet performs strongly despite having a lower visit total (~19K) compared to other facilities. It's direct facility recovery totals and wages remain among the lowest across all the arenas.
- Harry Howell had the most visits in 2023 with over 90K, explaining its higher recovery. Contrastingly, Spring Valley and Olympic Westoby sit in the middle of the pack, with around 24.5K and 29K visits, respectively. Yet they achieve the best ratios by a significant margin when comparing wages to rental ice revenue.



Appendix C: Cost Recovery by Recreation Service (4/7)

Recreation facilities face structural limitations to cost recovery

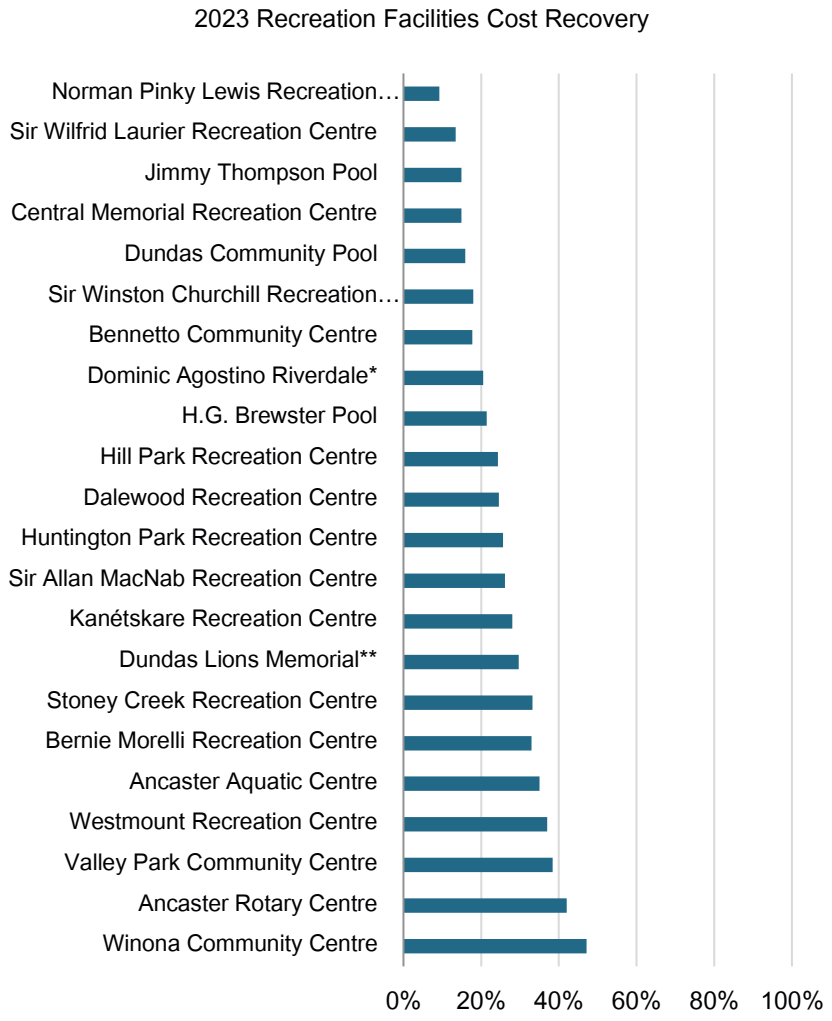
Recreation centres and indoor pools recover a relatively narrow share of costs

Cost recovery across recreation facilities heavily cluster between 15 to 30%, as shown to the right.

Admissions and programs at centres and pools provide a great degree of benefit to many residents. These facilities promote physical activity, youth development, social interaction and overall community wellbeing. As such, the City intentionally sets user fees at levels that remain affordable and accessible for all residents, aligning with Recreation's guiding principles and CBF. In the pursuit of amplifying community benefit, there is an inherent trade-off with maximizing cost recovery.

Since the City relies on the collection of user fees to sustain these facilities, there is a noticeable correlation between total visits and cost recovery. Outliers include:

- Hill Park Recreation Centre: with the third fewest visits compared to other recreation centres (~26K total visits in 2023), Hill Park still has stronger cost recovery than other centres with more visits.
- Ancaster Rotary Centre: similarly, this centre is in the bottom half of total visits with close to 47K visits, yet it attains one of the best cost recovery ratios across all recreation facilities.
- Dominic Agostino Riverdale Community Centre and Huntington Park Recreation Centre: these spaces record higher participation relative to their comparators at just under 70K and 135K, respectively. However, they recover a lower ratio of costs than their comparators.



Appendix C: Cost Recovery by Recreation Service (5/7)

Senior centres see lower cost recovery than most of its counterparts due to their split operating model with boards

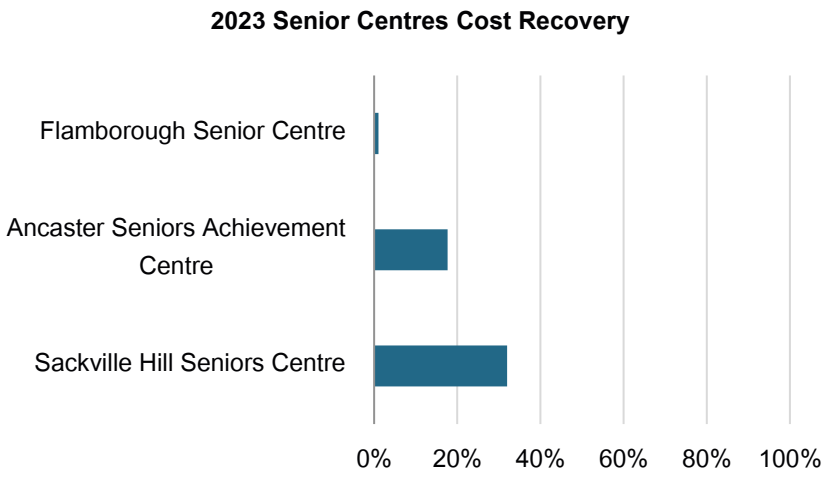
The City only collects a modest portion of user fees, with the boards of these centres retaining the rest

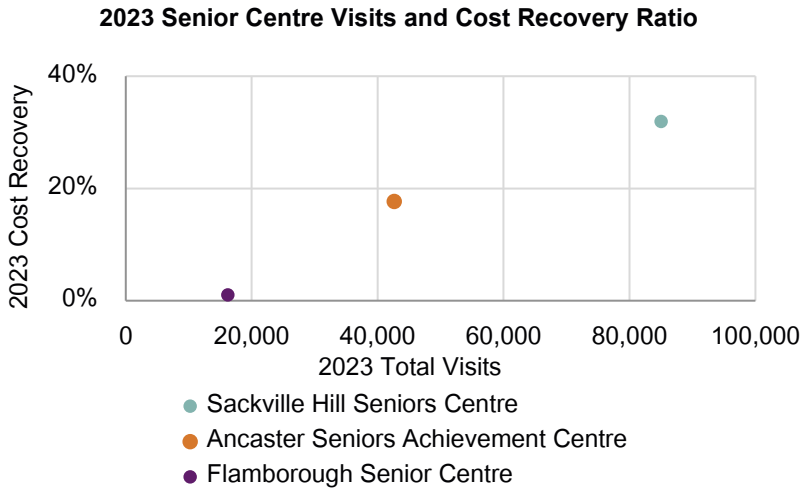
Hamilton recognizes the perceived community benefit these centres provide residents and assists the boards by incurring costs of building maintenance and staffing. However, since Recreation does not directly operate these centres, the division does not see the full amount of membership and admission-based revenues. Instead, remitting a portion to the board to reinvest in the facilities. Similar to senior clubs, some of these centres also received grants. This operating model produces the cost recovery displayed on the right.

The data shows a correlation between participation and cost recovery, as plotted in the scatter chart in the bottom right

Since Hamilton still collects a portion of membership revenue, the facilities that have higher visits also have stronger cost recovery metrics.

- Sackville Hill has the most visits, and correspondingly also the highest membership and admissions revenue at just over $70K.
- Ancaster Seniors Achievement sits in the middle of pack in terms of participation, and the same with user fee revenue totalling marginally higher than $17K.
- Flamborough realized only slightly more than $1K from memberships and admissions in 2023. It also had significantly less visits. Although, the fact that Flamborough did not receive a grant in 2023, while the other 2 facilities both received just over $60K in funding pushes the cost recovery differences even further apart



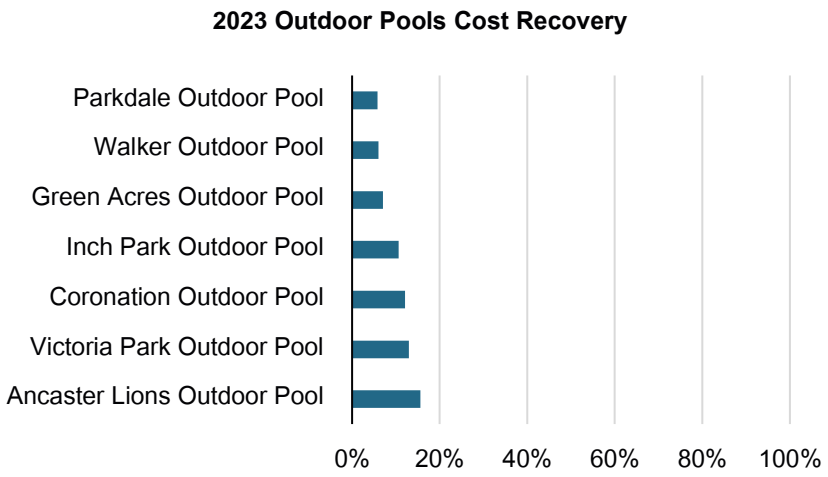


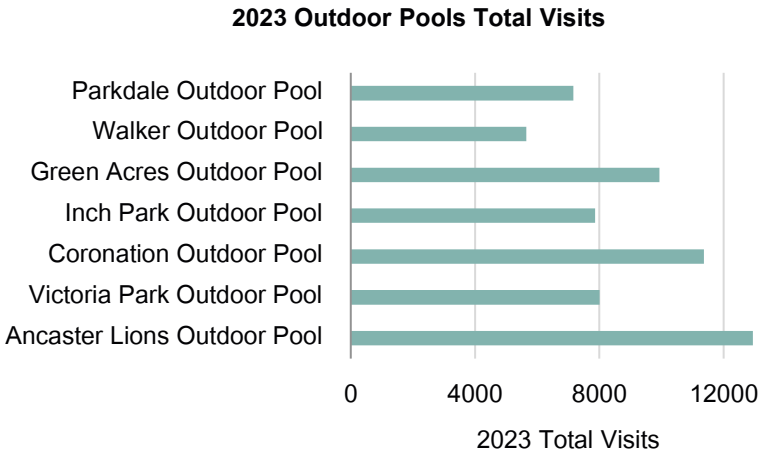
Outdoor pools recover the least amount of costs relative to their counterparts

Due to seasonality, outdoor pools have a smaller window to recover costs that are already priced equitably in alignment with the CBF

Shorter operating periods limit outdoor pools visit volume as displayed in the chart to the bottom right chart. This results in the low cost recovery range seen in the top right chart. We excluded Birge, Chedoke and Rosedale outdoor pools since these pools only offer free swims and do not have associated user fees.

- Outdoor pools costs recovery do not show a proportional relationship with total visits. Facilities with higher visitation do not have higher cost recovery, which may be associated with free swim initiatives (e.g. on heat alert days).
- Parkdale and Walker see the lowest visits in 2023 and correspondingly generates the lowest revenue ($5.8K and $6.3K respectively).
- Green Acres recorded the highest expenditure ($148K) but sits mid-pack on revenue ($10.1K) despite strong participation.
- Coronation shows the second-highest visit count and revenue ($14.5K). However, its direct recovery expenses are highest.
- Victoria Park shows lower participation, but the collection of aquatic program fees ($5.6K) drives higher revenue. Only one other outdoor pool (Coronation) records this type of revenue.
- Ancaster Lions stands out with $7.8K in revenue from halls rentals, which other outdoor pools do not have. Combined with the highest visit count across the pools, this positions the pool as a relative top performer in cost recovery across its comparators.





Appendix C: Cost Recovery by Recreation Service (7/7)

The City faces a systemic challenge in isolating cost recovery at a program level

The financial data enabled us to isolate cost recovery for only two specific programs; aquatic leadership and camps

Although the City generally codes revenues and expenditures at the facility level, it does not consistently track financials by individual programs. With activities delivered across many locations, analyzing cost recovery at the program level becomes difficult. This highlights a structural challenge in assessing program-specific performance, common across many municipalities.

Appendix D: User Fee Index (1/3)

We compared the following user fees across municipalities

These fees reflect standard resident rates only and exclude youth, senior, commercial or other discounted categories. For fee types with multiple tiers, we selected the mid-point rate to ensure a balanced, like-for-like comparison.

Service Area	Hamilton Fee Title
Admissions	► Recreation Centre & Pool Admission Fees - Single Admit (Adult)
	► Recreation Centre & Pool Admission Fees - Monthly Pass (Adult)
	► Recreation Centre & Pool Admission Fees - 10 Visit Clip Card (Adult)
	► Recreation Centre & Pool Admission Fees - 3 Monthly Pass (Adult)
	► Recreation Centre & Pool Admission Fees - Yearly Pass (Adult)
	► Waterfit Admission Fees - Single Admit (Adult)
	► Arena Admission Fees - Single Admit (Adult)
	► Arena Admission Fees - Shinny (Adult)
	► Senior Facility Admission Fees - Yearly Pass (Senior Centre)
Golf	► Chedoke Golf Memberships - Beddoe & Martin - Adult - any day

Appendix D: User Fee Index (2/3)

We compared the following user fees across municipalities

These fees reflect standard resident rates only and exclude youth, senior, commercial, or other discounted categories. For fee types with multiple tiers, we selected the mid-point rate to ensure a balanced, like-for-like comparison.

Service Area	Hamilton Fee Title
Parks	► Hamilton Pavilion (Per Booking)
	► Hamilton - Wedding Ceremony/Photos (Per Booking)
	► Special Event Exclusive Use Fee (Select Locations Only) (Per Booking)
Programs	► Aquatics Programs - Learn to Swim Program (45 Minute Class)
	► Aquatics Programs - Private Lesson - Semi (30 Minute Class)
	► Aquatics Programs - Private Lesson (30 Minute Class)
	► Aquatic Leadership Programs - Bronze Cross
	► Aquatic Leadership Programs - National Lifeguard
	► Aquatic Leadership Programs - National Lifeguard Recertification
	► Adult - Art/Music Program (1 Hour Class)
	► Adult - Dance/Fitness Program (1 Hour Class)
	► Adult - Sport Program (Non-Instructed) (2 Hour Class)

Appendix D: User Fee Index (3/3)

We compared the following user fees across municipalities

These fees reflect standard resident rates only and exclude youth, senior, commercial, or other discounted categories. For fee types with multiple tiers, we selected the mid-point rate to ensure a balanced, like-for-like comparison.

Service Area	Hamilton Fee Title
Rentals	► Sports Field Rentals - Field/Diamond-B (Hourly)
	► Hall Rentals - Category B - Standard Community Rooms - Hourly Rate – Standard
	► Gym Rentals - Category B - Gym 3500-6000Sq Ft+ (Ancaster Single, Dundas, Huntington, Bennetto, WMT Single)
	► Category B - Traditional Pools (With 2 Lifeguards) (All Other Facilities) - Hourly Rate - Standard
	► User Group Ice Rates - Prime Time Non Subsidized
	► User Group Ice Rates - Non Prime Time

The table below lists the sources consulted for peer municipalities to compile the user fee data used in our benchmarking

Municipality	Source
Hamilton	► Internal Information
London	► Report to Strategic Priorities and Policy Committee – 2024-2027 Consolidates Fees and Charges By-Law
Windsor	► 2024 User Fee Schedule
Burlington	► 2024 Budget – Schedule A of Rates and Fees Bylaw
Oakville	► Approved 2025 Rates and Fees Schedule (includes 2024 data)

Relative to population, peers manage comparable amounts of indoor recreation space, but staffing levels vary

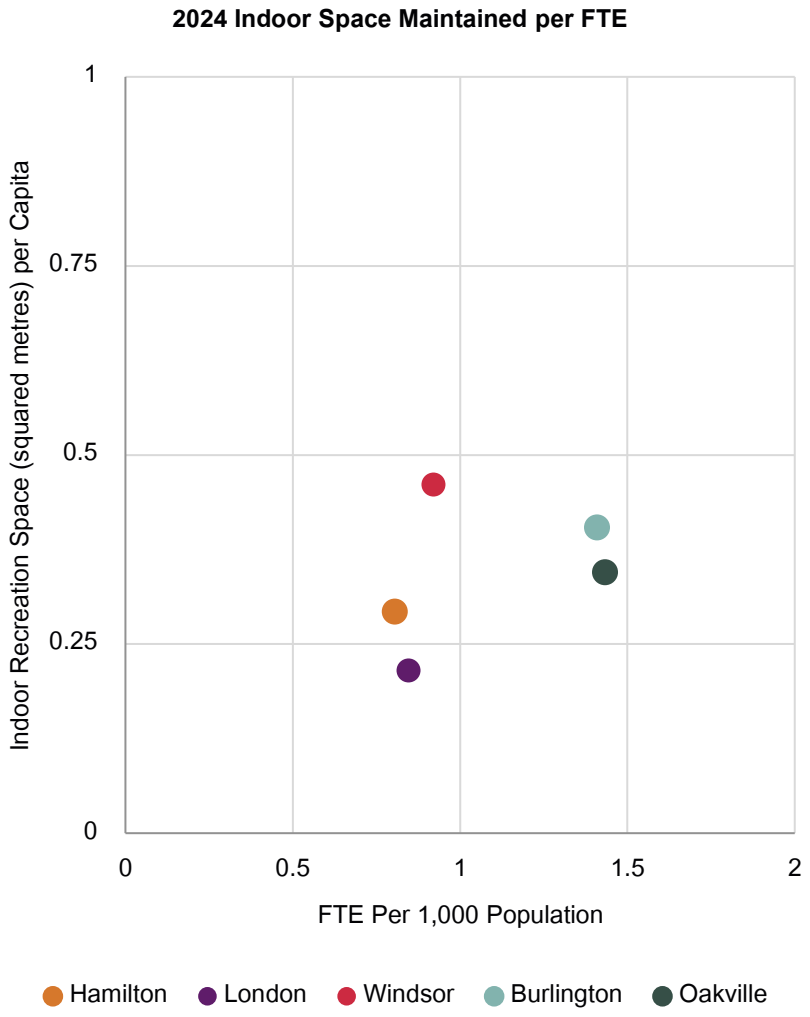
We compared indoor recreation space per capita using Ontario FIR's and staffing levels provided by peers (FTE per 1,000 residents)

Most municipalities maintain between 0.2 and 0.5 square metres of indoor recreation space per capita, as illustrated in the chart to the right. However, staffing levels range more significantly, indicating different service delivery models.

- Hamilton and London operate with slightly lower indoor recreation space per capita and correspondingly lower staffing complements.
- Windsor provides the highest indoor recreation space per capita, while staffing levels sit in the middle of the comparator group.
- Burlington and Oakville maintain less indoor space per capita than Windsor but operate with comparatively higher FTE per 1,000 residents.

These results require careful consideration, as the municipal data is not all from the same source.

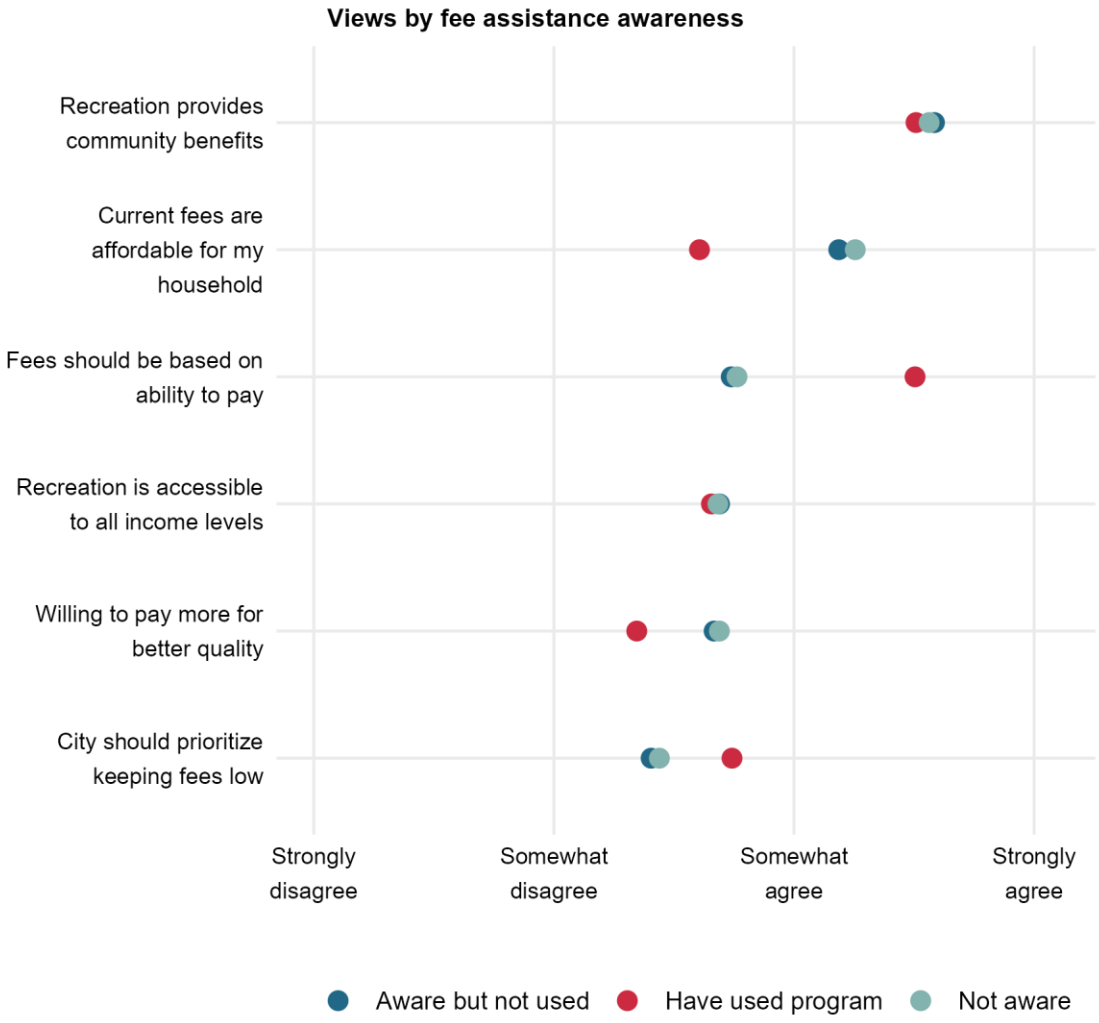
- For Hamilton, the analysis uses FTE and population figures from the 2026 budget and indoor recreation space data from the 2022 FIR, as updated 2024 space data was not available.
- For Oakville, the analysis uses FTE, population and indoor recreation space metrics from the 2024 FIR.
- For the remaining peers, we sourced population and indoor recreation space figures from 2024 FIR data, and each municipality provided its FTE counts directly.



Appendix F: Additional Recreation Survey Insights (1/6)

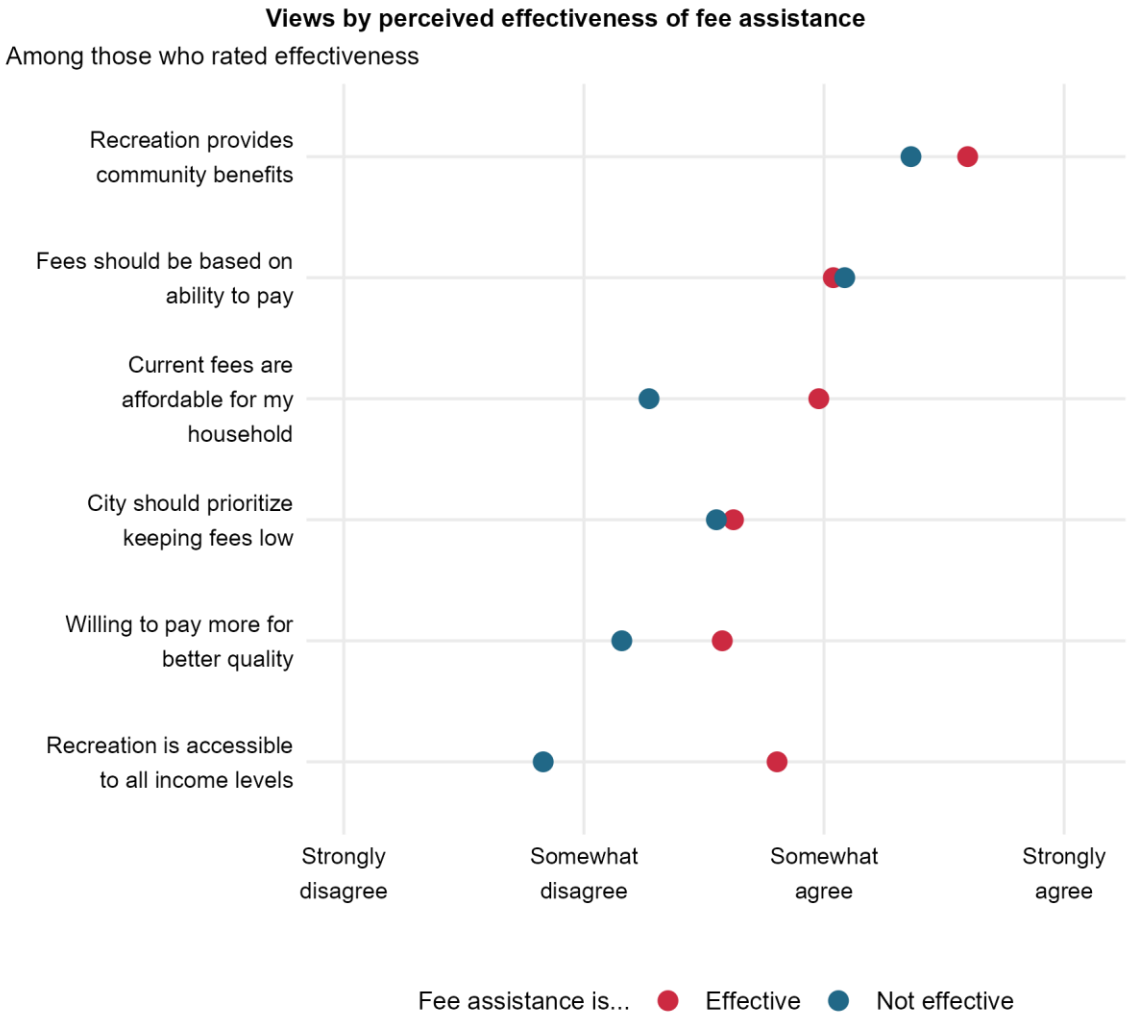
Those who have used fee assistance show distinct attitude patterns

Program users are more likely to perceive recreation as accessible and to support ability-to-pay approaches, though causation cannot be established from this data.



Those who view fee assistance as effective are more likely to see recreation as accessible

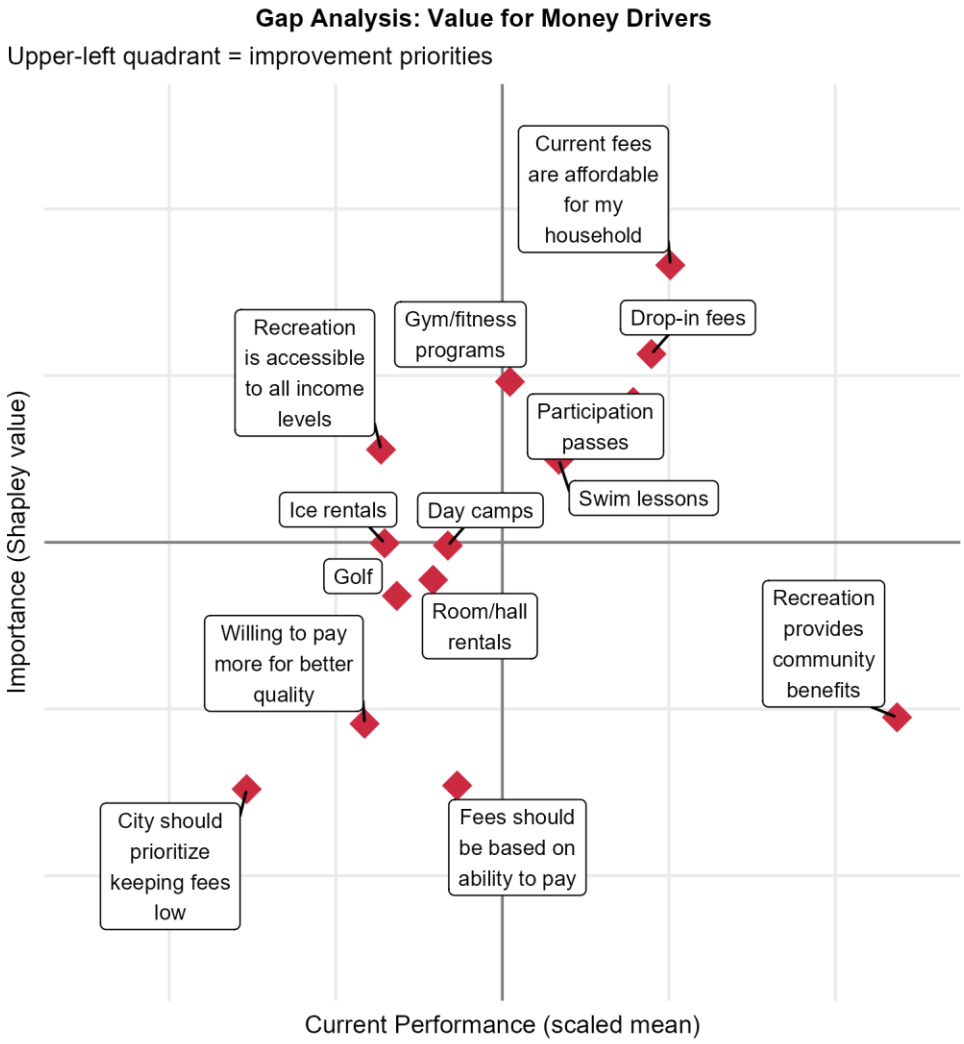
This correlation suggests that effective assistance programs may improve perceptions of system-wide accessibility.



Personal affordability is the strongest driver of value perceptions

Shapley value analysis reveals that “current fees are affordable for my household” accounts for 14.5% of explained variance in value ratings.

- Satisfaction with specific fee categories (drop-in fees 12%, gym/fitness 12%, participation passes 11%) follows.
- Philosophical statements about pricing (ability-to-pay, keeping fees low) show minimal influence on value perceptions.



Respondent segments differ most sharply on affordability and ability-to-pay views

Three distinct respondent segments emerge from the data

Silhouette analysis confirms that a three-cluster solution provides meaningful segmentation based on attitude patterns.

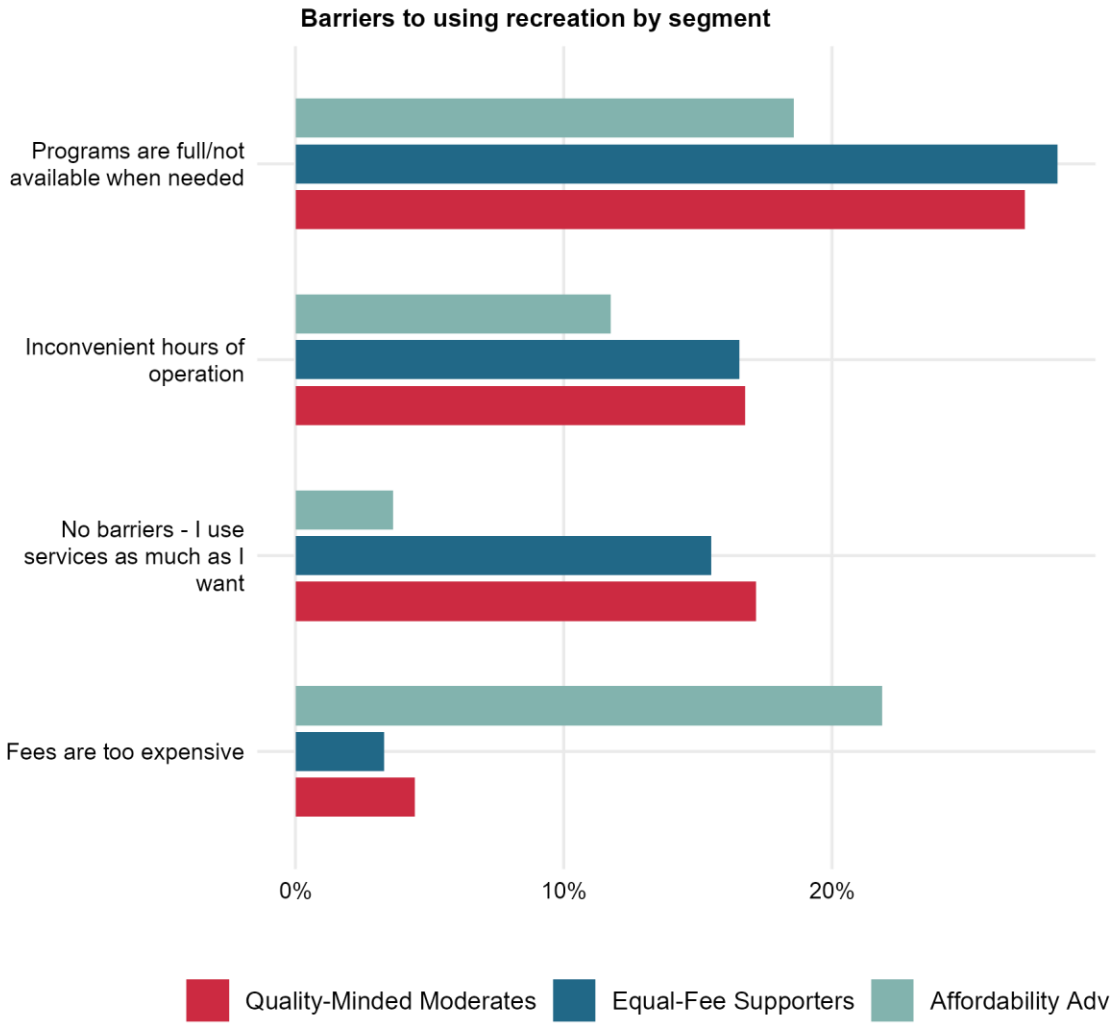
- Quality-Minded Moderates (n=570, 48%): Find fees affordable (mean 3.54), moderate support for ability-to-pay (3.41), highest value ratings (3.43). Predominantly higher-income (50% earn $100K+).
- Equal-Fee Supporters (n=319, 27%): Find fees affordable (3.55) but strongly oppose ability-to-pay pricing (1.54). Highest income segment (63% earn $100K+).
- Affordability Advocates (n=308, 26%): Find fees unaffordable (1.92), strongly support ability-to-pay (2.99), lowest value ratings (2.45). Predominantly lower-income (64% earn under $70K).



Appendix F: Additional Recreation Survey Insights (5/6)

Affordability Advocates report cost barriers at much higher rates

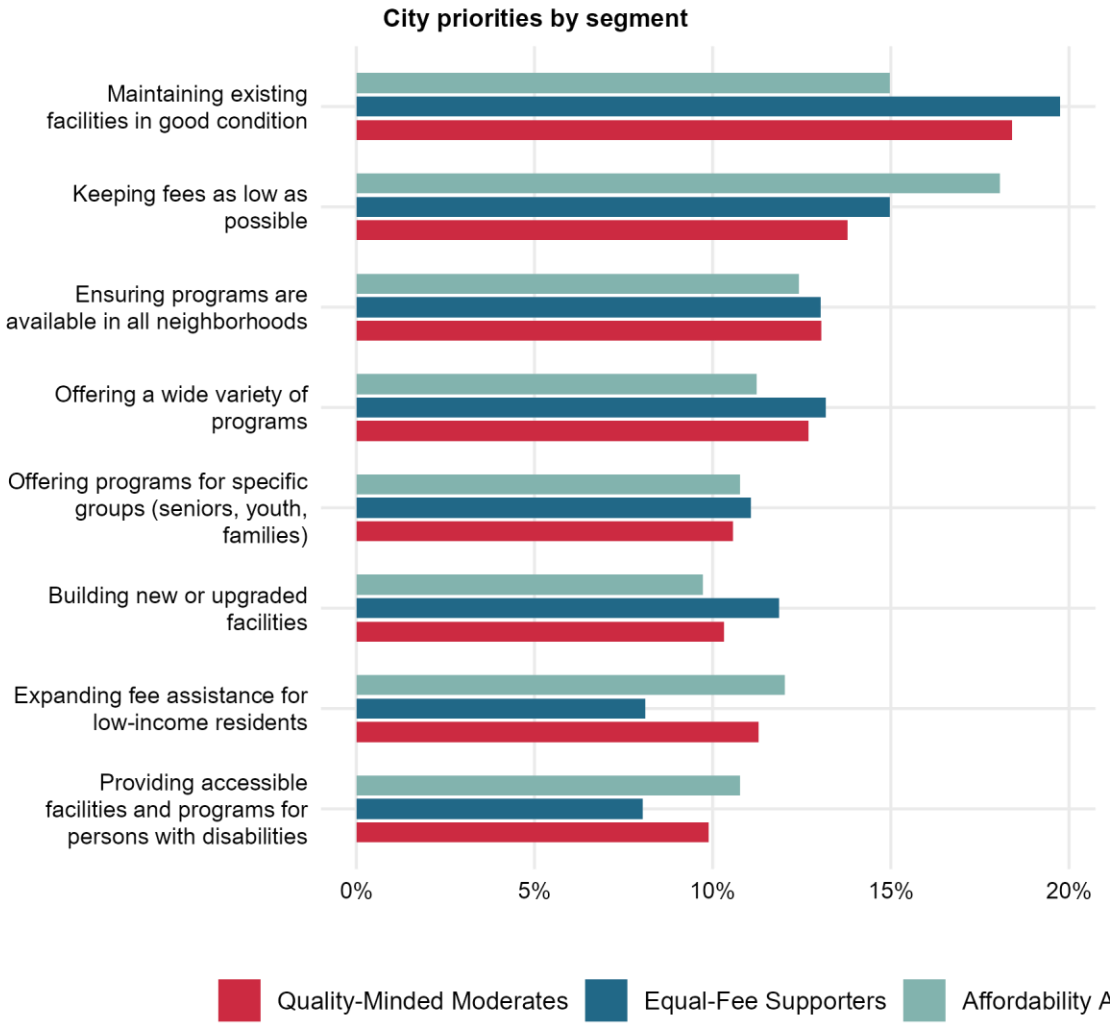
This segment is approximately three times more likely to cite fees as a barrier compared to the other segments.



Appendix F: Additional Recreation Survey Insights (6/6)

Fee adjustment preferences align with segment profiles

- Affordability Advocates favour fee assistance.
- Equal-Fee Supporters prefer universal approaches
- Quality-Minded Moderates are distributed across options.



All trip types are increasing but pass trips exhibit high seasonal variation

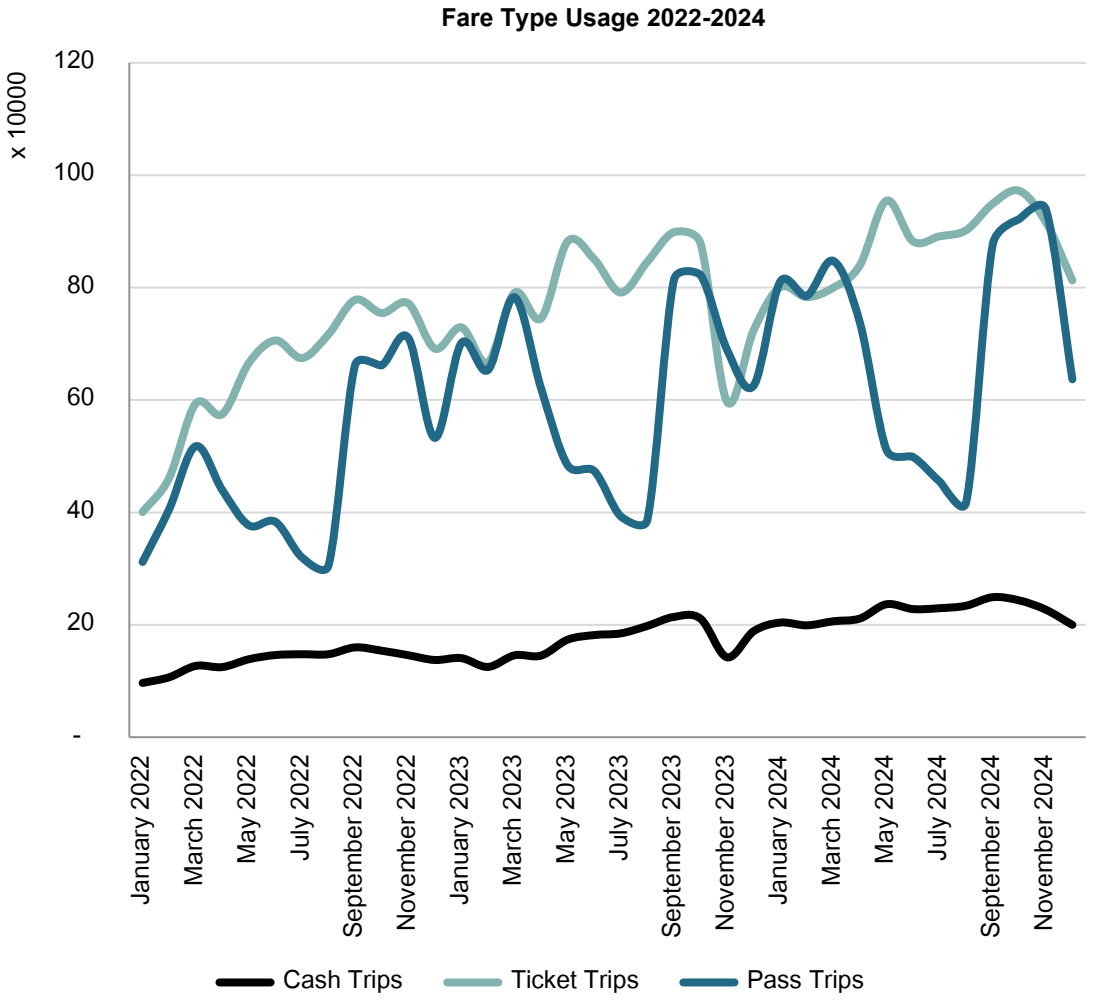
Both ticket and pass trips have risen consistently

Cash passes include exact change fares and when riders tap with a debit/credit card. This charges the full fare, regardless of age or group.

Ticket trips are those taken using a PRESTO or a pre-purchased ticket and offer a heavy discount.

Pass trips are also taken using PRESTO, but are paid by month, year or semester.

- While the overall trend is increasing, pass trips dip occur during the summer months when both school-age and post-secondary students are off.
- Cash trips remain stable but slowly increasing, reflecting the overall shift toward modern fare types, such as PRESTO, which was adopted in 2021 and tap-to-pay, which was introduced in 2023.
- Additionally, Metrolinx launched the One Fare Program in 2024, allowing residents of the GTHA to only pay once through the region, as opposed to separate fares on different transit systems. This further prompted the switch to ticket and pass trips.



Ridership within youth and school fares have declined

Core fare groups of Adults and Post-secondary students have driven ridership increases

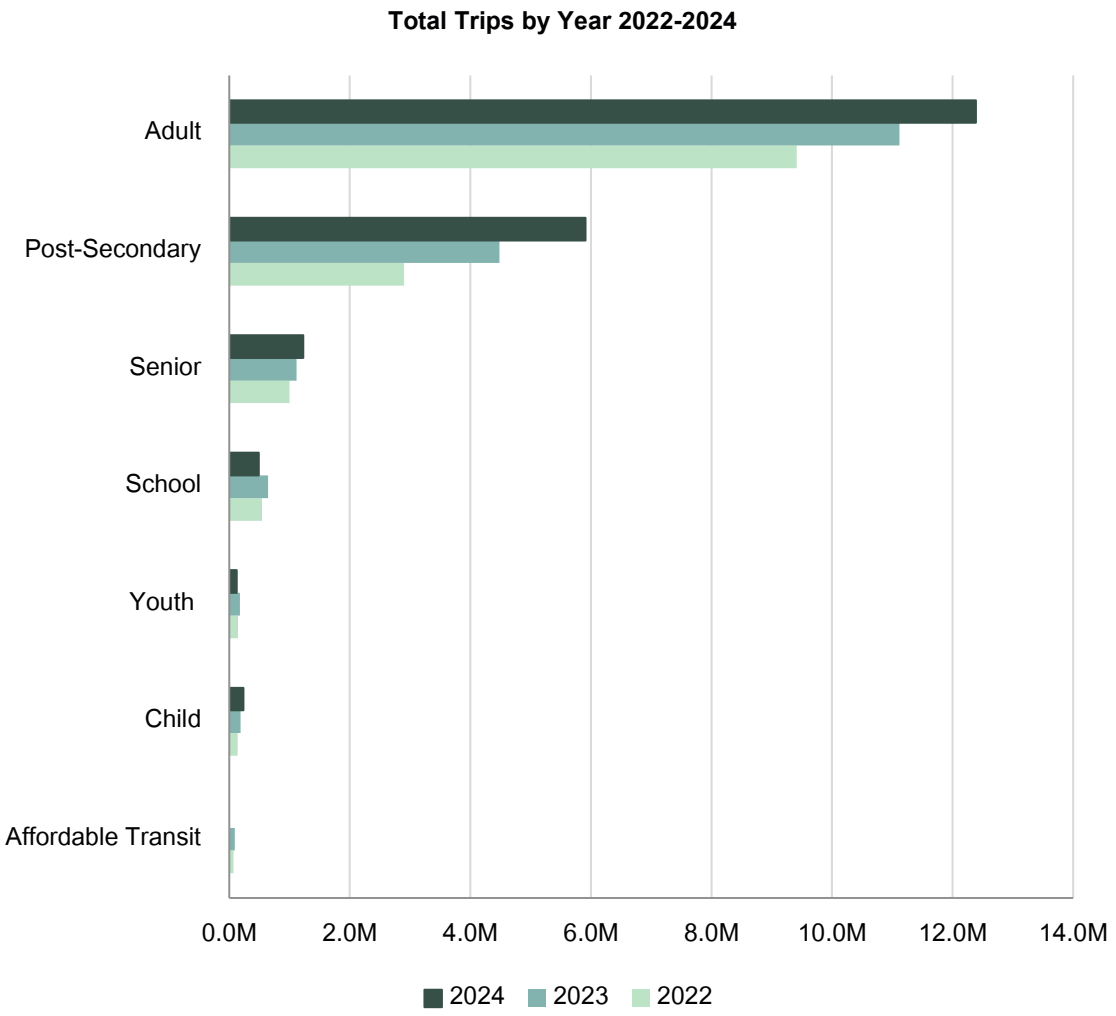
As the Affordable Transit program was switched to Fare Assist in 2024, there is no ridership data.

Youth riders took about 20k less trips and School riders took 90k less between 2022 and 2024. These declines are not likely tied to pricing, indicating that there are other barriers for these groups. Reasons for less youth trips could include a shift to more virtual or remote activities, staggered schedules or switching to other modes of transit.

On the other side, Senior riders took 231k more trips, an increase of around 23%. This is to be expected with a growing senior population.

The fare category with the sharpest increase was Post-Secondary, with approximately a 104% increase from 2.9 million to 5.9 million trips across three years.

Nationally, CUTA noted a slight overall decline in student trips from 2023 to 2024, after the introduction of the international student cap.



Monthly transit costs peaked in October 2023

Between 2022 and 2024, the City recovered an average of 40% of costs through fares

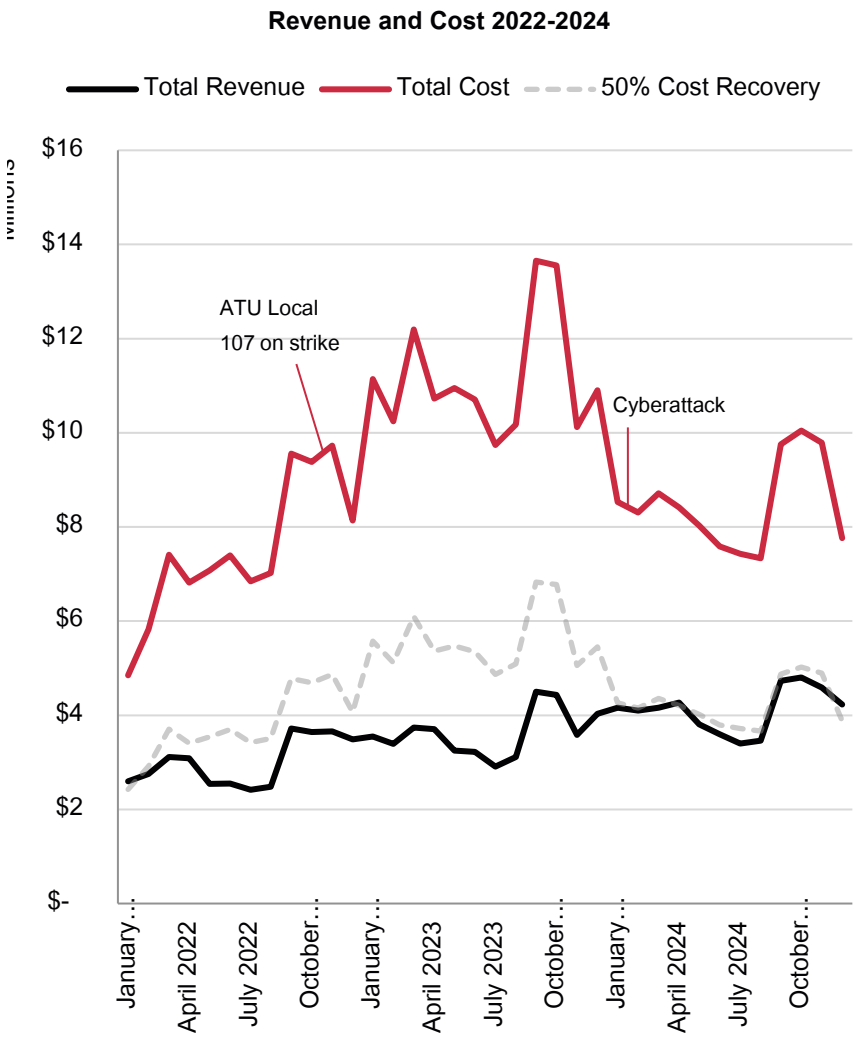
Cost recovery, sometimes also referred to as farebox recovery, is a measure of how much money is recovered through user fees to offset expenses. In this case, the user fees are the fares paid by HSR users.

While the City has not published targets for the last few years the grey dotted line represents a 50% cost recovery ratio, which was the long-term goal set out in the 10 Year Local Transit Strategy. For 2026, the City established a ratio of 40%.

Across peer municipalities, transit is not designed to achieve cost recovery, rather it is funded as a public good. Notable exceptions exist internationally where transit is structured around alternative revenue models. For example, Amtrak in the U.S. generates revenue through tourism and long-distance travel markets, while Hong Kong's MTR transit operations generate revenue for development.

For HSR and peers, a portion of operating costs are intentionally subsidized to keep fares affordable for different equity groups. These subsidies also support broader mobility and service coverage objectives.

The gap reached $53m in 2022 and peaked at $90m in 2023, after the Amalgamated Transit Union (ATU) Local 107 strike. Costs declined to $52m in 2024.



Both cost and revenue per trip have been decreasing over time

As ridership is recovering after the pandemic, cost (or subsidy) per trip is continuing to fall

Transit costs are partially offset by fare revenues, with the remaining costs subsidized by the City to support service delivery, staffing, fleet operations and maintenance.

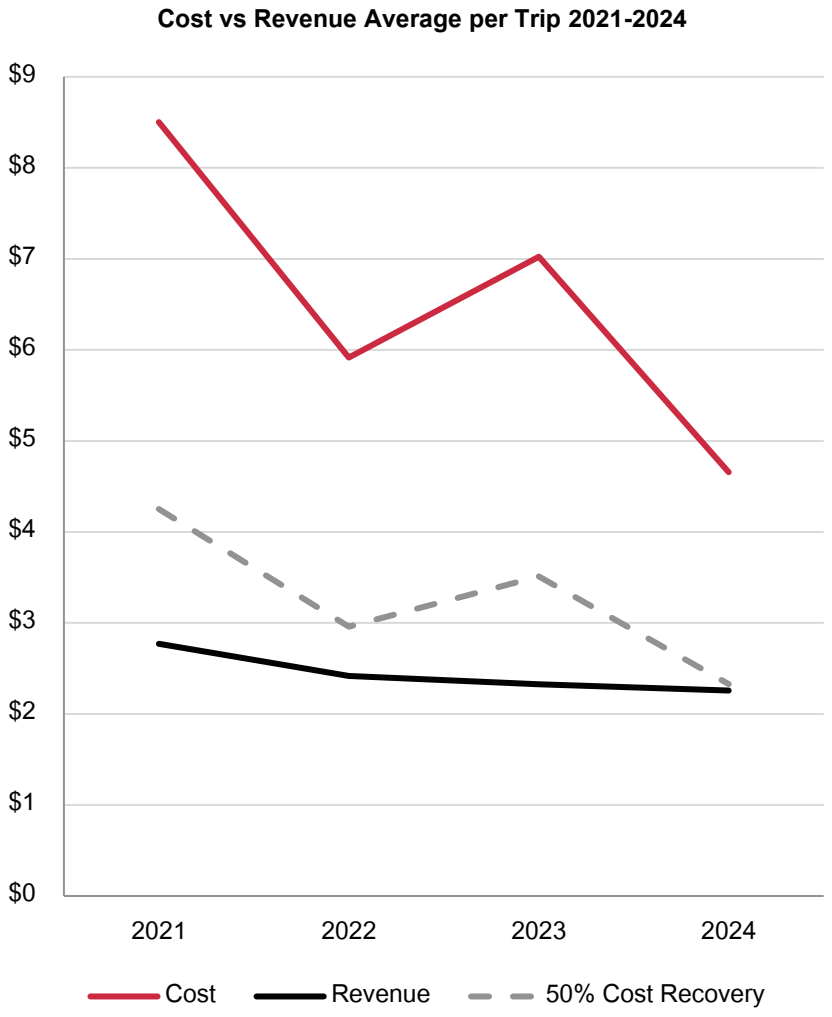
The average cost and revenue per trip is calculated by dividing total operating costs (or revenues) for a given year by regular service trips for that year.

This subsidy is between all fare types, including those that are revenue generating (Adult, Employer Commuter), partially subsidized (Senior, Youth) and fully subsidized (Child, Golden Age).

At the height of COVID-19 in 2021, the average subsidy the City was providing per trip was at a high of $8.50. Revenue peaked at $2.77, but the overall gap between cost and revenue was the largest out of the four years.

In 2024, both cost and revenue hit a low of $4.66 and $2.26 respectively, per trip.

The decrease in both revenue and cost suggests that access to transit is improving across fare types. The City is recouping more from user fees which offsets costs. The decrease in revenue shows that more trips are being taken by groups that are intentionally priced below cost recovery.



Adult and Post-Secondary fares bring in the most revenue for the City

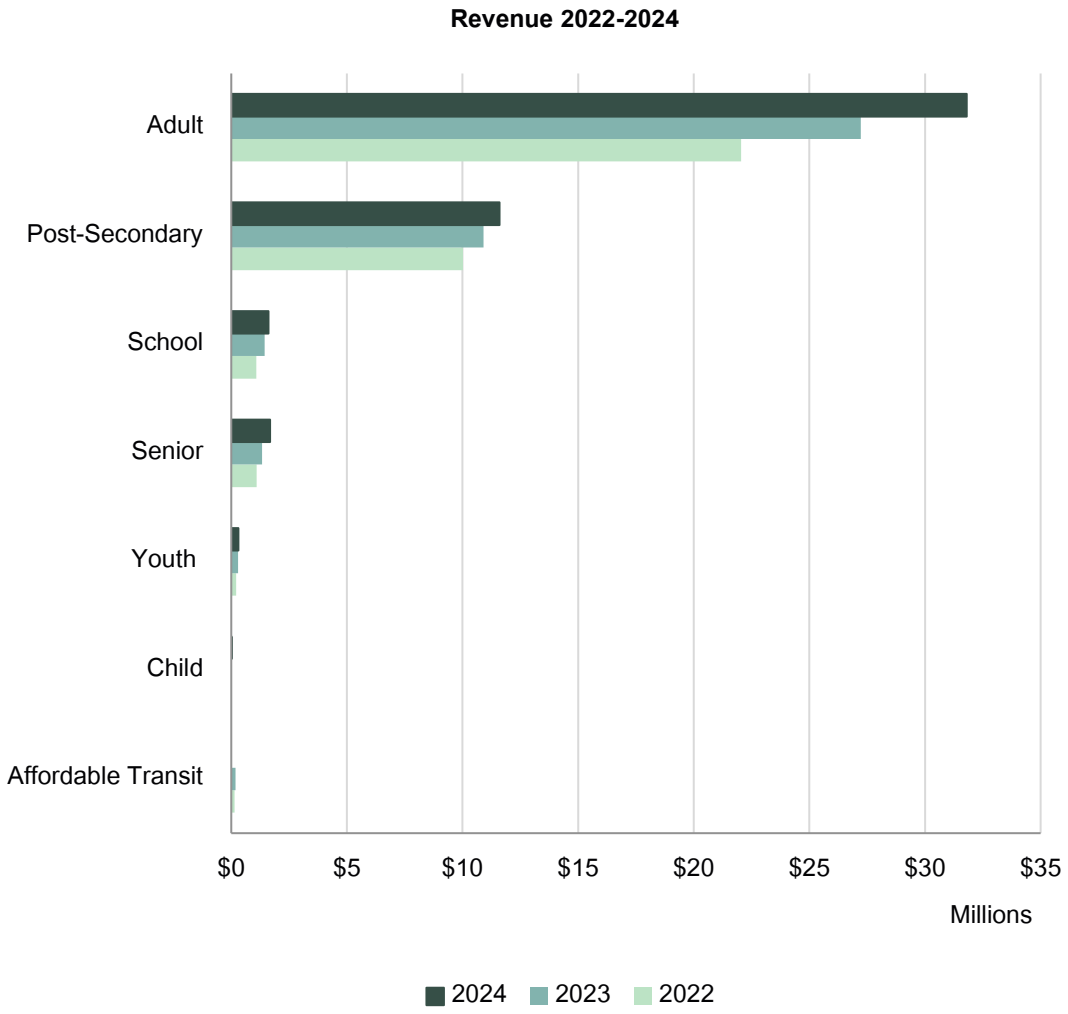
Broken down into fare types, the revenue distribution is what we would expect

The dollar amount to the right of each category represents the total user fee revenue generated from 2022-2024, in millions.

Each category has seen a large jump from 2022-2024, with the largest being youth at 62%, Senior at 52%, School at 49%, Child at 45% and Adult at 44%.

Post-secondary passes are a consistent stream of revenue, as riders in this category will pay a fixed pass price up front with tuition, regardless of how often they will be using the service. For example, the HSR has an agreement in place with both the McMaster Student Union (MSU) and Graduate Student Association (GSA) until August 2026.

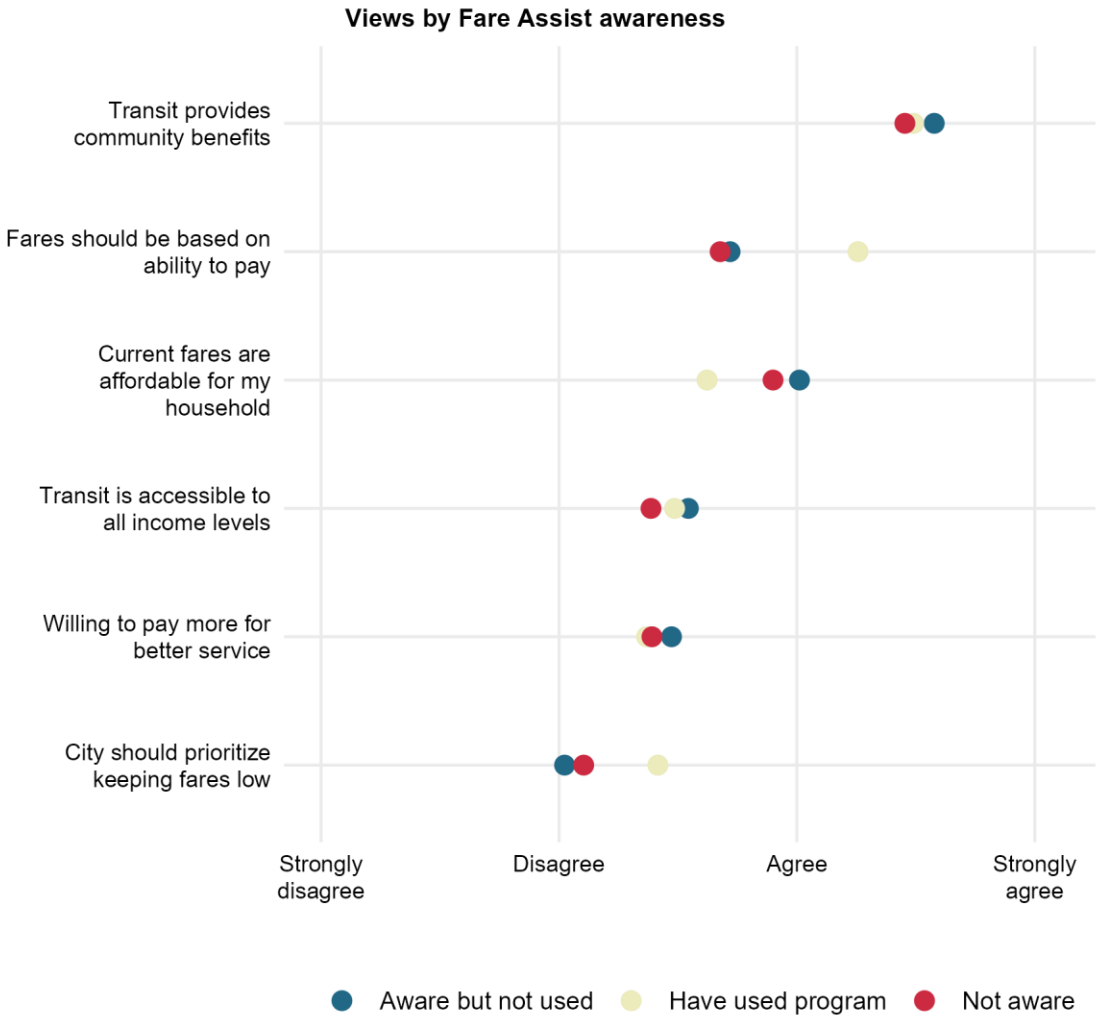
Higher revenue fares help to offset the intentional under-recovery for Child, Youth and Senior fares to support the City's broader objectives and preserve affordability.



Fare Assist users are more likely to say fares should be based on ability to pay

Those who have used Fare Assist show higher agreement that fares should be based on ability to pay and that the City should prioritize lower fares

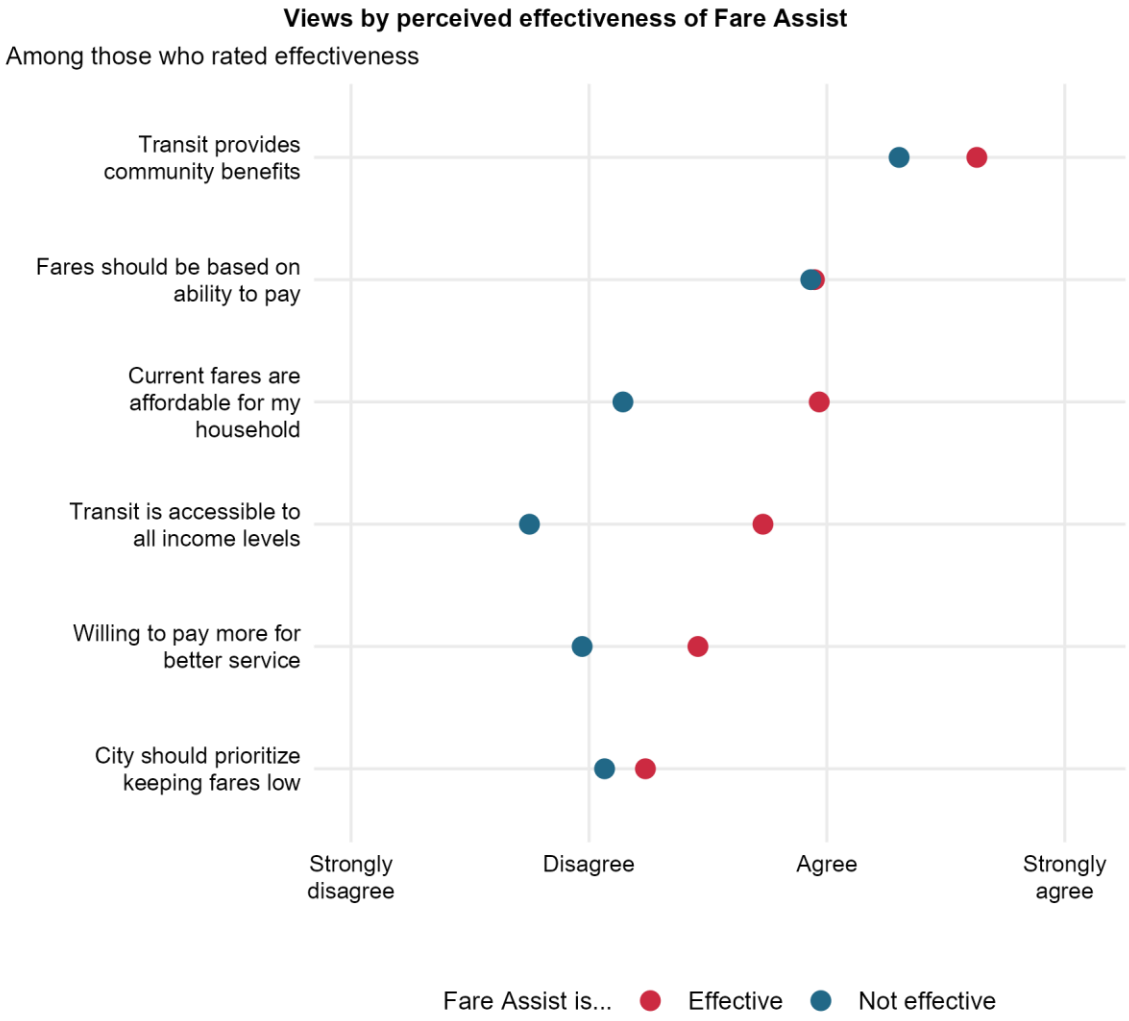
Fare Assist users are also less likely to agree that current fares are affordable for their households.



Perceptions of Fare Assist effectiveness correlate with accessibility views

Those who view Fare Assist as effective are more likely to see transit as accessible overall

They are also more likely to agree that current fares are affordable for their household.

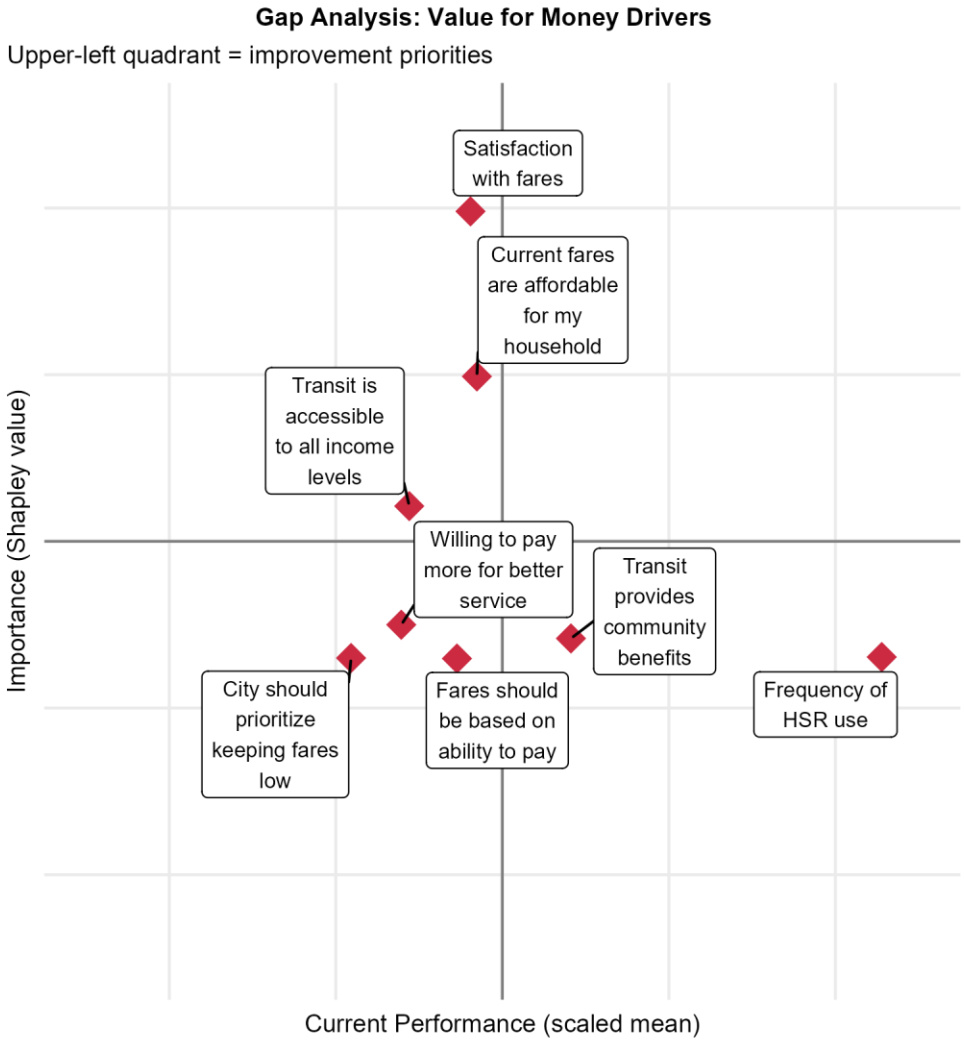


Fare satisfaction dominates perceptions of value for money

Shapley value analysis reveals that satisfaction with fares accounts for almost half of explained variance in value ratings

This is more concentrated than recreation's more distributed drivers.

Current fare affordability (30%) and perceived accessibility (16%) follow. Principle-based statements (ability-to-pay, keeping fares low) show minimal direct influence.



Transit segments differ sharply on affordability and service investment

Transit segments show cleaner separation than recreation

Higher silhouette scores indicate more distinct attitude groupings, making the three-segment solution particularly meaningful for transit.

The three segments are clearly distinguishable. The cluster visualization shows less overlap than recreation, suggesting transit attitudes form more coherent groupings.

- **Service Investors** (n=199, 41%): Find fares affordable (mean 3.42), support ability-to-pay (3.38), highest willingness to pay for better service (3.10). Value rating: 3.20. Mixed income composition.
- **Equal-Fare Advocates** (n=123, 26%): Find fares affordable (3.25) but strongly oppose ability-to-pay pricing (1.68). Lowest support for keeping fares low (2.02). Value rating: 3.12. Highest income segment (51% earn $100K+).
- **Cost-Burdened Riders** (n=158, 33%): Find fares unaffordable (1.73), perceive low accessibility (1.70), support ability-to-pay (2.94). Lowest value rating (2.00) and fare satisfaction (1.95). Predominantly lower-income (73% earn under $70K).

Service Investors and Cost-Burdened Riders are both more likely to ride HSR daily or weekly compared to Equal-Fare Advocates.

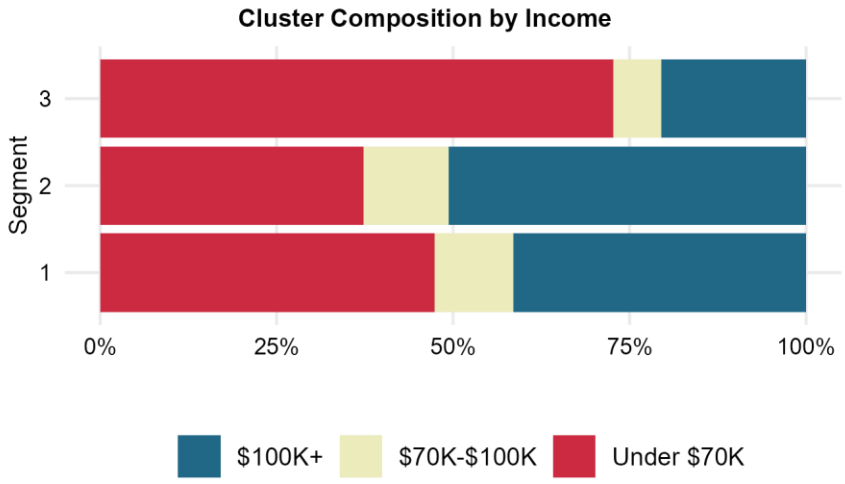


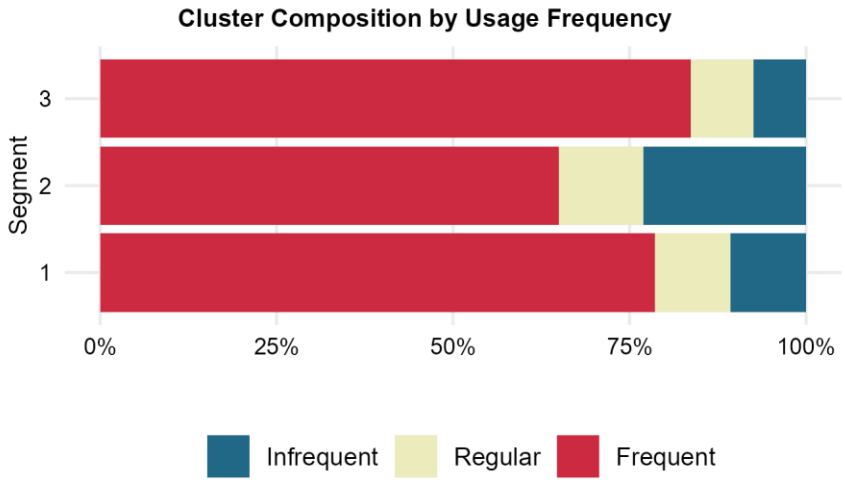
Income composition differs dramatically across segments

However, usage frequency is similar across segments

Unlike income, usage patterns do not differentiate segments, indicating that differences reflect economic and attitudinal positions rather than how often people ride.

Cost-Burdened Riders are overwhelmingly lower-income (73%), while Equal-Fare Advocates are majority higher-income (51%). The sharp income-segment correlation confirms that transit attitudes are strongly shaped by economic circumstances.

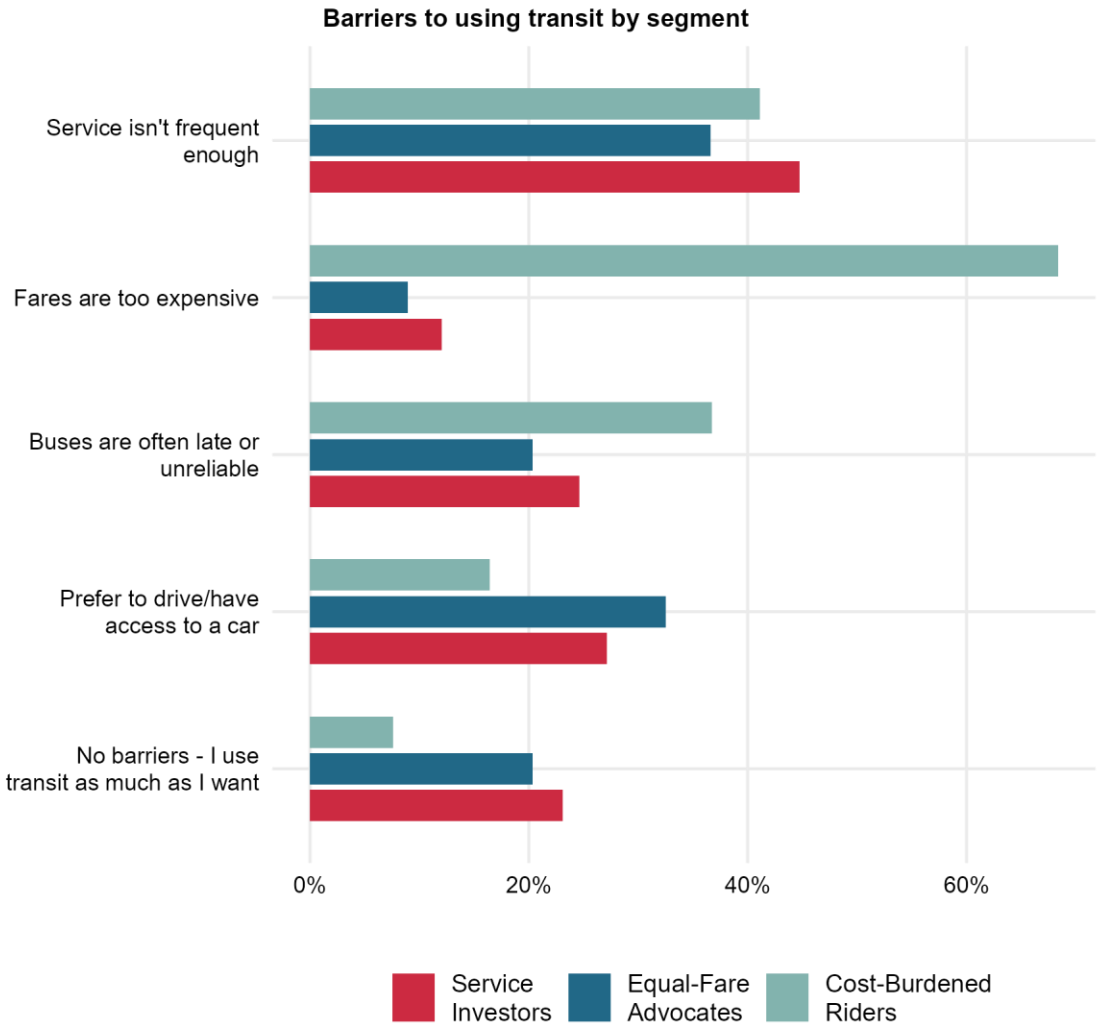




Cost-Burdened Riders report fare barriers at dramatically higher rates

This segment cites fares as a barrier at more than five times the rate of other segments

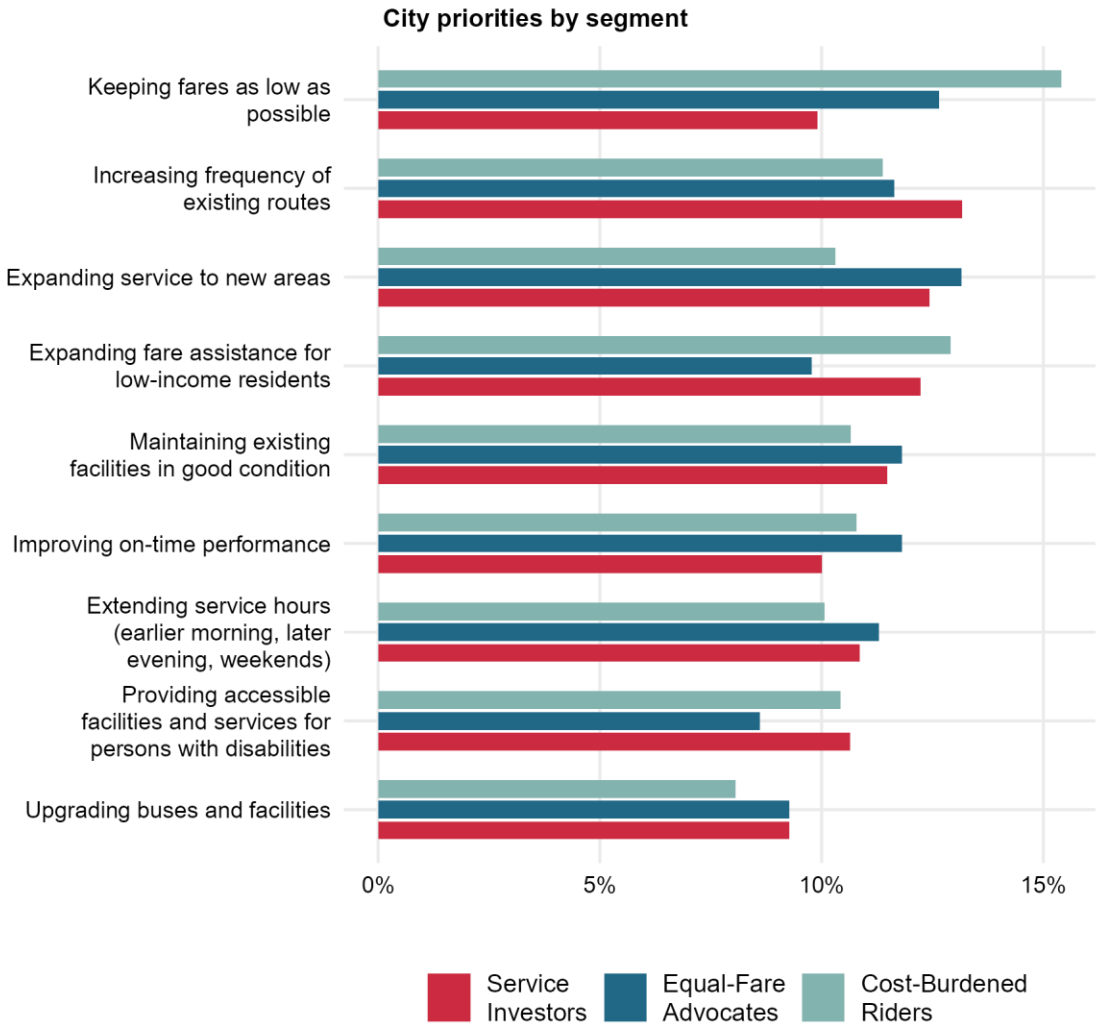
Confirming that their self-identified affordability concerns translate into actual usage barriers.



Priority rankings reflect segment values

Cost-Burdened Riders prioritize keeping fares low and expanding assistance

Service Investors prioritize frequency and coverage, while Equal-Fare Advocates prioritize service improvements over affordability.



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City of Hamilton

Report for Information

To:	Chair and Members General Issues Committee
Date:	April 15, 2026
Report No:	HSC23076(b)
Subject/Title:	2025 Ending Chronic Homelessness Performance Update OUTSTANDING BUSINESS LIST ITEM
Ward(s) Affected:	(City Wide)

Recommendations

1) That Report HSC23076(b) respecting 2025 Ending Chronic Homelessness Performance Update and attached appendices **BE RECEIVED** for information.

2) That the Outstanding Business List Item GIC-11/20/24-10.4, respecting the number of individuals that have transitioned out of tent encampments to social housing, residential care facilities, transitional housing, and shelter beds **BE CONSIDERED COMPLETE** and **REMOVED** from the listing.

Key Facts

- This report provides the 2025 Ending Chronic Homelessness system performance results and includes expanded analysis of system investments, population trends, and program-level outcomes.

- Year-over-year variation in homelessness indicators continues, with persistent pressure in chronic homelessness reflecting broader housing affordability challenges and limited long-term supportive housing supply.
- Demand remains high across prevention, outreach, shelter, and housing-focused supports, with sustained use of emergency and low-barrier services. Housing-focused case management programs continue to support substantial numbers of individuals to secure and maintain more stable housing, with strong long-term housing stability outcomes overall.
- Expanded investments across the housing continuum, including shelter capacity, prevention supports, outreach, and supportive housing, have strengthened system response; however, structural funding and housing supply pressures continue to constrain progress toward ending chronic homelessness.
- From January 1 to June 30, 2025, 577 unique individuals were identified in the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System as experiencing unsheltered homelessness; of these, 222 accessed an emergency shelter or transitional living program at least once, and 27 were identified as moving into housing at least once during the reporting period.

Financial Considerations - N/A

Background

The City of Hamilton remains committed to ending chronic homelessness by building a system where homelessness is prevented wherever possible and, when it occurs, is brief and non-reoccurring.

On April 1, 2019, the Federal government launched Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy, which set a national target to reduce chronic homelessness by 50% by 2028. In collaboration with the Indigenous Homelessness Community Entity (Coalition of Hamilton Indigenous Leadership), the City of Hamilton produces an annual Community Homelessness Report assessing local progress toward this goal.

Hamilton's approach is also guided by the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan (currently under renewal), the Reaching Home Hamilton Community Plan 2024-2028, and funding agreements under the Provincial Homelessness Prevention Program. In April 2023, Council approved a motion to declare a state of emergency in the areas of Homelessness, Mental Health and Opioid Addiction, recognizing the escalating pressures facing the community and the local homeless-serving system. In addition to this declaration the City has also established the Housing Secretariat with a focus on the Housing Sustainability and Investment Roadmap pillars that are meant to create more affordable and supportive housing in Hamilton to support pathways out of homelessness. Through this work the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan will be a key companion document to the Housing Master Plan that is currently under development.

In March 2023, Council received Report HSC23021: Ending Chronic Homelessness, which outlined the current state of homelessness in Hamilton and identified investments and system changes required to address rising demand. The report committed to annual performance reporting. Since that time, Council has approved significant investments across the housing continuum to strengthen prevention, shelter, outreach, supportive housing, and system coordination efforts.

This report provides the Ending Chronic Homelessness system performance results up to December 2025, and builds on the commitments outlined in the 2023 Ending Chronic Homelessness report (HSC23021). Results are presented in aggregate across the homeless-serving sector and contain no personally identifying information. All data collection, management, and reporting are conducted in compliance with the Municipal Freedom of Information & Protection of Privacy Act.

Analysis

Current State of Homelessness

Data from the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) demonstrates that during the 2024-2025 fiscal year, 3,004 unique individuals were

homeless for at least one day in Hamilton. Of these, 1,287 unique individuals met the definition of experiencing chronic homelessness (individuals or families who are currently homeless and have been for 6 months or more in the past year or have had recurring experiences of homelessness).

While overall homelessness decreased slightly compared to the previous year, chronic homelessness continued to rise, indicating sustained challenges in supporting long-term housing stability and increasing pressure on high-acuity supports and services.

This trend is not unique to Hamilton and has been observed across Ontario. The Association of Municipalities of Ontario noted in its January 2026 report, Municipalities Under Pressure: An Update on the Human and Financial Cost of Ontario's Homelessness Crisis, that although public funding for housing and homelessness has nearly doubled since 2018, with municipalities increasing their contributions at a proportionally higher rate, the availability of affordable and supportive housing has not kept pace with demand, contributing to rising homelessness across the province.

Recent Actions and Investments

A healthy housing continuum aims to prevent homelessness wherever possible and ensure that if it occurs, experiences are brief and non-reoccurring through coordinated prevention, emergency response, housing stabilization and permanent housing solutions.

Since 2023, the City has expanded investments and policy responses across the housing continuum to address rising demand and complexity of needs. Key enhancements have included:

- expansion of shelter capacity by 80%, including 272 temporary spaces, inclusive of 80 outdoor, low-barrier spaces accommodating couples and pets;
- opening 97 supportive housing units at Dorothy Day Place and King William Flats;

- continued support for hotel overflow spaces for families, and the creation of mobile case management support for families experiencing homelessness supported in hotels;
- expansion of Intensive Case Management supports for those experiencing chronic homelessness;
- implementation of Rent Secure, a portable municipally funded housing benefit to bridge individuals experiencing homelessness to longer-term supports, and use of the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit to support those experiencing homelessness;
- enabling the opening of 43 transitional living spaces at the YMCA and enhancing supports available in the transitional living program at the YWCA;
- adoption of the Renovation Licence and Relocation By-Law, Rental Housing Demolition and Conversion By-Law, and the Safe Apartment Buildings Program, alongside the launch of the Tenant Support Program to reduce bad faith evictions, strengthen tenant rights education, prevent entry into homelessness, and support tenant engagement and coordination of community supports through initiatives such as the Community Research Table; and,
- enhancements to shelter diversion programs to improve performance and ensure access to diversion services in all permanently funded shelters.
- Regular updates to the City's Housing and Homelessness Dashboard that supports transparency and understanding of the current homelessness crisis. This includes updates related to the number of individual's who are actively experiencing homelessness, individuals housed through City funded programs, and other key data points.

In collaboration with the Coalition of Hamilton Indigenous Leadership and local Indigenous service providers, the City has also supported Indigenous-led programs including an Action Research on Chronic Homelessness project, embedding culturally grounded practices and Indigenous data governance principles into system coordination.

2025 System Performance Results

The following section outlines how these investments are reflected in system performance during the 2025 reporting period. The current performance results reflect continued routine system reporting and illustrate trends across the housing continuum. Appendix “A” to Report HSC23076(b) - Ending Chronic Homelessness Data Table provides a detailed breakdown of performance results. A reporting data dictionary outlining all the reporting definitions and data collection methods is available upon request. Key findings from the 2025 reporting period include:

- **Population-level results** show that the number of individuals experiencing homelessness at least once during the period decreased slightly compared to the previous year. However, the number of individuals identified as experiencing chronic homelessness increased, indicating ongoing challenges in maintaining consistent housing outflow and limited availability of long-term, appropriate housing options.
- **Prevention and early intervention** service activity remained high. From the launch of the Housing Emergency Fund in July 2024 until the end of 2025, the program supported 4027 households on social assistance (Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support Program) and living with low income, with $5.37M to support acquisition of affordable units via last month’s rent, and to remain in their units by addressing rental and utility arrears. Additionally, in 2025 the Tenant Support Program reached 3557 households with tenant engagement and legal support. The collective impacts are much higher when considering spouses and dependents.
- Service use within **drop-in programs** increased significantly in 2025, driven by sustained investment in day, evening, and overnight low-barrier services and the return of winter response programming. Drop-ins recorded over 160,000 basic needs interactions in 2025, underscoring their role as access points for indoor space, food, hygiene, and other supports, while also providing growing levels of housing support assistance.

- The **Housing-Focused Street Outreach** program continued to serve individuals living unsheltered, with increases in both basic needs and housing-focused interactions. Overall, results point to sustained and intensive engagement with individuals in encampments and other outdoor locations.
- Demand for **emergency shelter** remains significant. Each quarter, more than 1,000 unique individuals were provided a City funded bed or room, and adult and youth sector occupancy rates frequently exceeded 90%. Additional temporary beds and the phased opening of the Temporary Barton Tiffany Shelter increased overall capacity throughout the reporting period. Consistent high occupancy rates demonstrate the need for these additional spaces and increased outflow options from shelter.
- **Transitional housing programs** served 70 to 130 unique individuals each quarter with increased capacity and program choice generated through new funding for the YMCA Transitional Living Program. Housing placement outcomes remained modest, with an average of 11% of participants moving to stable housing each quarter. Average occupancy is 72%, mostly reflecting the staggered opening of the newly funded programming.
- **Housing-focused case management** (Rapid Rehousing and Intensive Case Management) maintained strong placement outcomes in 2025, with just over 40% of participants securing housing (198 through RRH and 183 through ICM). Twelve-month housing stability rates remained high, though they declined modestly compared to 2024 (RRH: 78% in 2025, down from 86%; ICM: 63%, down from 70%). Both programs also experienced increases in returns to homelessness (RRH: 6%; ICM: 10%), suggesting growing client complexity and housing market pressures. The introduction of the Rent Secure housing allowance is expected to further strengthen housing stability outcomes.
- **Permanent supportive housing** demonstrated the strongest housing stability outcomes in the system, with very few returns to homelessness among tenants housed during the reporting period (5 out of 118 individuals in 2025). This continues to demonstrate the effectiveness of long-term, wrap-around supportive

housing for people who require sustained, individualized support to remain housed.

The measures presented reflect point-in-time results. Transitions to housing are not always linear, particularly for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness, living unsheltered, or presenting with high-acuity needs. Individuals may cycle through services multiple times before achieving sustained housing stability, and service engagement may be interrupted by health-related or justice system interactions.

Program performance results may not account for differences in agency practices, client acuity and complexity, prioritization and referral processes, housing availability, reasons for service, discharge reasons, or discharge timing – all of which directly influence program outcomes.

Hamilton continues to allocate a minimum of 20% of federal homelessness funding to Indigenous-led housing and homelessness responses through the Indigenous Community Entity. Indigenous Peoples are prioritized across housing supports in recognition of the systemic factors contributing to their overrepresentation among those experiencing homelessness.

Individuals served during this reporting period often present with complex and co-occurring needs, including mental health, substance use, and physical health challenges. These factors influence service trajectories and housing stability outcomes and underscore the importance of integrated housing and healthcare responses.

Persistent Gaps and Challenges

While investments have expanded services and supports across the housing continuum and strengthened system capacity, much of this expansion has been driven by increased municipal investment. Despite these efforts, several structural pressures continue to impact progress toward reducing chronic homelessness. Key challenges include:

- Funding sustainability risks: temporary funding is currently supporting hotel overflow and case management, mobile case management supports, expanded

shelter capacity and transitional housing creating uncertainty for short-and long-term service capacity.

- Limited supportive housing supply and operational funding: while capital investments are advancing new supportive housing units through the Housing Secretariat Project Stream, sustainable operating funding from upper levels of government will be required to ensure long-term viability and appropriate support levels.
- Sustained shelter system pressure: high occupancy rates, particularly for low-barrier spaces and accommodations for couples, and pet-owners, indicate continued demand for permanent housing supports.
- Complex and co-occurring needs: many individuals experiencing chronic homelessness were identified as having complex needs and co-occurring health needs, including healthcare integration needs.
- Broader system-level factors: housing affordability pressures, limited rental supply, and social assistance rates that do not align with market conditions continue to constrain housing stability outcomes and increase demand across the system.

Addressing these structural pressures will require sustained and increased investment to expand housing and support capacity, strengthened intergovernmental collaboration, deeper integration across housing, healthcare, mental health, addictions, and justice systems, and continued system monitoring and evaluation to support redesign efforts aimed at achieving both short- and long-term reductions in chronic homelessness.

Unsheltered Homelessness to Shelter or Housing

During the six-month reporting period from January 1 to June 30, 2025, 577 unique individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness were identified in the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS). Of these, 249 individuals transitioned to emergency shelter, transitional or permanent housing, while 326 unique individuals had no recorded exits from unsheltered homelessness during the reporting period. During the same time period, 91 unique individuals returned to unsheltered

homelessness, and 484 unique individuals had no recorded returns to unsheltered homelessness during the reporting period.

Next Steps

Continued efforts across the homeless-serving system will focus on strengthening performance, service coordination, and accountability. Ongoing development of Coordinated Access, improvements to data integrity, and performance monitoring will support alignment of services with demonstrated need, responsiveness to evolving pressures within the local housing continuum of supports, and alignment with applicable provincial and federal policy, funding, and reporting requirements.

Housing Services Division will continue to review and improve the annual reporting cycle to Council with focused development aimed at identifying performance measures that begin to shift toward demonstrating client outcomes and incorporate the voice of those with lived or living experience as well as considering the application of an equity lens. The 2026 data improvement plan includes implementation of the following:

- **Implementation of a new Data Sharing Partnership Agreement and client consent process**
    - Timeline: Q3 2026
    - Includes revisions to the HIFIS data sharing agreements and client consent processes to ensure they are aligned with best practices and clearly identify the roles and responsibilities of Coordinated Access and HIFIS participating partners and the uses of client information collected in HIFIS.
- **Expand the coverage of HIFIS to include prevention and diversion programs**
    - Timeline: Q2 2026
    - Several programs offering City-funded prevention and diversion/ early intervention supports will be onboarded onto HIFIS to improve program performance results and assessments.

- **Ongoing HIFIS data quality and reporting improvements**
    - Timeline: 2026 and ongoing
    - To improve the completeness, and accuracy of information contained within the HIFIS database overall the City of Hamilton continues to implement a proactive data validation and verification program and provide scheduled annual training opportunities. Expanded and improved reporting capabilities are being explored as part of a Housing Service Division Data Strategy.

Further updates will be provided through Council reporting and the 2025–2035 Housing and Homelessness Action Plan, which establishes the long-term strategic direction for the Housing Services Division. The Action Plan will include specific actions aligned with core priorities, with a practical focus on measurable goals and system-level outcomes. Developed through multi-partner collaboration and community engagement, the Plan reflects the voices of people with lived and living experience and includes measurable outcomes to guide and track progress over the next decade.

Ongoing system planning and performance monitoring, undertaken in partnership with community providers and sector partners, will continue to align with federal Reaching Home requirements and broader provincial and federal accountability frameworks, with a sustained focus on homelessness reduction, prevention, limiting returns to homelessness, and addressing chronic and Indigenous homelessness within the local context.

Alternatives - N/A

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

These recommendations advance Council Priority #2: Safe and Thriving Neighbourhoods, Outcome 2.1: Increase the supply of affordable and supportive housing and reduce chronic homelessness.

These performance results represent an ongoing commitment to sector-wide results reporting as the Housing Services Division continues to work towards comprehensive program performance measurement within the homeless-serving sector. Performance measurement fosters transparency and is essential to understand the effectiveness of interventions, as well as a community's overall progress towards reducing homelessness.

Previous Reports Submitted

- HSC23076(a): 2024 Ending Chronic Homelessness Performance Update, April 9, 2025
- HSC23076: 2023 Ending Chronic Homelessness Performance Update (Q1 and Q2), December 6, 2023
- HSC23041: Addressing the Needs of Unsheltered Individuals and those Relying on Hamilton's Emergency Shelter System, August 14,2023
- HSC23021: Ending Chronic Homelessness, March 23,2023

Consultation

The results have been provided or reviewed and confirmed by representatives from the individual reporting programs and/or organizations through email communications, the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) Super User Group, and virtual question and answer sessions. See Appendix "B" to Report HSC23076(b) – Ending Chronic Homelessness Consultations for a list of programs engaged for this reporting and engagement opportunities provided by the City of Hamilton.

The monitoring measure definitions are in alignment with data reporting best practices and consistent with Reaching Home Results reporting and homelessness data reporting approaches in other municipalities.

The expertise of people with living experience is invaluable to shaping programs, facilities, and policies in the emergency shelter sector. Positive client outcomes are a

critical accountability measure, but more than that, people with living experience know how the system works, they know what their needs are, and experience the system at work every day. They can bring to light perspectives that may be unknown or unknowable at the staff or senior leadership level. Future reporting will endeavour to bring this perspective into identifying meaningful measures and the interpretation of the results.

Appendices and Schedules Attached

- Appendix A: 2025 Ending Chronic Homelessness Performance Update Data Tables
- Appendix B: 2025 Ending Chronic Homelessness Performance Update Consultation

Prepared by:

- Katrice Carson, Senior Project Manager, Housing Services Division, Healthy and Safe Communities
- James O’Brien, Manager, Housing Services Division, Healthy and Safe Communities
- Jessica Reeve, Senior Policy Analyst, Housing Services Division, Healthy and Safe Communities
- Greg Tedesco, Manager, Housing Services Division, Healthy and Safe Communities

Submitted and Recommended by:

- Michelle Baird, Director – Housing Services Division, Healthy and Safe Communities

APPENDIX A: 2025 Ending Chronic Homelessness Performance Update Data Tables

1287 unique individuals Ending Chronic Homelessness Data Tables

A reporting data dictionary outlining all the reporting definitions and data collection methods is available upon request.

Population Indicators (Monitoring)

Ref #	Indicators	Goal	Fiscal 2020-21	Fiscal 2021-22	Fiscal 2022-23	Fiscal 2023-24	Fiscal 2024-25	Assessment and/or Sector Comments
POP1	Number of unique individuals who were homeless for at least one day during the reporting period	Reduce homelessness by 5% overall annually	2738	3230 (+492)	3069 (-161)	3106 (+37)	3004 (-102)	Data collection coverage and phased program onboarding onto HIFIS may account for previous increases in reported results.
POP2	Number of unique individuals who experienced chronic homelessness during the reporting period	End chronic homelessness by 2025	1420	684 (-736)	1026 (+342)	1165 (+139)	1287 (+122)	The method for determining chronicity was updated in 2021-22 to align with federal methods for determining chronicity. As a result, figures from 2020-21 and 2021-22 are not directly comparable.
POP3	Number of unique individuals who were included for the first time as homeless during the reporting period	Reduce new inflow into homelessness by 10% annually	1521	2023 (+502)	1676 (-347)	1625 (-51)	1562 (-63)	Increases in the number of clients with long lengths of stay in the shelter system as a result of limited outflow options impacts the shelter system capacity to accept new clients and client turnover rates. This is a possible contributing factor to the noted decrease.
POP4	Number of unique individuals who returned to homelessness from housing or any transitional living situation	Less than 15% of individuals or households return to homelessness each year	83	150 (+67)	201 (+51)	206 (+5)	156 (-50)	

More information about the reporting definitions used above can be found at Community Homelessness Report: HIFIS Report Guide

System Performance Measures
To support understanding the system performance information provided, please note the following:

- When a measure includes the word “unique” it means we are able to count unique people who have accessed service during the timeframe. These numbers, across the quarters, will not add up to the “unique” year-to-date total. They should be interpreted as the number of clients accessing service at least once during the timeframe. These results only include clients who have consented to have their personal information stored in the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS 4.0) and therefore may be an under-representation of service provision.

- When a measure does not include the word “unique” it means we are not counting unique people who have accessed service during the timeframe. Because of how the information is collected or managed we were not able to say whether individuals accessing the services more than once within the timeframe have only been counted once for the quarter or year-to-date total.

- When a measure includes the word “interactions” it counts the number of times a service was provided and not the number of people receiving the service. This includes services provided to both known clients and interactions recorded anonymously (e.g. when consent for HIFIS data collection was declined).

- All measures should be considered independent of one another unless otherwise noted and results are not expected tally up to the total reached in each section.

- Some temporary or pilot programs have not been included in this reporting at this time including short-term housing programs and waitlist/referral programs.

NA = Not available

Measure		Quarterly					Annual		Trend	Assessment and/or Sector Comments
		Oct-Dec 2024	Jan-Mar 2025	Apr-Jun 2025	Jul-Sep 2025	Oct-Dec 2025	2024	2025		
Community Prevention and Diversion Programs (PRV)[1]										
Description: Includes programs offering financial support (rent and utility arrears, etc.) with housing supports to achieve housing stabilization for those at imminent risk for homelessness or to rapidly resolve a housing crisis and divert from staying in emergency shelter.										
PRV1	Number of individuals and/ or households reached by prevention programs	4193	6499	5901	6045	5951	14,521	21,238	↗	Actual individuals reached, including family members and dependants, could be much higher. Many reporting agencies and programs provide service and report by household only. Reporting unique clients reached even within a single reporting agency may be estimated (i.e. no new only or all interactions) due to data collection limitations and may over or underrepresent reach. May include only clients with known demographic information and not all individual clients from some reporting programs.

[1] Interpret with caution – the program-reported information may have inconsistent reporting definitions due to agency-specific data collection and reporting methods

	Measure	Quarterly					Annual		Trend	Assessment and/or Sector Comments
		Oct-Dec 2024	Jan-Mar 2025	Apr-Jun 2025	Jul-Sep 2025	Oct-Dec 2025	2024	2025		
PRV2	Number of households connected to a longer-term housing allowance or rent supplement programs to maintain their housing	Not Available	1407	1428	1392	1431	2437	2551	↗	Only annual results include the allocation of Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) program benefits as quarterly results were unavailable at the time of this reporting. Quarterly results for Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) Program, Municipal Housing Allowances, and Rent Supplements Program were unavailable the October to December 2024.
PRV3	Number of individuals and/ or households who received one-time financial assistance from a prevention program	763	737	877	1088	831	1700	3533	↗	Annual increases are attributed to the implementation of the Housing Emergency Fund Program mid-year in 2024.
PRV4	Total financial (dollars) one-time assistance provided from a prevention program	$1,026K	$1,007K	$1,118K	$1,231K	$1,314K	$2,184K	$4,578K	↗	Annual increases are attributed to the implementation of the Housing Emergency Fund Program mid-year in 2024.
Shelter-based Diversion Programs (DV)[2]										
Description: Programs concentrate efforts in ensuring alternative immediate housing arrangements are fully explored and supported where needed.										
DV1	Number of individuals reached by diversion programs	517	557	494	628	656	1767	2159	↗	Reporting unique clients reached even within a single reporting agency may be estimated (i.e. no new only or all interactions) due to data collection limitations and may over or underrepresent reach.

[2] Interpret with caution – the program-reported information may have inconsistent reporting definitions due to agency-specific data collection and reporting methods

	Measure	Quarterly					Annual		Trend	Assessment and/or Sector Comments
		Oct-Dec 2024	Jan-Mar 2025	Apr-Jun 2025	Jul-Sep 2025	Oct-Dec 2025	2024	2025		
DV2	Number of individuals and/ or households who received one-time financial assistance from a diversion program	61	53	68	82	50	134	256	↗	The Family sector allocated a significant portion of one-time financial assistance available through diversion programs.
DV3	Total financial (dollars) one-time assistance provided from a diversion program	$22,280	$27,544	$10,682	$30,674	$24,322	$78,219	$93,229	↗	
Drop-in Programs (DI)[3]										
Description: Provide services to meet basic needs and connect to additional housing resources and supports. These programs target individuals in need of support while unsheltered or to retain housing.										
DI1	Number of individuals reached by drop-in programs	1626	1367	1749	1772	1995	2745	5180	↗	Annual increases are due to the ongoing funding and expansion of day, evening, and overnight low barrier drop-in programs and the return of winter response seasonal programming. Several reporting agencies noted challenges with reporting information prior to 2025. Reporting improvements were made in 2025 when they were onboarded onto the Homelessness Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS).

[3] Interpret with caution – the program-reported information may have inconsistent reporting definitions due to agency-specific data collection and reporting methods

	Measure	Quarterly					Annual		Trend	Assessment and/or Sector Comments
		Oct-Dec 2024	Jan-Mar 2025	Apr-Jun 2025	Jul-Sep 2025	Oct-Dec 2025	2024	2025		
DI2	Number of drop-in program interactions where individuals received support with their basic needs	28,140	40,161	38,306	41,027	41,394	94,514	160,888	↗	Basic needs service delivery is central to the scope of drop-in programs and all programs noted that all clients receive this service level.
DI3	Number of drop-in program interactions where individuals received support with their housing needs	2224	1714	3143	3156	2939	6546	10,952	↗	As low-barrier programming focused on meeting immediate basic needs, support with housing needs is offered based on each individual's interest, readiness, and circumstances.
Housing-focused Street Outreach Program (HFSO)										
Description: Provides services to meet basic needs and connect to additional housing resources and supports. This program targets individuals living unsheltered in the community.										
HFSO1	Number of unique individuals reached by the Housing-Focused Street Outreach program	87	178	226	226	185	225	507	↗	HFSO data may differ in other reports during these periods as data collected by HFSO were based off daily estimates until October 2025. The Ending Chronic Homelessness report is solely based in HIFIS data resulting in a variance of the numbers reported. Historically the number of individuals living unsheltered was estimated by the HFSO team until October 2025, therefore, any HIFIS estimates taken from this period may differ due to the different data source used. Any estimate post-October 2025 is pulled from HIFIS for all reporting.
HFSO2	Number of Housing-Focused Street Outreach program client interactions where individuals received support with their basic needs	31	269	1433	2447	953	176	5102	↗	
HFSO3	Number of Housing-Focused Street Outreach program client interactions where individuals received support with their housing needs	154	942	3069	2772	1258	715	8068	↗	

Measure		Quarterly					Annual		Trend	Assessment and/or Sector Comments
		Oct-Dec 2024	Jan-Mar 2025	Apr-Jun 2025	Jul-Sep 2025	Oct-Dec 2025	2024	2025		
Emergency Shelter Early Intervention Supports (ESEI)										
Description: Provides individuals with intensive and targeted supports to find alternative or stable housing arrangements within 14 days or less of their emergency shelter stay. These programs target individuals in need of emergency shelter for up to 14 days.										
ESEI1	Number of unique individuals reached by the emergency shelter early intervention programs (i.e. received targeted housing supports within the first 14 days)	669	697	754	744	810	1059	1187	↗	
Emergency Shelters (ES)										
Description: Provides individuals/ households with short-term emergency shelter to meet their basic needs (bed, meals, etc.) and support with resources to locate and secure stable housing.										
ES1	Number of unique individuals provided with a City-funded emergency shelter bed/ room	1191	1353	1489	1486	1388	1785	2317	↗	

	Measure	Quarterly					Annual		Trend	Assessment and/or Sector Comments
		Oct-Dec 2024	Jan-Mar 2025	Apr-Jun 2025	Jul-Sep 2025	Oct-Dec 2025	2024	2025		
ES2a	Average bed occupancy rate (adult and youth sectors)	95%	94%	92%	90%	93%	91%	92%	↗	Average bed occupancy rates range from 62% to 99% in the youth and adult sector with lower occupancy rates in the youth and specialized support programs. Occupancy rates may slightly underrepresent actuals because of requirement for client consent to data collection and general data quality issues; however, given the consistently high overall average occupancy in most sectors, the underestimation is likely low.
ES2b	Average room occupancy rate (family sectors)	72%	68%	66%	81%	72%	71%	72%	↗	Occupancy rates range from 57% to 97% in the family sector with lower occupancy rates in the hotels used as overflow service for families seeking shelter. Occupancy rates may slightly underrepresent actuals because of requirement for client consent to data collection and general data quality issues; however, given the consistently high overall average occupancy in most sectors, the underestimation is likely low.

Measure		Quarterly					Annual		Trend	Assessment and/or Sector Comments
		Oct-Dec 2024	Jan-Mar 2025	Apr-Jun 2025	Jul-Sep 2025	Oct-Dec 2025	2024	2025		
Transitional Housing Programs (TH)										
Description: Provides place-based time-limited support designed to move individuals to independent living or permanent housing. The length of stay is typically less than one year for adults and up to two years for youth. These programs target individuals with low to mid acuity in need of temporary place-based supports.										
TH1	Number of unique individuals reached by transitional housing programs	83	71	70	110	132	122	182	↗	Annual increases are attributed to the opening of new funded programming within the reporting period.
TH2	Number (and percent) of unique individuals placed into more stable housing by the end of their stay in the transitional living situation	11 (13%)	13 (18%)	10 (14%)	7 (6%)	10 (8%)	37 (30%)	39 (21%)	↘	
TH3	Average bed occupancy rate	83%	75%	69%	61%	84%	85%	72%	↘	Fluctuations in bed occupancy rates can partially be explained by the staggered opening of new funded programming within the reporting period. Some programs may be excluded from the average occupancy rate reporting because of their specific funding.
Rapid Rehousing Programs (RRH)										

Measure		Quarterly					Annual		Trend	Assessment and/or Sector Comments
		Oct-Dec 2024	Jan-Mar 2025	Apr-Jun 2025	Jul-Sep 2025	Oct-Dec 2025	2024	2025		
Description: Provide case management and housing support for mid acuity participants facing long-term homelessness (chronic homelessness). The length of the intervention is up to 12 months. These programs target individuals with mid acuity and supports to help them quickly exit homelessness.										
RRH1	Number of unique individuals reached by rapid rehousing programs (RRH)	496	301	306	274	253	716	449	↘	The observed decrease is largely attributable to records being closed later than expected and subsequently captured in a future reporting period and should not be interpreted solely as a reduction in the number of individuals completing an intake for RRH.
RRH2	Combined caseload ratio (Staffing Complement FTEs as per Contract with the City of Hamilton)	38:1 (13)	23:1 (13)	24:1 (13)	22:1 (13)	20:1 (13)	Not Available	22:1 (13)		Target caseload ratios for rapid rehousing programs are 1:25.
RRH3	Number (and percent) of unique individuals reached by a RRH program who were newly placed into stable housing during the period	84 (17%)	56 (19%)	61 (20%)	33 (12%)	55 (22%)	317 (44%)	198 (44%)	-	
RRH4	Number (and percent) of unique individuals who were placed into stable housing with RRH support and who are confirmed to have a documented return to homelessness within 12 months of that housing placement	4 (5%)	6 (6%)	2 (2%)	4 (5%)	7 (8%)	8 (3%)	18 (6%)	↗	

	Measure	Quarterly					Annual		Trend	Assessment and/or Sector Comments
		Oct-Dec 2024	Jan-Mar 2025	Apr-Jun 2025	Jul-Sep 2025	Oct-Dec 2025	2024	2025		
RRH5	Number (and percent) of unique individuals who were placed into stable housing with RRH support and who had a documented successful program exit at the 12-month follow-up point (i.e., living independently without ongoing case management supports)	67 (84%)	76 (77%)	71 (88%)	51 (70%)	56 (67%)	235 (86%)	246 (78%)	↘	RRH programs have an average program duration of 6-12 months and some clients served in 2025 may not have had the opportunity to realize positive outcomes yet.
Intensive Case Management Programs (ICM)										
Description: Provides longer-term case management and housing support to higher acuity participants facing long-term homelessness (chronic homelessness), addictions, mental health. The length of the intervention is generally between 12 and 24 months. These programs target individuals with high acuity in need of longer supports and interventions.										
ICM1	Number of unique individuals reached by intensive case management programs (ICM)	535	503	513	494	495	715	751	↗	
ICM2	Combined caseload ratio (Staffing Complement FTEs as per Contract with the City of Hamilton)	18:1 (30)	15:1 (31)	13:1 (33)	13:1 (38)	13:1 (38)	Not Available	14:1 (35)		Higher acuity clients often require additional staff supports (e.g. multiple staff or senior staff). Target caseload ratios for intensive case management programs are 1:20 for adults or 1:11 for youth.
ICM3	Number (and percent) of individuals reached by an ICM program who were newly placed into stable housing during the period	80 (15%)	69 (14%)	116 (23%)	66 (13%)	97 (20%)	299 (42%)	318 (42%)	-	
ICM4	Number (and percent) of individuals who were placed into stable housing with ICM support and who are confirmed to have a documented return to homelessness within 12 months of that housing placement	3 (4%)	8 (8%)	8 (10%)	6 (9%)	6 (9%)	8 (4%)	28 (10%)	↗	

	Measure	Quarterly					Annual		Trend	Assessment and/or Sector Comments
		Oct-Dec 2024	Jan-Mar 2025	Apr-Jun 2025	Jul-Sep 2025	Oct-Dec 2025	2024	2025		
ICM5	Number (and percent) of individuals who were placed into stable housing with ICM support and who had a documented successful program exit at the 12-month follow-up point (i.e., living independently without ongoing case management supports)	47 (67%)	58 (61%)	55 (69%)	48 (70%)	23 (33%)	151 (70%)	183 (63%)	↘	ICM programs have an average program duration of 18-24 months and some clients served in 2025 may not have had the opportunity to realize positive outcomes yet.
Permanent Supportive Housing Programs										
Description: Programs that provide permanent housing (no time limit) with rental assistance and individualized support plans for people with greater depth of need (acuity) related to physical or mental health, developmental disabilities and/or substance use.										
PSH1	Number of individuals reached by supportive housing programs	105	110	99	102	97	105	118	↗	
PSH2	Number (and percent) of unique individuals supported by a supportive housing program who returned to homelessness following their exit from a supportive housing unit	5 (5%)	5 (5%)	1 (1%)	0 (0%	0 (0%	5 (5%)	5 (4%)	↘	

APPENDIX B: Ending Chronic Homelessness Performance Update Consultations

List of Stakeholders/Program Staff Consulted as Part of the Development of Report HSC23076(b)

External Stakeholders

- CCAS Community Youth Housing Project
- Good Shepherd Cathedral Men's Emergency Shelter
- Good Shepherd Dorothy Day Place Permanent Supportive Housing
- Good Shepherd Family Centre Diversion
- Good Shepherd Family Centre Emergency Shelter
- Good Shepherd Hotel Overflow
- Good Shepherd Mary's Place Emergency Shelter
- Good Shepherd Men's Early Intervention
- Good Shepherd Men's Emergency Shelter
- Good Shepherd Men's Shelter Diversion
- Good Shepherd Notre Dame - Community Resource Centre Youth Prevention
- Good Shepherd Notre Dame Youth Emergency Shelter
- Good Shepherd Reaching Home (Families, Women) Rapid Rehousing Program
- Good Shepherd Reaching Home (Families, Women, Youth) Intensive Case Management Program
- Good Shepherd Staying Home Program (Women & Families)
- Good Shepherd Temporary Barton Tiffany Emergency Shelter
- Good Shepherd West Ave – Women's Emergency Shelter
- Good Shepherd Women's Shelter Diversion
- Housing Help Centre (HHC)
- HRIC Indigenous Housing & Homelessness Supports and Services
- Indwell King William Permanent Supportive Housing
- Interval House Flamborough Women's Resource Centre
- Living Rock Youth Drop-in
- Mission Men's Shelter Diversion
- Mission Services Emma's Place Emergency Shelter
- Mission Services Emma's Place Shelter Diversion
- Mission Services Housing Up! Intensive Case Management Program
- Mission Services Housing Up! Rapid Rehousing Program
- Mission Services Men's Early Intervention
- Mission Services Men's Emergency Shelter
- Mission Services Night Link Drop In

- Mission Services Willow's Place Drop In
- Neighbour to Neighbour (N2N) Resource Counselling Program
- Salvation Army Booth Centre Emergency Shelter
- Salvation Army Men's Early Intervention
- Salvation Army Men's Shelter Diversion
- SJHH Womankind Emergency Shelter
- St. Matthew's House Christ's Church Cathedral Café Drop In
- St. Matthew's House Housing Outreach Prevention Eviction for Seniors (HOPE)
- St. Matthew's House Men's Overnight Warming Centre Drop In
- Wesley Special Care Unit Emergency Shelter
- Wesley Urban Ministries Intensive Case Management Program
- Wesley Youth Housing (TLP)
- YMCA – Transitional Living Program
- YWCA – Carole Anne's Place
- YWCA – Transitional Living Program
- YWCA – Women's Emergency Shelter

Internal Stakeholders

- Housing Services Division Staff

List of Engagement Sessions and Opportunities Completed

- HIFIS Super Users Group Meeting – Data Entry Review: January 28, 2026
- City of Hamilton Hosted Virtual Information Q&A Session: January 30, 2026
- City of Hamilton Hosted Virtual Information Q&A Session: February 2, 2026
- HIFIS Super Users Group Meeting – Q&A Opportunity: February 25, 2026

City of Hamilton

Report for Information

To:	Chair and Members General Issues Committee
Date:	April 15, 2026
Report No:	HUR26006
Subject/Title:	Labour Relations Activity Report and Analysis – 2021-2025
Ward(s) Affected:	(City Wide)

Recommendations

1) That Report HUR26006 respecting Labour Relations Activity Report and Analysis - 2021-2025 **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Key Facts

- This Report is to provide Council and other City stakeholders with an overview of the City of Hamilton's state of labour relations and related activities for the period of January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2025.
- This Report focuses on a five-year historical review of the general labour relations activities and related costs across the City of Hamilton's bargaining units and departments from January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2025.

- In addition, this Report provides a summary of the City's collective agreement status with the eleven bargaining units and an overview of collective bargaining activity in 2025.

Financial Considerations

Not applicable.

Background

In 2008, Council requested an analytical account of the City's labour relations grievance activities. As part of this objective, the Employee & Labour Relations Information System was introduced and implemented in 2009. This effort was primarily driven by Council's direction for greater labour and employee relations accountability as well to providing a more strategic approach to labour relations service delivery. Since 2010, Human Resources has provided analytical accounts of the City's labour relations activities on an annual basis. This year's information Report focuses on a five (5) year historical review of the labour relations activities and data for the period January 1, 2021 through December 31, 2025.

Analysis

City Unionization Overview

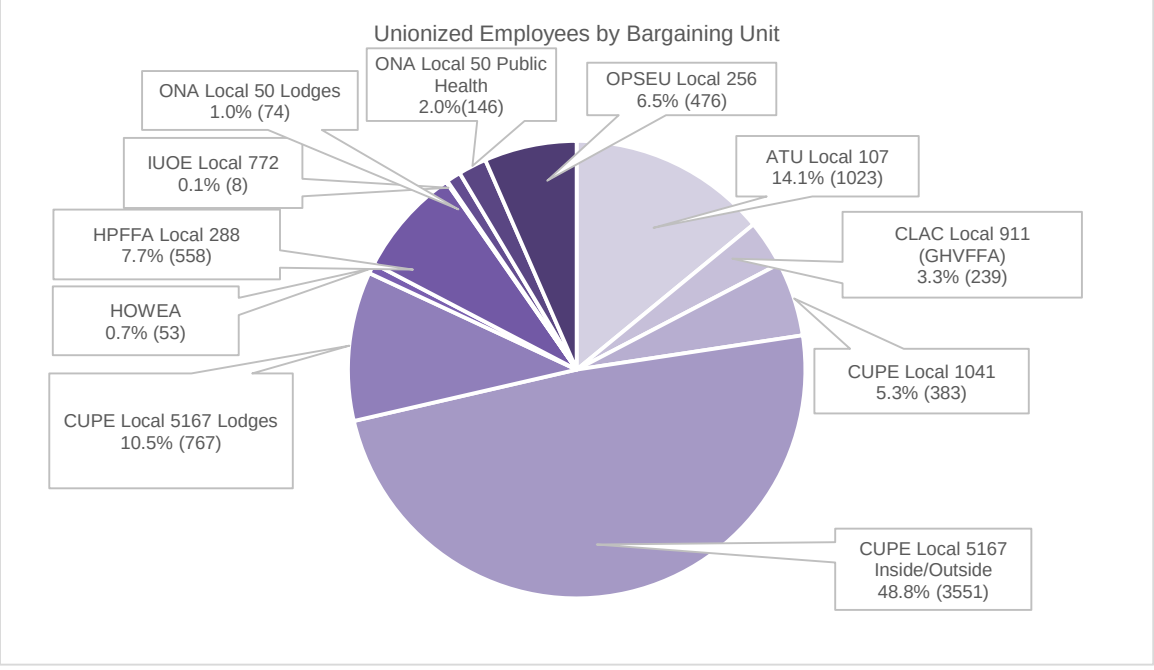
The City of Hamilton has a highly unionized workforce with unionized employees representing approximately 76.4% of the City's overall workforce. Chart 1 below provides an overview of the unionized head count by department at the end of 2025. The largest number of unionized employees are in the City's largest departments: Healthy & Safe Communities and Public Works. The Public Works department has the highest percentage of unionized employees within the department compared to others.

Chart 1 – Unionized Head Count by Department

Department	Total Head Count	Unionized Head Count	% of Unionized Head Count within Department	% of Unionized Head Count within City
City Manager's Office	153	0	0.0%	0.0%
CityHousing Hamilton	257	151	58.8%	1.6%
Corporate Services	636	300	47.2%	3.1%
Healthy & Safe Communities	4864	3918	80.6%	41.1%
Planning & Economic Development	980	532	54.3%	5.6%
Public Works	2634	2377	90.2%	25.0%
Total**	**9524**	**7278**	**N/A**	**76.4%**

Graph 1 below shows the percentage breakdown of the City's unionized workforce across the eleven bargaining units at the end of 2025. Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) Local 5167 Inside/Outside is the largest bargaining unit and accounts for approximately 48.8% of the City's overall unionized employees. In contrast, the Internation Union of Operating Engineers (IUOE) Local 772 is the smallest bargaining unit and accounts for approximately 0.1% of unionized employees at the City.

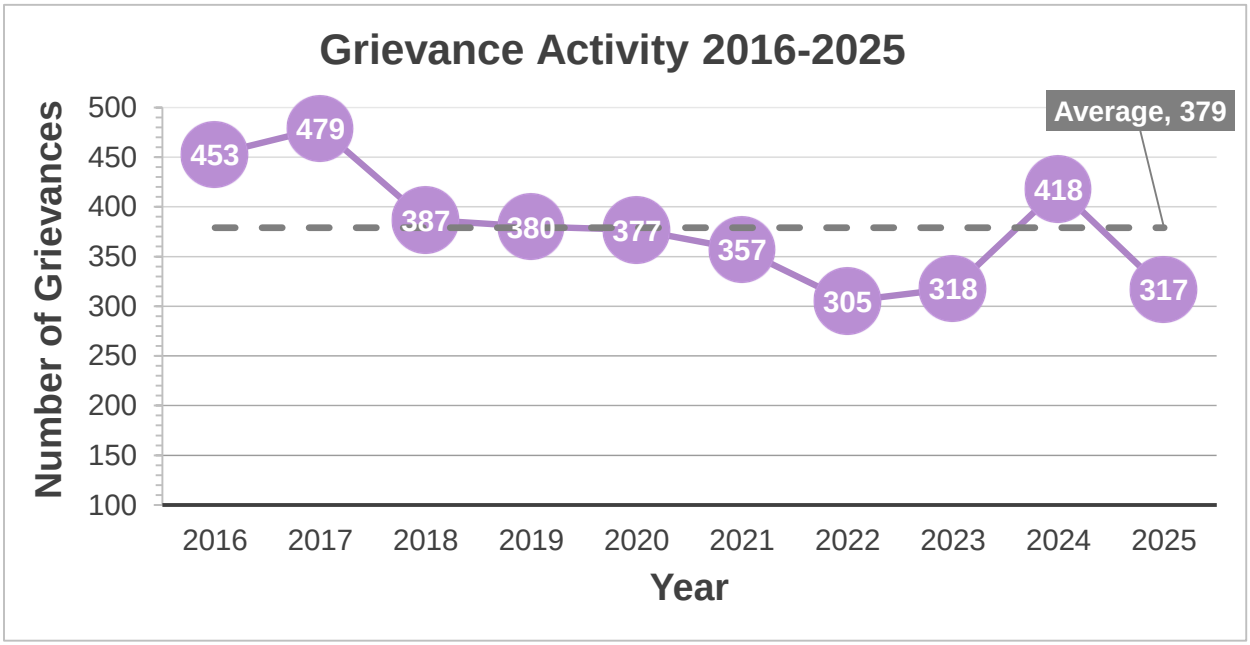
Graph 1 – Unionized Employees by Bargaining Unit



Overall Grievance Activity

The Report presents an analysis of grievance activity throughout the years from 2021 through 2025. The grievance process is an important communication mechanism between the employer, employees, and union. Grievances provide valuable insight into potential areas of concern or opportunities for improvement within the organization. When addressed effectively, grievances contribute to transparency, accountability, and a more stable and productive work environment. An analysis of the five-year period trend shows some fluctuation in the number of grievances filed each year. Grievance submissions reached their lowest level in 2022, while 2024 reflected the highest volume with 418 grievances. At 317 submissions, 2025 has remained relatively consistent and close to the overall average, suggesting alignment with typical annual volumes. Even though this report is intended to review five years of data, a broader picture of historical activity is provided in Graph 2. When examined over a ten-year period, the data reveals an overall downward trend. This can be attributed to, in part, the strong labour management relations enjoyed across the organization.

Graph 2 – Total Grievance Activity 2016-2025



While the number of grievances filed in any given year can serve as a general indicator of the state of labour relations, it should not be viewed as the sole measure of the labour-management relationship. Grievance volumes can be influenced by a range of contextual factors including collective bargaining cycles, contentious negotiations, unprecedented workplace events, or other high-profile matters. These dynamics may result in temporary fluctuations that do not necessarily reflect the overall strength or stability of the relationship. As an example, grievances in 2024 were greatly impacted by the cyber security incident. In 2024, a total of 143 grievances related to the cyber security incident were filed representing approximately 34.2% of the total grievances filed that year. If the cyber security event did not occur in 2024, the total number of grievances in 2024 would have been 275 and the lowest grievance submission year over the five-year period. As of 2025, 93% of those cyber security incident related grievances have been resolved, reflecting substantial progress in resolving outstanding grievances from 2024 cases and significantly reducing carryover volume.

The time required to resolve a grievance varies depending on the complexity of the issue and whether it progresses through multiple stages of the grievance procedure. Resolutions may occur at various points, including during the grievance process itself, through mediation, arbitration, or by being withdrawn by the bargaining unit. Chart 2 below illustrates the number of grievances filed between 2021 and 2025 that have been resolved.

By the end of 2025, approximately 77.3% of all grievances filed during this five-year period had been resolved, representing a 9% increase in overall resolution rate compared to the previous five-year period reported last year. In 2025 alone, 459 grievances originating from the 2021-2025 period were resolved. An additional 61 grievances filed prior to 2021 were also closed, bringing the total number of grievances resolved in the 2025 calendar year to 520.

Chart 2 – Grievances Filed, Resolved, and Outstanding from 2021-2025

Year	Number of Grievances Filed	Number of Outstanding Grievances	Number of Resolved Grievances	Percent of Grievances Resolved	Number of Grievances Resolved in 2025
2021	357	27	330	92.4%	27
2022	305	44	261	85.6%	31
2023	318	54	264	83.0%	43
2024	418	90	328	78.5%	215
2025	317	174	143	45.1%	143
Total	**1715**	**389**	**1326**	**77.3%**	**459**

Grievances that remain unresolved or outstanding are generally either held in abeyance for a variety of reasons or awaiting a future hearing date. Often it is advantageous to temporarily pause a grievance instead of proceeding to formal arbitration if the parties are unable to come to an agreement. This allows the parties to research and gather additional information on the grievance prior to committing to next steps in the grievance procedure.

The grievance process is a formal mechanism for resolving disputes regarding terms and conditions of employment, workplace policies and organizational processes. It provides both individual employees and union leaders with a structured and transparent forum to raise and address concerns in accordance with the provisions of the collective agreement. Analysis beyond a direct count of grievances is always necessary, and caution should be given to drawing too many conclusions.

Grievance Activity by Bargaining Unit

The data on grievances filed by bargaining unit from 2021 to 2025 in Chart 3 below shows notable fluctuations in grievance activity.

In 2025, the total number of CUPE 5167 Inside/Outside grievances decreased substantially, falling below levels observed in previous years within the five-year period.

CUPE 5167 Inside/Outside experienced a 53% decline in grievances from 2024 to 2025. As noted, a significant portion of grievances filed in 2024 were linked to the unprecedented cyber security incident. However, the decline in grievances over the period could also suggest potential improvements in the workplace, or fewer issues arising to a formal grievance. Other unions such as the Hamilton Professional Firefighters Association (HPFFA) Local 288 Fire and the Hamilton Ontario Water Employees Association (HOWEA) show an increase in grievance activity in 2025. An increase in the HPFFA local 288 Fire data can be attributed to the increase of grievances regarding work performed by Volunteer Firefighters. The increase in HOWEA grievances were mostly attributed to issues arising during and out of the labour disruption as well as the implementation of the new collective agreement. Overall data suggests stability in grievance activity for majority of the bargaining units in 2025.

The stability of grievance submissions often reflects the effectiveness of the City's grievance handling process, the level of communication between parties, and the concerted efforts of management working proactively to resolve issues prior to a grievance being filed. Labour Relations training for people leaders can also play a role in contributing to the stability of grievance submissions. Since 2021, Labour Relations has ensured training sessions are available to leaders that manage employees. In 2025, Labour Relations delivered nine (9) structured training sessions which focussed on the essentials of managing in a unionized environment, with 203 participants in attendance. Enhancing supervisory knowledge and promoting consistent decision-making reduces the misapplication of collective agreements and policies, minimizes procedural errors, and supports a more stable and predictable work environment year over year.

Chart 3 – Grievances Filed by Bargaining Unit in 2021-2025

Bargaining Unit	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Five-Year Average
ATU Local 107	45	44	42	74	71	55
CLAC Local 911 (GHVFFA)	1	1	0	0	0	0
CUPE Local 1041	33	21	23	25	20	24

CUPE Local 5167 Inside/Outside	173	132	168	225	119	163
CUPE Local 5167 Lodges	38	44	28	40	40	38
HOWEA	8	12	8	3	7	8
HPFFA Local 288 Fire	15	11	11	13	21	14
IUOE Local 772	0	0	0	0	0	0
ONA Local 50 Lodges	19	13	6	10	5	11
ONA Local 50 Public Health	4	3	1	4	4	3
OPSEU Local 256	21	24	31	24	30	26
Total	**357**	**305**	**318**	**418**	**317**	**343**

Grievance Activity by Department

Further analysis of the state of labour-management relations is done through a review of grievance activity in the various City departments. Chart 4 below provides an overview of unionized head count by department and 2025 grievance submissions. As expected, the largest number of grievances filed in 2025 occurred in the City's two largest departments: Public Works and Healthy and Safe Communities. Public Works has the largest grievance submission rate. The higher submission rate is due to higher levels of overtime, standby, callout and discipline grievances. For Public Works, there is a few reasons why these types of grievances are higher than the other departments. The work includes weather-dependent work such as snow removal and emergency infrastructure repairs such as watermain breaks and road failures as well as seasonal peaks. These conditions increase overtime, standby and callout and schedule changes. The more unpredictable and urgent the work, the more opportunities for disputes to arise over how employees are assigned, distribution of hours and whether procedures were followed. This activity further highlights the need for HR related technology to assist with the allocation of overtime hours, etc.

When the collective agreement provisions are used more frequently, grievances naturally rise. For Healthy and Safe Communities, the largest operational department, the grievance rate per 100 employees is below the average compared to the other departments.

Chart 4 – Grievance Submission by Department in 2025

Department	Unionized Head Count	Number of Grievances Filed in 2025	% of Overall Grievances Submitted	Grievance Rate per 100 Unionized Employees
City Manager's Office	0	0	0.0%	0.0
CityHousing Hamilton	151	7	2.2%	4.6
Corporate Services	300	6	1.9%	2.0
Healthy & Safe Communities	3918	133	42.0%	3.4
Planning & Economic Development	532	19	6.0%	3.6
Public Works	2377	150	47.3%	6.3
City Wide**	N/A	2	0.6%	N/A
Total	**7278**	**317**	**N/A**	**4.4**

City Wide grievances are those that are not tied to a single department. For clarity, policy grievances that affect employees across multiple departments are more corporate in nature and would be categorized as a City Wide grievance. Chart 5 provides an overview of grievances filed by department over the five-year reporting period. When comparing 2024 and 2025, there was a decrease in City Wide grievances filed in 2025. This decrease is largely due to the unprecedented cyber security incident causing more City-Wide grievances related to compensation and wage statements (i.e. pay stubs) filed in 2024.

Overall, the grievance activity across the City's departments provides a favourable outlook on the state of labour-management relations showing relatively stable grievance submissions over time by departments.

Chart 5 – Grievance Activity by Department in 2021-2025

Department	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Five-Year Average
City Manager's Office	0	0	0	0	0	0
CityHousing Hamilton	4	2	3	3	7	4
Corporate Services	11	13	6	8	6	9
Healthy & Safe Communities	148	124	123	114	133	128
Planning & Economic Development	31	25	24	13	19	22
Public Works	156	131	161	254	150	170
City Wide**	7	10	1	26	2	9
Total	**357**	**305**	**318**	**418**	**317**	**343**

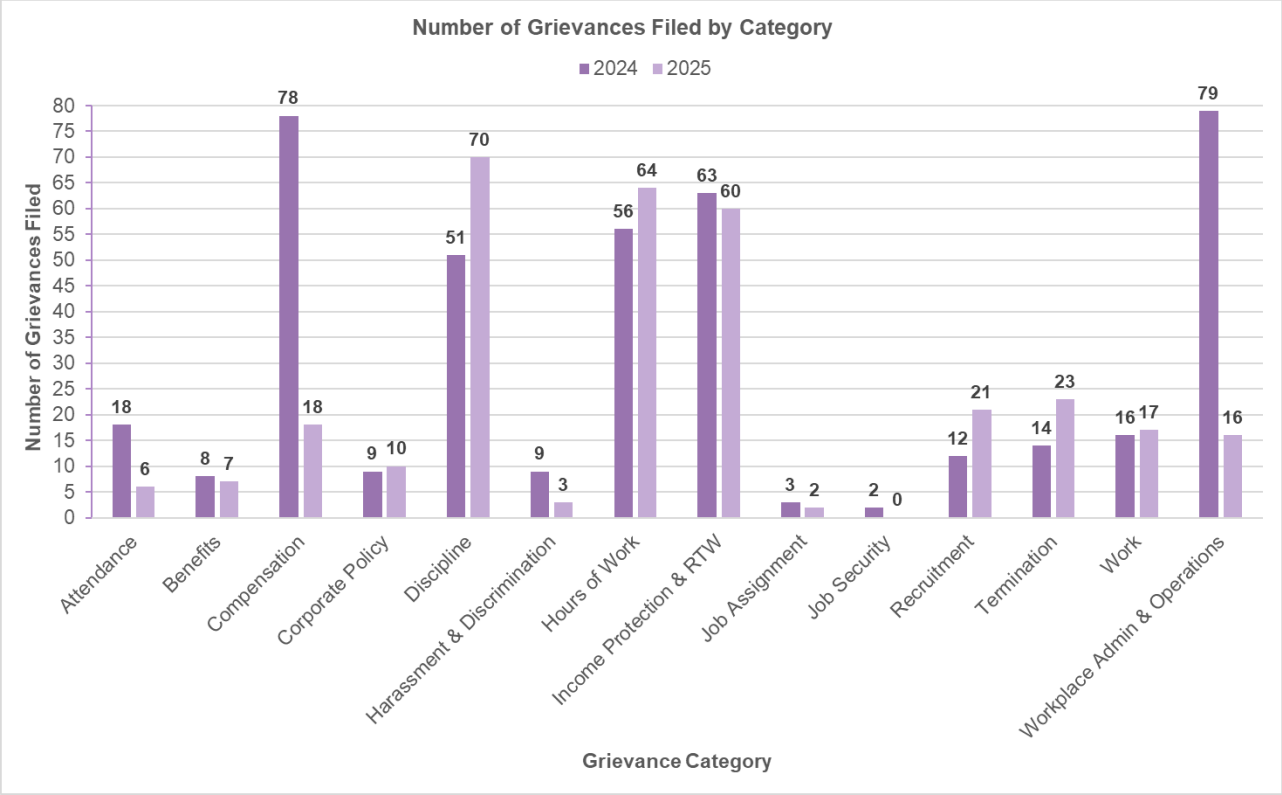
Grievance Activity by Category

When grievances are filed, they are categorized into grievance categories by the issue being grieved. A description of all grievance categories can be found in Appendix “A” of this Report. The data is presented in a bar chart (Graph 3) comparing the volume of grievances filed in 2024 and 2025 across the various grievance categories. The total number of grievances filed across most categories remained relatively consistent between the two years, with some categories in 2025 showing notable deviations from 2024.

The overall top five grievance categories in 2025 were Discipline, Hours of Work, Income Protection (IPP) & Return to Work (RTW), Termination and Recruitment. An analysis of grievance activity over the five-year period indicates that Discipline, Hours of Work and IPP & RTW have consistently ranked among the top five grievance categories. Discipline grievances are typically filed when a bargaining unit disputes either the justification for discipline or the fairness of how it was imposed. Grievances related to hours of work are typically filed around the scheduling of shifts, overtime, call-out/in or standby. IPP and RTW grievances generally relate to compensation continuity when an employee is off sick or on short term disability or long-term disability and misinterpretations of the income protection policy and return to work requirements.

As shown in Graph 3, there was a significant decrease in 2025 Workplace Admin & Operations and Compensation categories which were the highest number of grievances filed in 2024. Over 80% of the grievances filed in these categories were a direct result of the cyber security incident causing issues with the payment of wages and delayed issuing of wage statements (pay stubs). The other categories show a relatively stable volume of grievances, although there was a slight increase in 2025 compared to 2024 in Recruitment and Termination grievances.

Graph 3 – Grievances Filed by Category 2024 and 2025

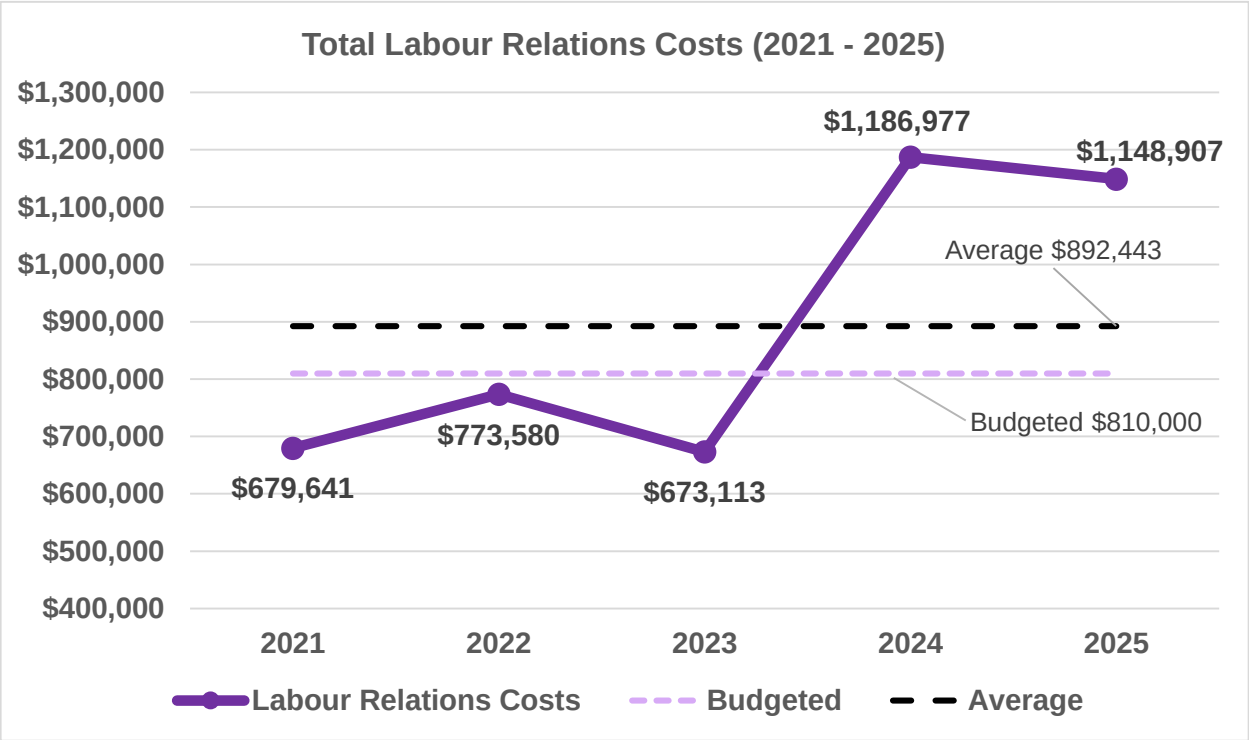


Labour Relations Legal Costs

Graph 4 illustrates the total labour relations costs by year from 2021 to 2025, highlighting a significant increase in 2024 and 2025 in the total labour relations legal costs. Over previous years, costs remained relatively stable; however, in 2024 and 2025 the total costs exceeded both the budgeted amount and the five-year average. The

increase from historical trends reflects factors such as cases requiring longer arbitrations with increased complexity and rising professional fees. In 2025, there was a 1.4% decrease in legal fees and 24% decrease in arbitration fees from 2024. This decrease can be attributed to higher collective bargaining activity in 2024 which includes interest arbitration costs.

Graph 4 – Total Labour Relations Legal Costs (2021-2025)



A breakdown of the 2025 legal costs by category in Chart 6 highlights that grievance matters accounted for the largest share of the total labour relations costs at 54.6%. Non-grievance matters, including non-union proceedings, followed comprising of 35.6% of total costs. This includes a variety of matters including but not limited to representing the City in wrongful dismissal claims, legal challenges on entitlements to Workplace Safety insurance Board (WSIB), Short Term Disability (STD) and Long-Term Disability (LTD) as well as matters at the Ontario Labour Relations Board (OLRB). Human Rights related fees represented 9.7% of the overall costs. Collective bargaining costs were the

lowest contributing to 0.1% of the overall costs. The reason for this was there was little activity related to interest arbitrations in 2025.

Chart 6 – Summary of Total Labour Relations Costs in 2025

Category	Mediator Fees	Arbitrator Fees	Legal Fees	Total	Percent of Total
Collective Bargaining	$0	$0	$650	**$650**	**0.1%**
Grievance Matters	$39,346	$76,786	$511,286	**$627,419**	**54.6%**
Human Rights Claims	$0	$0	$111,823	**$111,823**	**9.7%**
Non-Grievance Matters	$4,070	$0	$404,945	**$409,015**	**35.6%**
Total Fees (2025)	**$43,417**	**$76,786**	**$1,028,704**	**$1,148,907**	

Collective Bargaining Activity

Out of the eleven collective agreements that the City has with various unions/associations, two currently remain outstanding, Ontario Public Service Employees Union (OPSEU) Local 256 (paramedics) and Ontario Nurses' Association (ONA) Lodges. Charts 7 and 8 below display the nine collective agreements that were renewed in 2023 & 2024.

In 2025 the HOWEA collective agreement expired. The Labour Relations Team participated in a total of 16 bargaining meetings between the HOWEA and OPSEU bargaining units. The HOWEA bargaining timeline spanned a total of 197 Days, with 3 bargaining meetings, 5 mediation meetings, 1 conciliation date and a 57-day labour disruption period. Thanks to the efforts of Hamilton Water Management, Hamilton Water employees, Human Resources/Labour Relations and Corporate Security, a contingency plan was put in place allowing for Water Services to remain uninterrupted to the City during the labour disruption. The labour disruption demanded significant resources and focus from the Labour Relations team. The parties reached a tentative agreement on July 7, 2025, and the ratification of the new agreement on July 16, 2025.

With the ratification of the new HOWEA collective agreement, only 2 of the city's agreements remain outstanding (Chart 10). In 2026 OPSEU proceeded to conciliation and subsequently filed a "no board" notice. The request for "no board" signals an impasse in negotiations and will lead to the matter advancing to interest arbitration. ONA Lodges are at this stage as well and are scheduled for interest arbitration in 2026.

Chart 7 - Collective Agreements Renewed in 2023

Bargaining Unit	Collective Agreement Term	Status
ATU Local 107	January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2026	Ratified - 2023
CUPE Local 5167 Inside/Outside	January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2026	Ratified - 2023
OPSEU Local 256	April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2024	Interest Arbitration Award - 2023 & 2024

Chart 8 - Collective Agreements Renewed in 2024

Bargaining Unit	Collective Agreement Term	Status
CLAC Local 911 (GHVFFA)	January 1, 2024 to December 31, 2027	Ratified - 2024
CUPE Local 1041	January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2026	Ratified - 2024
CUPE Local 5167 Lodges	April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2027	Ratified - 2024
HPFFA Local 288 Fire	January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2026	Interest Arbitration Award - 2024
IUOE Local 772	January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2026	Ratified - 2024
ONA Local 50 Public Health	January 1, 2023 to December 31, 2026	Ratified - 2024

Chart 9 - Collective Agreements Renewed in 2025

Bargaining Unit	Collective Agreement Term	Status
HOWEA	January 1, 2025 to December 31, 2028	Ratified - 2025

Chart 10 - Collective Agreements Outstanding

Bargaining Unit	Collective Agreement Term	Status
ONA Local 50 Lodges	April 1, 2019 to March 31, 2023	Expired – Interest Arbitration 2026
OPSEU Local 256	April 1, 2020 to March 31, 2024	Expired – Interest Arbitration 2026

Conclusion

The Labour Relations Activity Report and five-year analysis (January 1, 2021 to December 31, 2025) provides an overview of the City of Hamilton's engagement with its eleven bargaining units. This period reflects a consistent commitment to effective grievance resolution, principled negotiation, and the strengthening of constructive labour-management and union/association relationships.

The Labour Relations team has faced challenges in managing the increasing volume of work and complexity of labour relations matters – particularly during peak workload periods. The team is committed to continuing to enhance internal processes and reinforce the consistent application of policies and collective agreement provisions to the fullest extent feasible.

Throughout the five-year period, the City has continued to demonstrate its dedication to maintaining productive labour relations through ongoing collaboration with bargaining units. Even during challenging periods, the City showed resilience, safeguarding operational continuity, principled negotiations, and supporting a positive work environment across the organization.

Alternatives

Not applicable; as this is an information report, no alternatives are presented to this report.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

Labour Relations activities align with Council's strategic priorities by assisting to resolve issues and clarify terms and conditions of employment to support leaders and employees in completing their work. These efforts assist in reducing the burden on residential taxpayers (Priority 1: Sustainable Economic & Ecological Development) and assist in building a high performing public service (Priority 3: Responsiveness & Transparency).

Previous Reports Submitted

- Labour Relations Activity Report & Analysis (2020-2024) (HUR25002) (City Wide), (Item 7.3), April 9, 2025, General Issues Committee
- Appendix "A" to Report HUR25002, (Item 7.3), April 9, 2025, General Issues Committee
- Appendix "B" to Report HUR25002(Item 7.3), April 9, 2025, General Issues Committee

Consultation

Not Applicable

Appendices and Schedules Attached

Appendix A: Definitions Respecting Grievance Categories

Prepared by:

Vanessa Di Pietro, Labour Relations Analyst, City Manager's Office, Human Resources

Colton Nutley, Labour Relations Analyst, City Manager's Office, Human Resources

Julie Shott, Manager, Labour Relations, City Manager's Office, Human Resources

Yakov Sluchenkov, Director, Employee Health and Labour Relations, City Manager's Office, Human Resources

Submitted and Recommended by:

Lora Fontana, Executive Director, Human Resources, City Manager's Office, Human Resources

GRIEVANCE CATEGORIES

Attendance: Vacation, Stat Holidays, Absent Without Leave (AWOL), Leave of Absence, Bereavement, Attendance Support Program (ASP), Lieu Bank, Flex Time

Benefits: Health Benefits, Life Insurance, OMERS, Accidental Death & Dismemberment (AD&D), Benefits

Compensation: Wages, Premium Pay, Shift Premiums, Meal Allowance, Compensation, Acting Pay, Job Evaluation, Retro Pay, Union Dues, Training Allowance, Pay-out Entitlements

Corporate Policy: Driver Safety & Compliance Manual, Corporate Policy (i.e. Mandatory Vaccination Policy)

Discipline: Verbal, Written, Suspension, Discipline

Harassment/Discrimination: Harassment, Discrimination, Human Rights, Toxic/Poisonous Workplace

Hours of Work: Overtime, Call-in, Call-out, Standby, Continuation of the work day, shift schedule, hours of work

Income Protection & RTW: Short Term Disability (STD), Income Protection Plan (IPP), Long Term Disability (LTD), Work Accommodation, Return to Work, Doctors Note, Bridging

Job Assignment: Seniority, Conditions of Employment, Restructuring, Transfer, Job Location, Job Share, Shift Change

Job Security: Lay-off, Recall, Bumping,

Recruitment: Job postings & filling, Promotion, Demotion, Complement, Vacancies, Testing, temporary postings

Termination: Termination, Severance

Work: Duties, Scope, Work of the Bargaining Unit, Contracting Out, Union Representation, Technological Change, Workplace Safety, Meal Breaks

Workplace Admin & Operations Parking, Mileage, City Vehicle, Bus Pass, Confidentiality, Tuition Reimbursement, Performance Appraisal, Admin-other, Clothing Allowance, Cleaning Allowance, Clothing/Uniform, Safety Wear, Training, Missed Page, Seniority, Wage Statements

City of Hamilton

Memorandum

To:	Chair and Members General Issues Committee
Date:	April 15, 2026
Report No:	PED26018(a)
Subject/Title:	Ensuring Pedestrian Access at Jackson Street West and MacNab Street South
Ward(s) Affected:	Ward 2 / City Wide

Information

At its meeting on September 16, 2025, the Downtown Sub-Committee passed a motion directing staff to report back through a Recommendation Report on the following:

- (i) Enforcement mechanisms currently available under the Hamilton Streets By-law (86-077) to address sidewalk obstructions;
- (ii) Recommendations for an effective and practical approach to maintaining accessible sidewalks, including strategies to prevent repeated enforcement cycles while coordinating with outreach and support services; and
- (iii) Any resource or policy implications associated with implementing such an approach.

Background:

- Ongoing non-compliance with the Hamilton Streets By-law (86-077) continues to result in recurring obstructions within the pedestrian right-of-way. While compliance is typically achieved during enforcement attendance, obstructions frequently reoccur once staff leave the area.
- Staff presented Information Report PED26018 to the Downtown Sub-Committee on March 2, 2026, addressing the items outlined in the September 16, 2025, motion. The report was received by the Committee.
- Report PED26018 provided information related to items (i), (ii), and (iii), and indicated that a subsequent report would be brought forward to the General Issues Committee with recommendations, including direction to the General Manager of Planning and Economic Development, as well as a confidential appendix outlining anticipated costs associated with a proposed pilot program.
- The report was not brought forward to March 25, 2026, General Issues Committee, as staff elected to refine the operational approach to prioritize the use of existing resources.
- Enforcement of the Parks By-law (01-219) and Streets By-law (86-077) is currently supported by six Municipal Law Enforcement Officers.

Reasons for Revised Operational Approach:

- Staff have refocused operational efforts to identify efficiencies that support a more consistent enforcement presence in the area of Jackson Street West and MacNab Street South.

- Licensing and By-law Services has redeployed members of the Coordinated Encampment Response Team (CERT) to provide proactive, daily presence and enforcement within the area. This approach is intended to maintain visibility, reinforce compliance expectations, and reduce the likelihood of recurring violations.
- This revised approach leverages existing resources and does not require additional funding.
- Through sustained presence, staff have developed working relationships with individuals in the area. Combined with staff experience in encampment response, this approach is expected to improve compliance outcomes compared to introducing new personnel unfamiliar with the context.

Early Implementation Outcomes:

- Beginning March 23, 2026, Municipal Law Enforcement Officers, including members of the Coordinated Encampment Response Team, initiated proactive daily attendance at the intersection of Jackson Street West and MacNab Street South to address sidewalk obstructions.
- This consistent presence has improved pedestrian access and reduced the frequency of repeat violations and supports continued enforcement presence.

Next Steps:

- Beginning the week of April 13, 2026, Municipal Law Enforcement Officers will provide a minimum of three proactive patrols per day in the identified area.

- Staff will continue to coordinate enforcement and clean-up efforts with Hamilton Police Service and Public Works (Parks Section).
- This approach enables the remaining four Municipal Law Enforcement Officers to maintain enforcement within City parks, consistent with Council direction following the rescission of the Encampment Protocol in March 2025.
- Subject to sustained compliance in the area, the two assigned officers may be redeployed to support enforcement in other high-priority locations, including the York Boulevard corridor.
- Licensing and By-law Services will continue to monitor outcomes, adjust deployment as required, and prioritize city-wide encampment issues that pose elevated health and safety risks. This approach will not impact previously established proactive enforcement efforts within Ward 3 parks or within the 1 km radius of the Tiffany Barton Temporary Outdoor Shelter.
- Staff will also enhance coordination with Corporate Security to support enforcement operations, including risk identification, information sharing and coordinated responses where appropriate, with activities and outcomes tracked and monitored to inform ongoing operational adjustments.
- Staff will provide regular status updates to the Downtown Subcommittee and/or General Issues Committee on the implementation of these next steps, including changes in conditions, enforcement activity, emerging risks, and any required operational adjustments, including reporting back to the General Issues Committee in Q3 2026 with a comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of the revised

enforcement approach, impacts on broader encampment operations and any recommendations requiring Council direction.

Risks associated with the revised approach:

- Enforcement coverage is currently limited to weekdays between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., which may result in reoccurrence of violations outside of these hours.
- Allocating two officers to this area may result in slower response times to encampment-related concerns in City parks.
- Reduced response capacity in other locations may increase the likelihood of encampments becoming more established, potentially resulting in longer compliance timelines and increased clean-up requirements.
- Displacement of individuals from the identified area may lead to increased by-law violations in other locations.

Consultation

- Licensing and By-law Services (Municipal Law Enforcement Section)
- Licensing and By-law Services (Policy and Programs Section)
- Hamilton Police Services
- Public Works - Environmental Services (Parks Section)
- Public Works – Corporate Safety and Security
- Healthy and Safe Communities – Housing Services

Appendices and Schedules Attached

Not Applicable

Prepared by:

Dan Smith, Director, Licensing and By-law Services, Planning and Economic Development Department

Submitted and Recommended by:

Dan Smith, Director, Licensing and By-law Services, Planning and Economic Development Department

City of Hamilton

Report for Information

To:	Chair and Committee Members
Date:	April 15, 2026
Report No:	FCS26023
Subject/Title:	2026 Municipal Election and Municipal Use of Resources Policy
Ward(s) Affected:	City Wide

Recommendations

That Report FCS26023, respecting 2026 Municipal Election and Municipal Use of Resources Policy (City Wide), **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Key Facts

- The next Municipal and School Board Election is scheduled for Monday, October 26, 2026, with voting opportunities throughout the month of October.
- Nomination and registration period opens May 1, 2026 and closes August 21, 2026.
- Members of Council, Candidates and Staff should be aware of the requirements under the Use of City Resources During an Election Policy.
- All Candidates Information Session with Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing staff is scheduled for May 6, 2026, at 6 p.m.

- The new term of Council begins on November 15, 2026.
- All motions need to be approved prior to August 31 in an election year. For the 2026 Election year that would require all motions to be brought forward at the Council meeting on Aug 5, 2026.

Financial Considerations

There are no financial considerations and budgetary impacts associated with this Report, which is submitted to Committee for information purposes only. This aligns with the City's Policy and Guidelines for Eligible Expenses for Elected Officials, which establishes that only valid municipal expenditures incurred while conducting official City business are charged to the approved annual budgets for the Office of the Mayor, the Legislative Budget, and Councillor Ward Office Budgets. Because this Report does not introduce new activities, obligations, or expenditures beyond existing administrative responsibilities, it does not trigger any costs under these established budget frameworks.

Background

This report provides Council with an overview of preparations for the 2026 Municipal and School Board Election and outlines key requirements and implications of the Use of City Resources During an Election Policy. The intent is to ensure clarity, compliance, and operational readiness as the City enters the 2026 election period.

Analysis

Overview of the 2026 Municipal Election

The next Municipal and School Board Election is scheduled for Monday, October 26, 2026. Key dates include the nomination and registration period beginning May 1, 2026, advance voting dates in early October, and the commencement of the 2026–2030 Council term on November 15, 2026.

For the 2026 Municipal Election, we are advancing a significantly enhanced and equity‑focused voting model that will meaningfully strengthen accessibility, convenience, and voter experience across the City of Hamilton.

New for 2026, we are tripling the number of community polling locations, ensuring far greater access in high‑density buildings and equity‑deserving neighbourhoods. These locations are selected to reduce travel barriers, improve accessibility for equity‑deserving and high‑density communities, and ensure that electors have convenient, familiar, and welcoming places to cast their ballots during an election. This expansion directly supports our commitment to removing barriers and meeting voters where they are. Additionally, we will increase the number of advanced voting opportunities and have expanded Ballot‑on‑Demand locations across the city. This will give electors more flexibility, shorter wait times, and greater convenience than ever before.

Voters will now benefit from polling location flexibility within their ward, meaning electors can cast their ballot at any voting location that best suits their needs, rather than being restricted to a single assigned poll.

To ensure every eligible voter has the information they need, Voter Information Cards will be delivered to every household in Hamilton, including addresses that may not appear on the Voters' List. This universal outreach ensures no community is overlooked. While the Voter Information Card provides helpful details about voting locations and ward information, it is not required in order to vote. Electors may cast their ballot without a Voter Information Card as long as they bring one piece of acceptable identification showing their name and qualifying address.

Candidate support has also been strengthened for the 2026 election with the addition of a dedicated staff resource assigned to assist candidates throughout the entire campaign period. As part of this support, an All-Candidates Information Session with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is scheduled for May 6, 2026 at 6 p.m. This session will provide candidates with a comprehensive overview of the legislative framework governing municipal elections, clarify statutory requirements and compliance obligations, and offer guidance on key topics such as campaign finance rules, nomination procedures, advertising regulations, and the role of third‑party advertisers. Candidates will have an opportunity to receive authoritative information directly from provincial officials and ask questions to ensure they are fully prepared, informed, and compliant throughout the election process. Along with improved guides, tools, and communications designed to support compliance and transparency, our goal is to make it easier for candidates to navigate the election process.

Internally, we have formalized a comprehensive staffing strategy to build strong, effective poll teams, and we have fully modernized our training program to ensure staff are confident, knowledgeable, and prepared to deliver a consistent, voter‑centred experience at every location. This will include both traditional policy and guidelines training, along with hands on, in-person mock poll training simulations for workers.

Collectively, these improvements represent one of the most significant service enhancements to municipal election delivery to date for the City of Hamilton, with the

goal of providing a more accessible, equitable, and responsive election for all participants.

Legislative and Policy Context

Municipal Elections Act Requirements

Section 88.18 of the *Municipal Elections Act, 1996* requires municipalities to establish rules and procedures governing the use of municipal resources during an election period. These rules must be in place before May 1 of an election year.

Use of City Resources During an Election Policy

The City of Hamilton maintains a dedicated Use of City Resources During an Election Policy (Policy No. EO 02 21), which outlines restrictions regarding the use of:

- City facilities, equipment, and supplies
- City staff time
- Technology, infrastructure, and information
- City organized events or communication channels

The policy applies to:

- Members of Council
- Candidates
- Registered third-party advertisers
- Local boards
- City staff during the election campaign period

The campaign period for municipal elections runs from May 1 until Voting Day.

Council Code of Conduct

Sections 6 and 7 of Council's Code of Conduct (By-law 16 290) prohibits Members of Council from using City property, services, or staff for campaign purposes. The policy

clarifies that using corporate resources for campaigning constitutes a contribution under the Act, which is expressly prohibited.

Key Provisions of the Use of Resources Policy

Prohibited Use of Corporate Resources

Examples include:

- Use of City email, phones, or electronic devices for campaign activity
- Campaign-related postings on City managed websites or social media
- Use of staff time to support campaign tasks
- Displaying campaign signs or materials in City facilities (except permitted public areas, if applicable)

Advertising and Communications Restrictions

During the election period:

- Corporate communications must remain non-partisan
    - Non‑partisan communications are neutral, fact‑based election materials produced by the municipality that provide essential information without showing support for or opposition to any candidate, campaign, or political issue. Their purpose is to inform voters about the election process - such as dates, locations, and eligibility - while ensuring fairness, transparency, and impartiality in the administration of the municipal election.

- Members seeking re-election must use campaign communication tools, such as elect JohnDoe@gmail.com, and not use City accounts when engaging in campaign-related discussion or correspondence.

Staff Responsibilities

City staff are expected to maintain neutrality, refrain from participating in campaign activity while representing the City, and ensure they understand their obligations under both the Use of City Resources Policy and the Code of Conduct.

- A Summary of the Use of City Resources During an Election Policy (EO-02-21) can be found in the Appendix “A”.

Election Administration and Operational Planning

The Election Office is responsible for:

- Establishing voting places
- Recruiting and training election workers
- Facilitating advance voting and accessible services
- Maintaining voter lists and election records
- Managing vote-tabulating equipment

The scale of the election requires hundreds of temporary staff. Recruitment planning begins well in advance to ensure adequate staffing levels for voting days and advance polls.

The City’s experience administering the 2022 Municipal Election, including staff training, technology deployment, and expanded advance‑vote hours, along with the findings and recommendations from the 2022 Municipal Election Administrative Audit, provides essential insights and direction for planning the 2026 election. These lessons learned also inform the development and application of the 2026 Guidelines for Eligible Expenses, ensuring that the rules governing campaign spending are clear, transparent, and aligned with modernized election practices. By connecting administrative improvements with updated expense guidelines, the City supports a fair, accountable, and well‑regulated campaign environment for all candidates.

Guidelines for Eligible Expenses – Operating Budget

During an election year, consistent with past practice, the Operating budget is pro-rated at 10.5 months for current administration, and 1.5 months for new administration. In addition, there are restrictions to sponsorships, and ticket purchases for events that occur during the period between nomination day and election day. Donations are eligible provided there is confirmation from the Elected Office that there will be no public recognition or acknowledgement of the elected officer's contribution.

It is expected that the elected officer will continue to support residents through regular communication channels during an election year. However, such communication should not be campaign related and must be completed by August 31 of an election year. All Office equipment (office furniture and furnishings, computer and communications equipment) must be returned to the City when the elected officer is no longer in office.

Ensuring Compliance and Readiness for 2026

Communication to Council and Staff

Consistent with past practice, the Clerk's Office will provide clear guidance to Members of Council and staff regarding:

- Restrictions on the use of corporate resources
- Differentiation between corporate and campaign communications
- Rules for attending City events during the campaign period

Training and Awareness

Targeted training sessions and information resources will ensure that staff, candidates, and third-party advertisers understand both legislative and policy requirements.

Monitoring and Support

The Clerk's Office will continue to respond to inquiries, support compliance, and provide transparent processes for any concerns raised related to the use of City resources.

Conclusion

The 2026 Municipal and School Board Election requires a coordinated and policy-compliant approach to ensure fairness, transparency, and effective service to Hamilton residents. The Use of City Resources During an Election Policy provides the framework necessary to safeguard the neutrality of City operations and uphold the integrity of the election process.

The Election Office will continue preparations, provide timely updates, and ensure that all members of Council, candidates, staff, and third-party advertisers understand their responsibilities throughout the 2026 election cycle.

Alternatives

There are no applicable alternatives to this Report as it is only presented for information purposes.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

This Report does not specifically support a Council Priority or outcome measure, but it speaks to the importance of priority 3 Responsiveness & Transparency. The work of the Election team this year is to prioritize customer service and proactive communication for all eligible voters and candidates, in an effort to get more people involved in decision making by participating in the electoral process (as a candidate or a voter).

Consultation

Finance and Administration Division, Corporate Services

Appendices and Schedules Attached

Appendix “A” to Report FCS26023:	Policy EO-021-21: Use of City Resources During an Election Policy
Appendix “B” to Report FCS26023:	Summary of Policy EO-021-021
Appendix “C” to Report FCS26023:	Policy and Guidelines for Eligible Expenses for Elected Officials: Office of the Mayor, Legislative and Councillor Ward Office Budgets

Prepared by:

Tammy Reeves, Manager, Elections, Print, Mail & Courier, Office of the City Clerk, Corporate Services

Submitted and Recommended by:

Matthew Trennum, City Clerk, Office of the City Clerk, Corporate Services

Hamilton

Use of City Resources During an Election	City Clerk – Election Office
	Policy No. EO-02-21

1. Purpose

1.1 This policy establishes provisions respecting the use of City of Hamilton facilities, resources, assets, infrastructure and personnel for election purposes to maintain the independent and non-partisan functions of municipal government.

1.2 This policy outlines the City of Hamilton’s responsibilities under the *Municipal Elections Act*, 1996, the *Election Finances Act* and the *Canada Elections Act*, by outlining the requirements and restrictions relating to the use of city resources and city financial or in-kind contributions to election campaigns for candidates, third parties, City of Hamilton employees, and members of the community.

2. Application

2.1 This Policy applies to Members of Council and its Local Boards, candidates for elected office, third parties and Staff during a campaign period.

2.2 The following exceptions apply to this policy:

(a) Municipal information prepared, posted and maintained by the City, names and photographs of Members of Council, their contact information, and a list of current representation on committees that is prepared, posted and maintained by the City.

(b) Agendas and minutes of Council and Committee meetings.

(c) Media releases and City materials that describe inter-governmental activities of the Mayor, in the capacity as Head of Council, and Chief Executive Officer of the City.

3. Legislative Authority

3.1 Council is required to adopt and maintain a policy respecting the use of corporate resources as it relates to municipal elections. ***Reference MEA s.88.18***

3.2 Public funds are not to be used for any election-related purposes, including the promotion of or opposition to the candidacy of a person for elected office. ***Reference MEA s.88.8(4), 88.12(4).***

3.3 Section 29(1) of the *Election Finances Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E7* and section 363(1) of the *Canada Elections Act* S.C. 2000, c.9 further prohibit municipal corporations from contributing to any candidate, constituency association, nomination contestant, leadership contestant, or political party.

4. Policy

Definitions

Campaign	shall mean any campaign related to an election or by-election at the municipal, provincial, and federal level of government, or a campaign related to the submission of a question on the ballot to the electors.
Campaign Period	For a municipal and school board election, beginning May 1 in the year of an election, and ending on voting day. For a provincial election, beginning on the date the writ is issued and ending on voting day. For a federal election, beginning on the date the writ is issued and ending on voting day.

	For a ballot question, beginning the date on which Council passes the necessary by-law and ending on voting day. For a by-election, beginning the first date that nominations can be submitted and ending on voting day.
Campaign Related Activities	This can include, but is not limited to, events, canvassing, fundraising, research, purchasing, postering and social media posting, related to a candidate, political party or a question on the ballot in a municipal, provincial or federal election.
Candidate	means a Person whose nomination to run in a Municipal, Provincial or Federal election, including school board elections, has been certified or confirmed by the necessary Election official as required by the governing legislation
City	The City of Hamilton and its local boards.
City-Organized Event	Events that are funded and organized through the City. This may include events that are jointly organized with community organizations or with external sponsors only where the City is involved as a primary partner.
City Resources	includes tangible assets, (such as buildings, equipment, financial resources, and materials); intangible assets (such as technology, intellectual property); and staff of the municipality.

Local Board	a school board, municipal service board, transportation commission, public library board, board of health, police services board, planning board, or any other board, commission, committee, body or local authority established or exercising any power or authority under any general or special Act with respect to any of the affairs or purposes, including school purposes, of a municipality or of two or more municipalities or parts thereof; (“conseil local”) (*Municipal Act, 2001*, as amended)
Third Party	Any individual, corporation or trade union registered in accordance with Section 88.6 of the Municipal Elections Act, 1996 Section 37.5 of the Election Finances Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.E.7, or Section 353 of the Canada Elections Act, S. C. 2000, c. 9.
Staff	All regular full and part time, temporary and contract employees, volunteers, students and interns at the City of Hamilton.

4.1 The City shall not provide city resources or financial or in-kind contributions to election campaigns for candidates or third parties in municipal, provincial, or federal elections.

4.2 Members of Council must abide by the City of Hamilton’s Council Code of Conduct, including the provisions of section 7;

(a) No Member shall use facilities, equipment, supplies, services, or other resources of the City for any election campaign or campaign-related activities, except on the same basis (including paying a fee if any) as such resources are normally made available to members of the public.

(b) No Member shall use their newsletter or website linked through the City’s website, for any election campaign or campaign-related activities.

(c) No Member shall use the services of any City employee for any election campaign or campaign-related activities during hours in which those City employees receive any compensation from the City.

4.3 During a campaign period, Members of Council, candidates, and third parties are not permitted to:

(a) Use equipment, assets, supplies, services, staff or other resources of the City for any campaign or campaign related activities;

(b) Use City funds to acquire any resources for any campaign or campaign related activities, including ordering of stationery and office supplies;

(c) Use City facilities or property for campaign events unless the facility or property is rented in accordance with approved corporate policies and procedures;

(d) Use City funds to print or distribute any material that makes reference to, or contains the names or photographs, or identifies candidates or third parties;

(e) Use a City brand, logo, crest, coat of arms, chain of office, slogan or corporate program identifiers, including the Municipal Election logo, on any election campaign related material, either printed or on a campaign website;

(f) Use City Information Technology (IT) assets, infrastructure, or data (e.g. computers, wireless devices, portals, corporate email, web pages, blogs, telephone) to communicate election related messages. Links to the City’s website are permitted from a candidate’s election website for the purpose of obtaining

information about the election or sharing program/service information;

(g) Use distribution lists or contact lists developed and/or paid for using corporate resources or funding; and

(h) Use photographic images or videos produced for and owned by the City of Hamilton for any election purposes.

Advertising and Communications

4.4 Campaign-related signs or materials shall not be displayed at or in City-owned or leased facilities, unless permitted under the Election Sign By-law and/or the Commercial Advertising and Sponsorship Policy.

4.5 Materials produced or prepared by Staff or Members of Council, shall not contain campaign-related materials and messaging.

(a) Notwithstanding section 4.5, City owned or produced material or websites prepared for the purposes of public education during an Election or for the administration of an election are permitted.

(b) Notwithstanding section 4.5, Members of Council are not prohibited from engaging with constituents on ward or city-related matters.

4.6 The following services will be discontinued for Members of Council who have been certified as a candidate in municipal election, as of August 31:

(a) All forms of advertising, including municipal publications (e.g. paper or web-based); and,

(b) All printing services, including printing, photocopying and distribution of publications, such as newsletters and ward reports, with the exception of communications specifically related to an authorized or scheduled City event (e.g. Public Meeting).

4.7 No Member of Council, including candidates for election and those acclaimed to office, may distribute newsletters following August 31 of an election year in adherence to the Policy and Guidelines for Eligible

Expenses for Elected Officials: Budget for the Office of the Mayor, Legislative Budget and Councillor Ward Office Budget; and

4.8 Notwithstanding section 4.6 and 4.7, communications from Members of Council to constituents and use of city resources in response to a declared emergency are permitted with the approval of the City Manager in consultation with the City Clerk.

Member of Council, Candidate and Third Party Conduct

4.9 Candidates and third parties may attend City-organized events but are not permitted to campaign or disseminate election-related campaign materials at such events;

4.10 A Member of Council attending an event as a representative of City Council is not permitted to campaign while in attendance at the event; and,

4.11 Members of Council, staff, candidates and third parties are not permitted to engage in campaign related activities directed at City employees while those employees are at their workplace or engaged in work for the City.

Staff Involvement in Election Campaigns

4.12 Staff shall adhere to the Code of Conduct for Employees Policy and associated Schedule D: Outside Employment and Activity. Under these policies, City staff must ensure that their employment with the City is separate and distinct from any involvement in campaign related activities;

4.13 Staff shall not perform any work in support of a candidate or third party (e.g. campaign), during hours in which a person is receiving any compensation from the City, except during scheduled time off (e.g. scheduled vacation time);

4.14 Staff shall not post or distribute campaign material on behalf of a candidate or third party at a City facility or while on City property;

4.15 Staff shall not use equipment, assets, supplies, services, staff or other resources of the City to support any campaign or campaign related activities;

4.16 Staff shall not make reference to and/or identify any individual as a candidate, political party, third party or a supporter or opposition of a question on a ballot during an election, at any meeting or any social media sites, blogs, and other new media created and managed by City employees; and

4.17 Staff must comply with all applicable City policies, including those pertaining to fee structures, advertising, and service levels. For greater clarity, Staff shall adhere to the requirements of their role and not provide greater or lesser service or support to candidates or third parties than is normally provided to all clients.

Roles and Responsibilities

4.18 The City Clerk’s Office is responsible for communicating this policy to Members of Council, Staff, candidates and third parties.

4.19 People Leaders at the City of Hamilton are responsible for communicating this policy to their staff in advance of Nomination Day.

4.19.1 People Leaders are responsible for investigating reported contraventions of this policy by their staff to ensure compliance.

4.20 The City Clerk is authorized and directed to take such action as necessary to give effect to this policy, including investigating alleged contraventions of this policy and resolving any issues arising from the allegations.

4.20.1 The Clerk may consult with the Integrity Commissioner regarding allegations made against Members of Council.

4.21 Where a breach of this policy has been verified by the City Clerk, parties who are responsible for the breach will be required to repay costs associated with the unauthorized use of city resources, as identified by established user fees, market rate, or as determined by the City Clerk.

4.22 Following the election, the City Clerk will report all verified breaches of the Use of City Resources During an Election.

5. Legislation

Municipal Elections Act, 1996 S.O. 1996, c. 32, Sched

Municipal Act, 2001, S.O. 2001, c. 25

Election Finances Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. E.7

Canada Elections Act, S.C. 2000, c.9

Council Code of Conduct By-Law 16-290

Election Sign By-Law (Under Review)

Commercial Advertising and Sponsorship Policy

Policy and Guidelines for Eligible Expenses for Elected Officials: Budget for the Office of the Mayor, Legislative Budget and Councillor Ward Office Budget

City of Hamilton Code of Conduct for Employees Policy

6. Revision History

Date	**Description**
April 25, 2018	Policy approved by Council (General Issues Committee Report 18-009 - April 18, 2018)
October 2021	Review and Revisions to Policy
December 8, 2021	Reviewed at General Issues Committee
December 15, 2021	Council Approved

Summary of Policy EO-021-21: Use of City Resources During an Election Policy

Purpose:

Ensures City of Hamilton resources are not used for election campaigning, preserving neutrality and public trust.

Outlines responsibilities under the Municipal Elections Act, 1996, the Election Finances Act, and the Canada Elections Act regarding the prohibition of financial or in-kind contributions by the City to any candidate or third party.

Who This Policy Applies To:

Members of Council

Candidates (municipal, provincial, federal, school board)

Third party advertisers

City staff, including volunteers, students, and interns

Local boards

Exceptions

The following may continue during an election period:

- City-produced municipal information (e.g., Member names/photos, committee listings)
- Council/committee agendas and minutes
- City materials describing intergovernmental activities of the Mayor as Head of Council

Key Rules and Restrictions

1. Use of City Resources

City resources cannot be used for any campaign activity, including:

- City facilities, equipment, supplies, staff time, IT systems, email, or data
- City branding, logos, crests, or images
- Photographs or videos produced by the City
- Distribution lists or contact lists created using City resources

Campaign activities are prohibited in City facilities unless renting space under normal public rules.

2. Communications & Advertising

- No campaign materials may appear in City facilities (subject to sign by-law rules).
- City-funded printing, newsletters, and advertising for Members of Council end August 31 in an election year.
- Members cannot use City newsletters, websites, or social media for campaign purposes.
- Only City-approved election information intended for public education is permitted.

3. Conduct at City Events

- Candidates/third parties may attend City events but cannot campaign.
- Members of Council attending as official representatives may not campaign.
- Campaigning toward City employees is prohibited in workplaces or on duty.

Staff Responsibilities

Staff must:

- Maintain strict neutrality and keep all campaigning separate from their work.
- Not perform campaign work during paid hours or using City equipment.
- Not post or distribute campaign materials on City property.
- Not reference candidates or parties on official City platforms or meetings.
- Provide equal service to all residents—no preferential treatment for candidates.

Roles & Enforcement

City Clerk: Communicates the policy, investigates alleged breaches, reports violations, and may consult the Integrity Commissioner.

People Leaders: Must inform staff and investigate staff-related breaches.

Consequences: Individuals who violate the policy must reimburse costs associated with unauthorized use of City resources.

Following the election, the Clerk issues a report detailing verified breaches.

Legislative Authority

Municipal Elections Act, 1996

Municipal Act, 2001

Election Finances Act

Canada Elections Act

Council Code of Conduct (By-law 16-290)

Election Sign By-law & Advertising/Sponsorship Policy

Policy and Guidelines for Eligible Expenses for Elected Officials: Office of the Mayor, Legislative and Councillor Ward Office Budgets

SECTION 1 – POLICY FOR ELIGIBLE EXPENSES FOR ELECTED OFFICIALS

POLICY STATEMENT	Expenses incurred by elected officials, while acting as members of Council, are paid by the City.
APPROVAL	Once Council has approved the annual budget, specific approval of individual expenditures is not required. Elected officials are responsible for monitoring their own budgets through the operating budget variance reporting process.
PURPOSE	This Policy establishes types of expenses, which will be paid by the City from the Council approved budgets. Specific restrictions identify those expenses which will not be paid by the City.
SCOPE	This Policy applies to all expenses incurred annually, unless otherwise noted in this Policy, by the elected officials while conducting official City business and performing their duties as elected officials. Valid municipal expenditures will be paid by the City and should be charged to the correct account, regardless of whether there is a budget for that account. Elected officials are accountable for their expenditures, in aggregate, not by individual account line. This Policy is intended to provide flexibility to elected officials in managing their own budgets and programming. Supporting documentation required for payment for services or goods provided is: 1. The original invoice identifying the goods or services and the purpose of the purchase, if not obvious from the invoice, or 2. If there is no invoice, a short description of the good or service and purpose of the purchase is required, as well as an alternative proof of payment (eg. Payment card statement) Expenses for goods or services of a personal nature are the responsibility of the individual elected official and will not be paid by the City.
CURRENT BUDGET OR OPERATING BUDGET – APPROVAL, MONITORING AND REPORTING	As part of the annual current budget or operating budget, Council establishes a budget for expenses for elected officials. A statement of the expenses and revenues is available to the Councillors on a monthly basis and is reported to Council with the Corporate Operating Budget Variance Reports. Councillors will be required to provide explanations of any variances at the aggregate level in accordance with corporate standards for reporting.

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CURRENT BUDGET OR OPERATING BUDGET – APPROVAL, MONITORING AND REPORTING (Cont’d)	Current budget expense accounts are intended to cover all expenses incurred by elected officials, while conducting City business or promoting the City, including: expenses related to the management of the elected official’s office; communication with constituents; business entertainment and staff recognition; promotion; local travel; and attendance at functions on City business. Inventories of furniture, fixtures and equipment (FFE) purchased using City budgets are maintained by the Administrative Assistants. Elected officials’ budgets shall not be used to provide a personal benefit to specific individual citizens or businesses (examples: payment of tax penalties, parking tickets, sponsorship of personal travel, etc.).
ELECTION CAMPAIGN EXPENSES	Expenses incurred to produce or distribute election campaign literature, materials, or any election campaign communication (eg. Newsletters, social media or search engine advertisements, video advertising, SMS marketing) will not be paid for by the City. No Elected Official, including candidates for election and those acclaimed to office, may distribute newsletters after August 31 of an election year. Requirements and restrictions relating to the use of city resources and city financial or in-kind contributions to election campaigns are outlined in Use of City Resources During an Election Policy.
SPONSORSHIPS DONATIONS TICKETS	Expenses related to sponsorships and donations (including the purchase of event tickets) will be paid by the Elected Officials’ Budget. Sponsorships / donations are not to be provided for any amounts levied in respect of any tax or user fees. Sponsorships / donations are limited to $560 for 2024 per named organization per year. The $560 maximum will be adjusted annually per the Ontario all items Consumer Price Index. Participation in charitable/community events through the purchase of tickets is limited to two tickets per

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	charitable/community organization per year, excluding any events led by the City (eg. Senior Awards Gala). Donations to charitable organizations in lieu of floral tribute for a funeral will be paid by the City. Events/programs that occur during the election period (from the first day that nominations can be filed for candidates until the day after the election) will not be eligible for funding as a sponsorship from the Elected Official’s operating budget (even if the request is submitted prior to the first day that nominations can be filed). Donations to organizations from Elected Official’s operating budget will be allowed with the provision that there is no public acknowledgement or recognition of the Elected Official’s contribution to the organization. Tickets purchased from Elected Official’s operating budget for an event in the election period (from the first day that nominations can be filed for candidates until the day after the election) will be allowed, provided that no activities described as campaign activities take place while attending the event.
OFFICE EQUIPMENT EXPENSES	Expenses for office equipment (office furniture and furnishings, computer and communications equipment) are provided for the Councillors’ reception area and to elected officials’ offices within City facilities. Furniture repairs and replacements will be funded from Corporate Budgets upon assessment from Facilities and approval by the General Manager of Finance & Corporate Services. Each elected official is provided with a computer, other electronic equipment as required and access to a printer. The Councillors’ Administrative Assistants and staff in the Office of the Mayor are each provided with a computer and access to a printer in accordance with City standards. Any additional computer equipment may be ordered through the Information Technology Division, Corporate Services Department. When the elected official is no longer in office, all equipment must be returned to the City per Procurement Policy.

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REIMBURSEMENT OF CITY EXPENSES PAID BY PERSONAL ACCOUNTS (HOW TO CLAIM)	Detailed procedures for accessing the City’s financial system and for submitting incidental expense claims are available from the Financial Services Division, Corporate Services Department.
REIMBURSEMENT	Requests for reimbursement of out-of-pocket expenses and mileage will be submitted through the online expense portal. Out-of-pocket expenses include items such as business meals and parking. Purchase of tickets to community events should be requested through a Cheque Requisition payable to the event organization or through reimbursement requests if purchased online. Where the expense includes an overnight stay, the travel form/portal should be used.
SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION	Scanned receipts and supporting documentation are to be provided with the request for reimbursement indicating: 1. the type of expense; 2. date and purpose of event or meeting attended (if applicable); and 3. appropriate account number within the applicable current budget must be provided with the request. 4. Number of attendees.
CHEQUE REQUISITION	Goods or services that are not ordered through the City’s financial system (such as registrations, subscriptions, etc.) may be paid for by cheque issued directly to the vendor. A cheque requisition must be submitted to Finance and Administration staff with supporting documentation, as described above.

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SECTION 2 – GUIDELINES

DESCRIPTION	BUDGET FOR THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR	LEGISLATIVE BUDGET	WARD OFFICE BUDGET
Councillor Ward Budget Process and Guidelines	N/A	N/A	For reference, the methodology for developing the Councillor Ward Office Budgets is included in a separate document, Methodology for Developing Ward Office Budgets. Councillors may submit requests for access to the Contingency Fund within the Legislative budget to Council for approval during the course of the year. Councillors will be required to reimburse the City for any expenditures exceeding their approved Ward budget and their portion of the employee related budget in the Legislative Budget.

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DESCRIPTION	BUDGET FOR THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR	LEGISLATIVE BUDGET	WARD OFFICE BUDGET
Workplace Technology and Operational Resources (Note 1)	Office expenses, including all office consumables (stationery, office supplies, organizers, etc.), office accessory items (desk lamps, pictures / certificate framing, etc.), letterhead and business cards and purchased publications (maps, magazines, newspapers, etc.). Common office equipment (shredder, fax machine, printer) in accordance with corporate standards.	Expenses for shared office consumables (stationery, office supplies, etc.). Shared office equipment (shredder, one fax machine, printer). Computer hardware (in accordance with corporate standards) for Elected Officials and their staff.	Office expenses, including all office consumables (stationery, office supplies, organizers, etc.), office accessory items (desk lamps, pictures / certificate framing, etc.), letterhead and business cards and purchased publications (maps, magazines, newspapers, etc.).

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DESCRIPTION	BUDGET FOR THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR	LEGISLATIVE BUDGET	WARD OFFICE BUDGET
Staffing (Note 2)		Employee Related costs for one shared receptionist and associated vacation coverage. Employee Related costs for all Elected Officials and their staff. Costs of backfilling sick absences and parental leave, as well as, associated benefit costs will not be budgeted and actual backfilling expenses incurred will be excluded from overall expenditures in the Councillor’s Office Ward Budget. In the case of such absences, the replacement must provide a similar level of service and as such the costs of backfilling should be comparable to the original costs.	

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DESCRIPTION	BUDGET FOR THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR	LEGISLATIVE BUDGET	WARD OFFICE BUDGET
Parking: • Parking for Elected Officials is provided free of charge. • Parking for elected officials’ staff must be obtained or purchased in accordance with the corporate policy for parking.		Parking expenses for qualifying staff of Elected Officials.	
Training / Strategic Planning		Costs for Council orientation, strategic planning and professional development. Training costs for Elected Officials and their staff.	

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DESCRIPTION	BUDGET FOR THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR	LEGISLATIVE BUDGET	WARD OFFICE BUDGET
Communication with Constituents: Expenses incurred in the communication of City and / or ward issues or items of interest to constituents	Eligible expenses include, but are not limited to: mailings (printing, copying, postage, address lists); advertisements and inserts; room rentals; newspaper columns and television appearances; community association memberships; greeting cards; etc. Costs of communication lines (telephone, cell phone, fax, Internet) and related services will be paid when the use is for City business.		Eligible expenses include, but are not limited to: mailings (printing, copying, postage, address lists); advertisements and inserts; room rentals; newspaper columns and television appearances; community association memberships; greeting cards; etc.
Facility Costs	N/A	Facility costs associated with offices within City facilities for all elected officials. Expenses for external facilities are allowed in cases where City facilities are unavailable, but a satellite office is necessary. The qualifying wards for external facilities include 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, and 15.	

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DESCRIPTION	BUDGET FOR THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR	LEGISLATIVE BUDGET	WARD OFFICE BUDGET
Promotion	Costs for City souvenir items (mementoes) which are available for distribution at the discretion of the Mayor. Staff of the Office of the Mayor are responsible for maintaining the inventory of these items for the Office of the Mayor.	N/A	Costs for City souvenir items (mementoes) which are available for distribution at the discretion of the individual Councillor. Staff of the Councillor’s Ward Office will be responsible for maintaining the inventory of these items for the Councillors.
Business Entertainment / Staff Recognition	Reasonable expenses associated with the entertainment of business contacts or the recognition of staff, such as business lunches or tickets to events, will be reimbursed when such entertainment is considered to be either necessary for the advancement of the interests of the City, or appropriate as a means of rewarding the efforts of staff. Scanned receipts and supporting documentation are to be provided as outlined above and in accordance with the City’s Policy for Business Travel, Seminars and Conferences. The purchase of alcohol is strictly prohibited.	N/A	Reasonable expenses associated with the entertainment of business contacts or the recognition of staff, such as business lunches or tickets to events, will be reimbursed when such entertainment is considered to be either necessary for the advancement of the interests of the City, or appropriate as a means of rewarding the efforts of staff. Scanned receipts and supporting documentation are to be provided as outlined above and in accordance with the City’s Policy for Business Travel, Seminars and Conferences. The purchase of alcohol is strictly prohibited.

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DESCRIPTION	BUDGET FOR THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR	LEGISLATIVE BUDGET	WARD OFFICE BUDGET
Local Travel Allowance	The Mayor can choose between utilizing a City-provided vehicle or receiving a vehicle allowance. Mileage to and from the Mayor’s home and City Hall will not be paid by the City.	Mileage and parking of Elected Officials and their staff for attendance at constituency and other meetings at locations other than City Hall, 71 Main St W.	Mileage to and from the elected official’s home and City Hall will not be paid by the City.
Attendance at Functions and Conferences		Expenses incurred to attend functions / conferences on City business, including transportation, parking, registration fees or tickets, meals and accommodation, and incidental expenses (such as tips, etc.) in accordance with the City’s Policy for Business Travel, Seminars and Conferences. Scanned receipts and supporting documentation are to be provided as outlined above. Expenses to attend political fundraisers will be reimbursed if they advance the interests of the City.	Only nominal expenses of a spouse or companion will be reimbursed. Nominal expenses are defined as tickets to a dinner or reception.

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DESCRIPTION	BUDGET FOR THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR	LEGISLATIVE BUDGET	WARD OFFICE BUDGET
Attendance at Functions / Conferences (Continued)		Expenses incurred to attend functions / conferences on City business, including transportation, parking, registration fees or tickets, meals and accommodation, and incidental expenses (such as tips, etc.) in accordance with the City’s Policy for Business Travel, Seminars and Conferences. Scanned receipts and supporting documentation are to be provided as outlined above. Expenses to attend political fundraisers will be reimbursed if they advance the interests of the City. Where the elected official is representing the City as a member of a board (excluding local boards such as Police Board), expenses incurred to attend functions and / or conferences related to this membership, as follows: FCM (2 members of Council) AMO (2 members of Council) Other (International Children’s Games).	

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DESCRIPTION	BUDGET FOR THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR	LEGISLATIVE BUDGET	WARD OFFICE BUDGET
Memberships	N/A	The cost of memberships for all Elected Officials (i.e., Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Association of Municipalities of Ontario, etc.).	N/A
Meeting Expenses	Meeting expenses incurred by the Mayor’s Office in the course of doing City business.	Expenses for meetings of Council as a whole. The receptionist (for the Councillors’ offices) will be responsible for arranging for any refreshments for these meetings and administering this budget allocation. Expenses for meetings of committees established by Council. The receptionist (for the Councillors’ offices) will be responsible for arranging for any refreshments for these meetings and administering this budget allocation. The Office of the City Clerk will be responsible for set up requirements for meetings of Council and Committee meetings.	Expenses for community meetings. These expenses can include meeting room rentals (if applicable), refreshments, preparation and distribution of meeting notices, etc. Meeting expenses incurred by the Councillors in the course of doing City business.

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DESCRIPTION	BUDGET FOR THE OFFICE OF THE MAYOR	LEGISLATIVE BUDGET	WARD OFFICE BUDGET
Meeting Expenses (continued)		Expenses for use of City Hall by community groups, inclusive of facility costs.	
Hosting of Conferences with Municipal Subject Content	N/A	Expenses representing contributions to events hosted by organizations with a municipal affiliation as approved by Council.	N/A
Internal Charge-backs or Cost allocations	Expenses related to services provided in-house, such as printing and photocopying and the purchase of items through the City’s financial system will be charged to the account number in the budget for the Office of the Mayor provided with the requisition, if required, and no additional reporting is required.	Costs of liability insurance for general public liability, errors and omissions liability, comprehensive crime and conflict of interest for elected officials	Expenses related to services provided in-house, such as printing, photocopying, and the purchase of items through the City’s financial system will be charged to the account number in the individual Councillor’s ward office budget provided with the requisition, if required, and no additional reporting is required.

Note 1: City purchased furniture, fixtures, and equipment (FFE) including electronics purchased or reimbursed from the City Budget must remain the property of the City. An inventory of office related FFE must be maintained and tracked by the Ward Office Administrative Assistant. At the end of every Council term, the completed list must be submitted to the Office of the City Clerk.

Note 2: Contracts including offers of employment can only be signed by the Mayor and Elected Officials once they are sworn in.

City of Hamilton

Report for Consideration

To:	Mayor and Members of the General Issues Committee
Date:	April 15, 2026
Report No:	PED26078
Subject/Title:	A By-Law to Authorize the Imposition of a Special Charge under the Better Homes Hamilton Pilot Program – Batch 2
Ward(s) Affected:	City Wide

Recommendations

That the by-law as shown in Appendix A to Report PED26078, being a by-law to authorize the imposition of a special charge under the Better Homes Hamilton Pilot Program, **BE APPROVED.**

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to request Council approve the by-law, attached as Appendix A, required as per section 36.14 of Ontario Regulation 586/06, in order to add Better Homes Hamilton loans as local improvement charges to the tax roll.
- On November 22, 2023, Council adopted “Better Homes Hamilton” By-Law No. 23-216, Appendix B, to authorize the undertaking of climate change mitigation and adaptation works on private residential property as local improvements under the Better Homes Hamilton Program.
- Schedule A of Appendix B requires in Step 7 of the Better Homes Hamilton Program that the City Treasurer, Deputy Treasurer (or delegated authority) periodically certify the local improvement roll (which occurs after the improvements on a given set of properties are complete and the final amounts of funding are confirmed). Pursuant to this and in order to enable the City of Hamilton to collect repayment of the loans,

section 36.14 of Ontario Regulation 586/06 provides that after the Treasurer has certified the local improvement roll, the City shall by by-law provide that the amount specially charged on the property set out in the roll shall be sufficient to raise the property's share of the cost by a number of equal annual payments and that a special charge shall be imposed in each year on the property equal to the amount of the payment payable in that year.

- The approval of this by-law will allow the loan amounts of ten participants to complete the Better Homes Hamilton program, totalling $164,940.30 to be added as a special charge to the 2026 tax roll for repayment to the City of Hamilton.

Financial Considerations

There are no new financial considerations for Report PED26078 and corresponding appendices. Previously, Report PED23106, Better Homes Hamilton - Home Energy Retrofit Program, recommended that staff be directed to establish a loan receivable on the City's balance sheet, not exceeding $1,000,000, to record the corresponding liabilities regarding the long-term financing for the 'Incubation Stage' (pilot stage) of the Better Homes Hamilton program; Council adopted this motion on May 10, 2023.

The ten current loans totalling $164,940.30 have been issued through the pilot Better Homes Hamilton program. These loans will be repaid with zero-percent interest over 10 or 15 years, as chosen by the participant. Appendix A to Report PED26078 will enable loan repayment to begin in June 2026.

Background

On May 5, 2023, General Issues Committee received Report PED23106, Better Homes Hamilton - Home Energy Retrofit Program, and on May 10, 2023, Council approved the following motions:

(a) That the "Better Homes Hamilton" program, based on the terms outlined in Appendix A6, and subject to minor revisions authorized by the General Manager of Planning and Economic Development, be approved as the 'Incubation Stage' of Hamilton's first home energy retrofit program;

(b) That the "Better Homes Hamilton Detailed Study Design" attached as Appendix "B" to Report PED23106 be received;

(c) That Planning and Economic Development Staff be directed to launch the 'Incubation Stage' of the Better Homes Hamilton program with a target to retrofit up to 50 homes before the end of 2024;

(d) That staff be directed to establish a loan receivable on the City's balance sheet, not exceeding $1,000,000, to record the corresponding liabilities regarding the long-term financing for the 'Incubation Stage' of the Better Homes Hamilton program;

(e) That the costs for program administration, including loan loss provisions for the 'Incubation Stage' of the Better Homes Hamilton program as described in Report PED23106 and in Appendix "A" to Report PED23106 be funded through the Climate Change Reserve Account 108062 with an upset limit of $275,000 over two years;

(f) That staff be directed to prepare and bring forward for Council approval a municipal by-law authorizing the Better Homes Hamilton program including the details on eligibility and providing authority to launch the energy efficiency works on private residential property as local improvements under the program; and,

(g) That Staff be directed to report back to the General Issues Committee within two years of implementation of the 'Incubation Stage' of the Better Homes Hamilton Program with results and feasibility for scaling the program in terms of number of homes and expansion into the high-rise, commercial and/or industrial sectors.

The Better Homes Hamilton Program was designed to extend municipal financing to participating homeowners for the installation of climate mitigation retrofit measures, including building envelope, mechanical systems and supporting energy-efficiency retrofit infrastructure, as well as home energy assessments and permits, as applicable, and to secure payment by imposing a local improvement charge ("LIC") on the property, as authorized by Ontario Regulation 586/06, Local Improvement Charges - Priority Lien Status, enacted under the *Municipal Act, 2001,* S.O. 2001, c. 25.

After significant delays due to the cybersecurity incident and additional delays with the contractor developing the program portal, staff launched the Better Homes Hamilton Program in December 2024 as a pilot, offering a maximum of 50 loans to be provided to homeowners during the pilot program. Loans are a maximum of $20,000 each over a 10- or 15-year repayment term with zero-percent interest over the term of the loan.

Eligible registered owners of detached houses, semi-detached houses, and townhome properties within the geographic boundaries of the City of Hamilton are participating in the Better Homes Hamilton Pilot Program. All registered owners of the participating properties must consent to participation in the Better Homes Hamilton Program. As per Schedule A of Appendix B to Report PED26078, the properties must have a property tax roll account with the City, and the registered owner(s) are responsible for property tax payments directly to the City. All property taxes and other payment obligations to the City by the homeowners must be confirmed by Taxation to be in good standing.

Analysis

Since Council approved on January 21, 2026, By-Law 2026-009 regarding Report PED26005 for the first ten Better Homes Hamilton participants to complete the Better Homes Hamilton Pilot Program, another ten zero-interest loans totalling $164,940.30 have been granted. As per the program design approved in Report PED23106, Better Homes Hamilton Pilot Program, the loans will be repaid through a Local Improvement Charge. The attached by-law (Appendix A to Report PED26078), which is required under Ontario Regulation 586/06 – Local Improvement Charges – Priority Lien Status, requires Council's approval to allow the loan amounts from the Better Homes Hamilton Pilot Program to be added as a special charge to the tax roll for repayment commencing in 2026. For each property included in the by-law (Schedule A of Appendix A to Report PED26078), the Treasurer, Deputy Treasurer (or delegated authority) will add the annual loan repayment to the respective tax roll as a special charge.

Appendix A to Report PED26078 currently reflects the next ten participating properties and fulfills the requirements of Ontario Regulation 586/06 – Local Improvement Charges – Priority Lien Status and City of Hamilton By-Law No. 23-216 (Appendix B to Report PED26078).

Staff have consulted with other Ontario municipalities administering similar residential retrofit programs under Ontario Regulation 586/06 – Local Improvement Charges – Priority Lien Status regarding the procedures for authorizing the imposition of special charges on the tax roll of participating properties.

- Staff have consulted with Legal Services on the draft by-law and with Taxation to confirm procedures to apply the loan repayments on the participants' property tax bills. On an annual basis, staff from Taxation will add the loans to the property tax rolls for repayment.

Alternatives

Approval of Appendix A to Report PED26078 is required under Ontario Regulation 586/06 – Local Improvement Charges – Priority Lien Status to add the loans as local improvement charges to the tax roll effective 2026. The by-law in Appendix A to Report PED26078 is the legal mechanism the City of Hamilton must use to impose the special charges on the participating properties and thereby collect repayment of the Better Homes Hamilton loans. Without approval, the City of Hamilton cannot impose the special charges on the participating properties and therefore cannot seek remittance of the loans disbursed.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

Approval of Appendix A to Report PED26078 is required for administration of the Better Homes Hamilton Pilot Program, which supports elements of two of Council's priority focus areas.

The Better Homes Hamilton program plays a role in furthering the Sustainable Economic and Ecological Development priority by "accelerating our response to climate change" by enabling Hamilton homeowners to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions in a more affordable manner.

The Better Homes Hamilton program also contributes to enhancing Responsiveness and Transparency through high quality customer service. This is being achieved through a number of means, including the Better Homes Hamilton program's online portal, which allows participants to access their full files online and easily correspond with the dedicated "Better Homes Hamilton Program Coach" for support via email, Microsoft Teams, by phone, or in person. The Better Homes Hamilton program also empowers Hamilton homeowners to problem solve and enables them to take climate action that they might not otherwise have been able to afford or been motivated to achieve.

Previous Reports Submitted

- A By-Law to Authorize the Imposition of a Special Charge under the Better Homes Hamilton Pilot Program in Accordance with Ontario Regulation 586/06 for properties in the City of Hamilton (PED26005)
- Better Homes Hamilton - Home Energy Retrofit Program (PED23106)

Consultation

Maria Di Santo, Manager, Taxation, Revenue Services, Corporate Services

Susan Nicholson, Deputy City Solicitor, Municipal Section, Legal and Risk Management Services, Corporate Services

Appendices and Schedules Attached

Appendix A: A By-Law to Authorize the Imposition of a Special Charge under the Better Homes Hamilton Pilot Program in Accordance with Ontario Regulation 586/06 – Batch 2

Schedule A to Appendix A

Appendix B: By-law No. 23-216: A By-Law to Authorize the Undertaking of Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Works on Private Residential Property as Local Improvements Under the Better Homes Hamilton Program

Prepared by:

Cathrin Winkelmann, Senior Project Manager, Planning and Economic Development, Office of Climate Change Initiatives

Submitted and Recommended by:

Lynda Lukasik, Director, Planning and Economic Development, Office of Climate Change Initiatives

CITY OF HAMILTON

BY-LAW NO. 26-XXX

A By-Law to Authorize the Imposition of a Special Charge under the Better Homes Hamilton Pilot Program in Accordance with Ontario Regulation 586/06 on the following properties in the City of Hamilton (Batch 2):

00375026800; 04031250670; 04028551020; 04028505440; 01006200340; 04028751130; 03023403550; 03020505790; 03021257020; 08108103867 (the “benefitting properties”).

File: PED26078

WHEREAS at its meeting of November 22, 2023, Council for the City of Hamilton adopted “Better Homes Hamilton” BY-LAW NO. 23-216, being a by-law to authorize the undertaking of climate change mitigation and adaptation works on private residential property as local improvements under the Better Homes Hamilton - Home Energy Retrofit Program, in accordance with section 36.1 of O. Reg. 586/06 - Local Improvement Charges - Priority Lien Status, ("O. Reg. 586/06");

AND WHEREAS the owner(s) of the benefitting properties and the City of Hamilton (the "City") have entered into a Property Owner Agreement (the "POA") pursuant to section 36.2 of O. Reg. 586/06 for the City to undertake work as a local improvement (the "Work") on the benefitting property and to raise the cost of the Work (the "Cost") by imposing a special charge on the benefitting properties;

AND WHEREAS the City Clerk has certified the POA pursuant to section 36.4(2) of O. Reg. 586/06;

AND WHEREAS the Work has been completed;

AND WHEREAS a local improvement roll was prepared in accordance with section 36.10 of O. Reg. 586/06, setting out the Cost of the Work, the proposed special charges to be imposed on the benefitting properties, when the special charges are to be paid, and the lifetime of the Work;

AND WHEREAS the City has given notice of the proposed local improvement roll to the owner(s) of the benefitting properties pursuant to subsection 36.11(1) of O. Reg. 586/06;

AND WHEREAS the City Treasurer has certified the proposed local improvement roll in accordance with subsection 36.11(2) of the O. Reg. 586/06;

AND WHEREAS section 36.14 of O. Reg. 586/06 provides that after the Treasurer has certified the local improvement roll, the City shall by by-law provide that the amount specially charged on the property set out in the roll shall be sufficient to raise the property’s share of the Cost by a number of equal annual payments and that a special charge shall be imposed in each year on the property equal to the amount of the payment payable in that year.

NOW THEREFORE the Council of the City of Hamilton enacts as follows:

1. The provisions of section 36.14 of O. Reg. 586/06 apply to the benefitting property as a result of the completion of the Work pursuant to the POA.

2. The amounts specially charged on the property as set out in the certified local improvement roll attached as Schedule "A" to this By-Law (the "Special Charge") is sufficient to raise the property's share of the Cost within the specified number of annual payments and shall be imposed on and collected annually by adding the annual amount payable as set out in Schedule "A" to this By-Law (the "Annual Payment") to the tax roll of the property.

3. The Annual Payments as set out in the certified local improvement roll attached as Schedule "A" do not extend beyond the lifetime of the Work.

4. The amount of each payment made in respect of the Special Charge shall be entered in the local improvement roll by the Treasurer.

5. This By-Law shall come into force and take effect on the date of its passing and shall be deemed repealed on the date on which the Treasurer certifies that the Special Charge has been paid in full.

PASSED this 22 day of April, 2026

Andrea Horwath
Mayor

Matthew Trennum
City Clerk

Schedule A

Docusign Envelope ID: 42703B9B-7709-4CC1-8325-FAAB0D2A8332

City of Hamilton – Better Homes Hamilton Program

Local Improvement Charges to Be Added to Property Taxes

BHH Number	Roll Number	
0000000069	00375026800	

Local Improvement Charge								
Cost of Work	Approved Funding Amount	Interest Charge	Program Administration Charge	Special Charge (Total Amount Owing)	Lifetime of the Work	Special Charge to be Paid by	Description	Annual Payment
$16335.28	$16335.28	0%	$0.00	$16335.28	20 years	Within 15 years from the first payment date	Better Homes Hamilton Program – Local Improvement Charge added to taxes. First Payment due on the 2026 Final Tax Bill	$1089.02

Certified as sufficient, in accordance with O.Reg.586/06

DocuSigned by:
Mike Zegarac
A350F30B0E474...

3/16/2026

City Treasurer

Mike Zegarac

Docusign Envelope ID: B6BE9969-219A-46C6-85A5-8128C045DA1E

City of Hamilton – Better Homes Hamilton Program

Local Improvement Charges to Be Added to Property Taxes

BHH Number	Roll Number	
0000000032	04031250670	

Local Improvement Charge								
Cost of Work	Approved Funding Amount	Interest Charge	Program Administration Charge	Special Charge (Total Amount Owing)	Lifetime of the Work	Special Charge to be Paid by	Description	Annual Payment
$10292.63	$10292.63	0%	$0.00	$10292.63	12 years	Within 10 years from the first payment date	Better Homes Hamilton Program – Local Improvement Charge added to taxes. First Payment due on the 2026 Final Tax Bill	$1029.26

Certified as sufficient, in accordance with O.Reg.586/06

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Mike Zegarac
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3/16/2026

City Treasurer

Mike Zegarac

Docusign Envelope ID: E0550764-1985-4DC9-8FC9-81129EC450A1

City of Hamilton – Better Homes Hamilton Program

Local Improvement Charges to Be Added to Property Taxes

BHH Number	Roll Number	
0000000030	04028551020	

Local Improvement Charge								
Cost of Work	Approved Funding Amount	Interest Charge	Program Administration Charge	Special Charge (Total Amount Owing)	Lifetime of the Work	Special Charge to be Paid by	Description	Annual Payment
$10452.50	$10452.50	0%	$0.00	$10452.50	47 years	Within 15 years from the first payment date	Better Homes Hamilton Program – Local Improvement Charge added to taxes. First Payment due on the 2026 Final Tax Bill	$696.83

Certified as sufficient, in accordance with O.Reg.586/06

DocuSigned by:
Mike Zegarac
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3/16/2026

City Treasurer (or delegated authority)

Mike Zegarac

Docusign Envelope ID: E5386281-0427-4670-9A65-BE1FD905691C

City of Hamilton – Better Homes Hamilton Program

Local Improvement Charges to Be Added to Property Taxes

BHH Number	Roll Number	
0000000075	04028505440	

Local Improvement Charge								
Cost of Work	Approved Funding Amount	Interest Charge	Program Administration Charge	Special Charge (Total Amount Owing)	Lifetime of the Work	Special Charge to be Paid by	Description	Annual Payment
$14577.00	$14577.00	0%	$0.00	$14577.00	20 years	Within 15 years from the first payment date	Better Homes Hamilton Program – Local Improvement Charge added to taxes. First Payment due on the 2026 Final Tax Bill	$971.80

Certified as sufficient, in accordance with O.Reg.586/06

DocuSigned by:
Mike Zegarac
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3/16/2026

City Treasurer

Mike Zegarac

Docusign Envelope ID: 305A23D8-21D5-4FC4-977E-76A23AB9411D

City of Hamilton – Better Homes Hamilton Program

Local Improvement Charges to Be Added to Property Taxes

BHH Number	Roll Number
0000000089	01006200340

Local Improvement Charge								
Cost of Work	**Approved Funding Amount**	**Interest Charge**	**Program Administration Charge**	**Special Charge (Total Amount Owing)**	**Lifetime of the Work**	**Special Charge to be Paid by**	**Description**	**Annual Payment**
$20000.00	$20000.00	0%	$0.00	$20000.00	20 years	Within 15 years from the first payment date	Better Homes Hamilton Program – Local Improvement Charge added to taxes. First Payment due on the 2026 Final Tax Bill	$1333.33

Certified as sufficient, in accordance with O.Reg.586/06

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Mike Zegarac
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3/16/2026

City Treasurer

Mike Zegarac

City of Hamilton – Better Homes Hamilton Program

Local Improvement Charges to Be Added to Property Taxes

BHH Number	Roll Number
0000000033	04028751130

Local Improvement Charge								
Cost of Work	**Approved Funding Amount**	**Interest Charge**	**Program Administration Charge**	**Special Charge (Total Amount Owing)**	**Lifetime of the Work**	**Special Charge to be Paid by**	**Description**	**Annual Payment**
$16495.50	$16495.50	0%	$0.00	$16495.50	20 years	Within 15 years from the first payment date	Better Homes Hamilton Program – Local Improvement Charge added to taxes. First Payment due on the 2026 Final Tax Bill	$1099.70

Certified as sufficient, in accordance with O.Reg.586/06

DocuSigned by:
Mike Zegarac
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3/16/2026

City Treasurer

Mike Zegarac

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City of Hamilton – Better Homes Hamilton Program

Local Improvement Charges to Be Added to Property Taxes

BHH Number	Roll Number
0000000067	03023403550

Local Improvement Charge								
Cost of Work	**Approved Funding Amount**	**Interest Charge**	**Program Administration Charge**	**Special Charge (Total Amount Owing)**	**Lifetime of the Work**	**Special Charge to be Paid by**	**Description**	**Annual Payment**
$19472.57	$19472.57	0%	$0.00	$19472.57	15 years	Within 15 years from the first payment date	Better Homes Hamilton Program – Local Improvement Charge added to taxes. First Payment due on the 2026 Final Tax Bill	$1298.17

Certified as sufficient, in accordance with O.Reg.586/06

DocuSigned by:
Mike Zegarac
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3/16/2026

City Treasurer

Mike Zegarac

Docusign Envelope ID: E07F6FC9-CD1E-4F66-9EE4-DC894A3C9D9E

City of Hamilton – Better Homes Hamilton Program

Local Improvement Charges to Be Added to Property Taxes

BHH Number	Roll Number
0000000049	03020505790

Local Improvement Charge								
Cost of Work	**Approved Funding Amount**	**Interest Charge**	**Program Administration Charge**	**Special Charge (Total Amount Owing)**	**Lifetime of the Work**	**Special Charge to be Paid by**	**Description**	**Annual Payment**
$19460.80	$19460.80	0%	$0.00	$19460.80	30 years	Within 15 years from the first payment date	Better Homes Hamilton Program – Local Improvement Charge added to taxes. First Payment due on the 2026 Final Tax Bill	$1297.39

Certified as sufficient, in accordance with O.Reg.586/06

DocuSigned by:
Mike Zegarac
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3/16/2026

City Treasurer

Mike Zegarac

Docusign Envelope ID: 5D6080F6-88E9-401E-96DB-EF9E098DCE7B

City of Hamilton – Better Homes Hamilton Program

Local Improvement Charges to Be Added to Property Taxes

BHH Number	Roll Number
0000000083	03021257020

Local Improvement Charge								
Cost of Work	Approved Funding Amount	Interest Charge	Program Administration Charge	Special Charge (Total Amount Owing)	Lifetime of the Work	Special Charge to be Paid by	Description	Annual Payment
$20000.00	$20000.00	0%	$0.00	$20000.00	15 years	Within 15 years from the first payment date	Better Homes Hamilton Program – Local Improvement Charge added to taxes. First Payment due on the 2026 Final Tax Bill	$1333.33

Certified as sufficient, in accordance with O.Reg.586/06

DocuSigned by:
Mike Zegarac
A350F30B0E4A40B...

3/16/2026

City Treasurer

Mike Zegarac

Docusign Envelope ID: E41E52B7-D592-4D7A-8487-F11CB6F4082B

City of Hamilton – Better Homes Hamilton Program

Local Improvement Charges to Be Added to Property Taxes

BHH Number	Roll Number
0000000093	08108103867

Local Improvement Charge								
Cost of Work	**Approved Funding Amount**	**Interest Charge**	**Program Administration Charge**	**Special Charge (Total Amount Owing)**	**Lifetime of the Work**	**Special Charge to be Paid by**	**Description**	**Annual Payment**
$18820.15	$17854.00	0%	$0.00	$17854.00	15 years	Within 10 years from the first payment date	Better Homes Hamilton Program – Local Improvement Charge added to taxes. First Payment due on the 2026 Final Tax Bill	$1785.40

Certified as sufficient, in accordance with O.Reg.586/06

DocuSigned by:
Mike Zegarac
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3/20/2026

City Treasurer

Authority: Item 2, General Issues Committee Report 23-015 (PED23106)
CM: May 10, 2023 Ward: City Wide
Written approval for this by-law was given by Mayoral Decision MDE-2023 10
dated November 22, 2023
Bill No. 216

CITY OF HAMILTON

BY-LAW NO. 23-216

A By-Law to Authorize the Undertaking of Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Works on Private Residential Property as Local Improvements Under the Better Homes Hamilton Program

WHEREAS Part III of Ontario Regulation 586/06, Local Improvement Charges - Priority Lien Status, enacted under the *Municipal Act, 2001,* S.O. 2001, c. 25 ("O. Reg. 586/06"), authorizes a municipality to pass a by-law to undertake work on private property as a local improvement for the purpose of raising all or any part of the cost of the work by imposing special charges on lots upon which all or some part of the local improvement is or will be located;

AND WHEREAS Section 36.5(2) of 0. Reg. 586/06 states that the by-law may authorize the undertaking of works which satisfy the requirements of a municipal program for which the municipality has given notice under Section 36.6(2)(b) of 0. Reg. 586/06;

AND WHEREAS at its meeting of May 10, 2023, City Council adopted the Better Homes Hamilton program.

NOW THEREFORE the Council of the City of Hamilton enacts as follows:

1. Council authorizes the undertaking of Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation Works on private residential property as local improvements under the Better Homes Hamilton Program, as set out in Schedule "A" to this by-law, for the purpose of raising all or any part of the cost of the work by imposing special charges on lots upon which all or some part of the local improvement is or will be located.

2. Schedule “A” is attached to and forms part of this by-law.

3. Council authorizes the City to enter into Property Owner Agreements as provided for in Schedule “A” hereto with such terms and conditions consistent with Schedule “A” hereon, such additional terms and conditions as required by the Ontario Regulation 586/06 and such additional terms and conditions required by the General Manager of Planning and Economic Development or their designate and the City Solicitor and

in a form acceptable to the City Solicitor and that the General Manager of Planning and Economic Development or their designate be authorized to execute the Property Owner Agreements and such ancillary documents as necessary to facilitate the program described in Schedule “A” hereto.

4. This by-law may be referred to as the “Better Homes Hamilton By-law”

5. This by-law comes in to force on the day of its passing.

PASSED this 22nd day of November, 2023.

A. Horwath Mayor	J. Pilon Acting City Clerk

Schedule "A"

Better Homes Hamilton Program

1.0. Overview

The Better Homes Hamilton Program (the “BHH Program”) is currently designed to extend municipal financing to participating homeowners for the installation of climate mitigation retrofit measures, including building envelope, mechanical systems and supporting energy efficiency retrofit infrastructure, as well as home energy assessments and permits, as applicable, and to secure payment by imposing a local improvement charge (**"LIC"**) on the property, as authorized by Ontario Regulation 586/06, Local Improvement Charges - Priority Lien Status, enacted under the *Municipal Act, 2001,* S.O. 2001, c. 25 (the **"Regulation"**). The BHH Program will begin as a pilot, offering a maximum of fifty (50) loans to be provided to homeowners during the pilot program. Loans will be a maximum of $20,000 each over a ten (10) to fifteen (15) year term with zero (0) percent interest over the term of the loan. The City of Hamilton (the **"City"**) will administer the program alone or in conjunction with a third-party Program Administrator to be selected at a later date.

1.1. Program Eligibility

Registered owners of eligible properties within the geographic boundaries of the City of Hamilton can participate in the BHH Program.

The following residential building types within the City of Hamilton are eligible for the BHH Program:

- Detached houses,
- Semi-detached houses, and
- Townhomes.

All registered owner(s) of the property must consent to participation in the BHH Program.

The property must have a property tax account with the City and the registered owner(s) are responsible for tax payments directly to the City. All property taxes and other payment obligations to the City must also be in good standing.

1.2. Geographic Scope

Any homeowner of an eligible building outlined in Section 1.1 in the City of Hamilton can participate in the BHH program. Marketing for the BHH program may be prioritized to those homes:

- That were built prior to 1990;

- That have above average utility heating fuel costs (natural gas, propane or oil), including in rural areas; and/or
- Are located within neighbourhoods that were identified as having high rates of energy poverty through the Canadian Urban Sustainability Practitioners (CUSP) Energy Poverty Mapping Tool.

The City may work with existing community initiatives or organizations interested in being aligned with the BHH program to achieve efficiencies in terms of program delivery (i.e. marketing and outreach support, education and training).

1.3. Stacking Home Energy Incentives

Homeowners who apply to the BHH program will be encouraged to consider existing incentive programs offered by Enbridge Gas Inc. and the Federal Government and other existing and future programs which may become available

To be eligible for the Enbridge Gas Inc. and Federal Government rebates (with some exceptions), homeowners are required to arrange a home energy assessment through the EnerGuide Rating System.

1.4. Optional Home Energy Assessment

The BHH Program does not require applicants to submit a home energy assessment; however, it is strongly encouraged so that participants can maximize government grants and incentives, as described in Section 1.3.

If participants decide to undertake a home energy assessment that provides a standard measure of a home's energy and greenhouse gas ("GHG") emissions performance, the participant shall provide to the City of Hamilton a copy of both the pre- and the post-retrofit energy assessment report that has been conducted and verified by a Registered Energy Advisory (the "REA"), or equivalent, as Registered by Natural Resources Canada ("NRCan").

1.5. Qualifying Retrofit Measures

Financing is designated for capital costs (not maintenance costs) with an expected useful life of ten (10) to twenty (20) years and for measures that are permanently affixed to a property. The average expected useful life of the retrofit measures implemented within a participating property shall not be less than the ten (10) to fifteen (15) year term of the loan extended to the homeowner.

The following are the current categories of eligible measures, which are subject to change:

- Optional Home Energy Assessments and Applicable Permits: Including pre- and post-retrofit energy assessments and building permits.
- Building Envelope: Including air-sealing/draft proofing, insulation (attic,

basement and walls).
- Mechanical Systems: Air Source Heat Pumps (ASHP), including cold-climate air source heat pumps (ccASHP), ductless mini-splits, and high efficiency gas furnaces as a part of hybrid ASHP systems, and supporting smart thermostat/controller.
- Supporting Infrastructure: Including breaker panel upgrades and ductwork only when required to support installation of ASHP.

Ineligible retrofits include equipment or products not permanently affixed to the property, previously installed in another home and/or are deemed general maintenance.

By recommending categories of retrofit improvements and associated measures, the City makes no guarantees of the materials, performance, cost-effectiveness or any warranty of the measures supported by the BHH Program.

1.6. Completing the Retrofit through Contractor Engagement

The City of Hamilton will provide LIC financing to homeowners for eligible measures covered by the BHH Program that have been:
- Recommended or identified through the pre-retrofit energy assessment completed by a REA, if one was completed;
- Verified by the City or the assigned Program Administrator; and
- Installed by contractors hired by the homeowner after verification and approval from the City or the assigned Program Administrator.

Homeowners must provide to the City all documentation, including all quotes and all invoices, in order to receive the initial and final disbursements respectively.

The City will not procure contractors to perform home improvements in connection with this program. The homeowner will use the funds disbursed by the City to pay contractors directly. Where contractors require an upfront deposit prior to completing the retrofit, up to 30% of the total LIC financing may be released by the City prior to the contractor starting the work only after the proposed retrofit and renovation quotes have been approved by the City or Program Administrator and after the Property Owner Agreement has been signed by both parties and deemed final and binding, as described in Step 6.A.

The City is not responsible for the work quality of any contractors hired in connection with the BHH Program and assumes no liability for the works undertaken. All retrofit improvements and renovations must adhere to all applicable permitting requirements, codes, laws and by-laws.

The homeowner is responsible for ensuring that hired contractors are licensed,

bonded and insured for the applicable work they will be undertaking. Any issues that may arise relating to the quality of workmanship or post-installation performance of retrofit measures must be dealt with between the homeowner and the contractor.

1.7. Better Homes Hamilton Program Coach

The BHH Program will include access to a Program Coach. The BHH Program Coach is not a REA but rather serves as a source of support to provide guidance to the homeowner throughout the BHH process, in order to improve overall satisfaction with program effectiveness. BHH applicants are solely responsible for the retrofit choices made, and the City does not take any responsibility for the advice provided to the applicant or any work potentially recommended by the BHH Program Coach.

1.8. BHH Program Application Process

The application process is set out below. City staff will periodically review this process to ensure effective program implementation and, where deemed appropriate, the City may make changes to this process, in its sole discretion.

Step 1: BHH Program Application

The property owner must apply online through the BHH website, which includes a self-directed pre-application screening checklist to determine eligibility for the BHH program. Program eligibility requirements include the following:

- Eligible building type
- Property address to confirm location is within the City of Hamilton;
- Property assessment roll number to confirm that all property tax payments are in good standing; and
- Signed attestation that all registered owner(s) consent to program participation.

If a homeowner has one or more outstanding mortgage(s) associated with the property, then the homeowner must inform via mail or email the mortgage lender(s) of its intention to participate in the BHH Program using the City's prescribed letter template form (copying the City). City must receive proof of delivery (e.g. copied on email to lender or received carbon copy of letter mailed to lender) as part of the applicant’s funding request package.

Once the homeowner’s application has been reviewed and accepted by the City, the City will provide the homeowner with a Notice to Proceed with obtaining an optional pre-retrofit energy assessment and energy efficiency retrofit quotes.

Step 2: Identifying Energy Retrofit Improvements

A. Home Energy Assessment Process (Optional)

If the homeowner decides to proceed with this option, the homeowner will complete the pre-retrofit home energy assessment in accordance with this Section and Section 1.4 - Home Energy Assessments and submit a copy of the REA's NRCan EnerGuide home assessment (Home Energy Assessment report with recommended retrofits) to the City.

The home energy assessment report must include:

- The current NRCan EnerGuide rating for the home, including the rated energy consumption in gigajoules per year (GJ/yr.) and GHG emissions in tonnes per year (GHG(T)/yr.);
- Recommended improvements that have been customized for the home based on existing conditions, which are projected to improve its NRCan EnerGuide rating, including a reduction in energy consumption and/or GHG emissions;
- EnerGuide Homeowner Information Sheet that summarizes the residential building's details, including envelope, mechanical systems, and heated floor area;
- Estimated useful life of the proposed improvement(s); and,
- Potential eligibility for utility existing rebates and incentives offered (e.g. Enbridge Gas, Hydro One, Alectra Utilities, and other applicable programs that may become available to Hamilton residents).

Applicants may wish to review the NRCan EnerGuide Renovation Upgrade Report and Homeowner Information Sheet with the BHH Program Coach provided by the City. This step may help homeowners choose which energy retrofit improvements to undertake based on estimated energy savings that may be realized after installing the recommended improvements, as well as the estimated useful life of the proposed improvements.

A. Homeowner-identified Energy Retrofit Improvements

If the homeowner chooses not to undertake an NRCan EnerGuide home energy efficiency assessment with a REA, the homeowner must identify and propose eligible retrofit measures to the City or Program Administrator. The City of Hamilton or Program Administrator must approve the eligible retrofit measures with a formal Notice to Proceed with Quotes, as described in Step 3.

Step 3: Obtaining Contractor Quotes

Upon approval of the application and after the City or the Program Administrator has issued the Notice to Proceed with Quotes, homeowners will then be responsible for obtaining contractor quotes. The homeowner must engage qualified and licensed, where applicable, contractors selected by the homeowner to implement any

mechanical systems and “supporting infrastructure” retrofit measures, as well as a REA, if applicable. Work and materials installed by homeowners will not be eligible for the loan.

Using the Contractor Quote Template provided to homeowners by the BHH Program Coach, homeowners should contact contractors to obtain estimates. The BHH Program Coach will be available to provide assistance to homeowners, if necessary. Homeowners who completed a pre-retrofit home energy assessment should provide the contractor the NRCan Energuide Homeowner Information Sheet.

Homeowners will be required to submit at least one (1) contractor quote; however, it is strongly encouraged that all homeowners obtain three (3) contractor quotes. All quotes submitted to the City must, as outlined in the prescribed Contractor Quote Template, at minimum include:

- Estimated cost of the retrofits and Specification Sheets, if applicable, for inclusion in the Funding Request Package
- Quotes must be itemized by costs for all labour, parts and equipment, relevant permit fees and energy assessment fees, if applicable, applicable taxes, and include estimated useful life of the work;
- Registered HST Number;
- Proof of Liability Insurance that covers all employees;
- WSIB Certificate of Compliance; and
- Any and all applicable licenses and/or qualification for the prescribed work to be undertaken (e.g. municipal Heating, Cooling, Air Conditioning and Ventilation license; Electrical Contractor License from ESA; Sheet Metal Mechanic License number; G2 Gas Ticket, etc.)

Step 4: Funding Request Form

Within three (3) months of receiving the Notice to Proceed with Quotes, the applicant must submit a completed Funding Request Package that includes:

- Proof of delivery of prescribed Mortgage Lender Notification Letter;
- All copies of the contractor quotes containing the items set out in Step 3 above, including the Contractor Quote Table;
- If, applicable, all documentation from the pre-retrofit home energy assessment; and,
- The amount of contractor prepayment (as indicated in Section 1.6. - Completing the Retrofit through Contractor Engagement) being requested from the City.

Following receipt of the Funding Request Package, the City or its Program Administrator, will:

- Confirm the eligibility of the works in accordance with the criteria set out in Section 1.5. - Qualifying Retrofit Measures;
- Review the work proposed in the Contractor Quote Table and verify the reasonableness of retrofit costs and labour costs by consulting manufacturer pricing and prevailing labour rates; and,
- Render a decision on the acceptability of the applicant's Funding Request Package.

Step 5: Property Owner Agreement (the "POA")

After the City of Hamilton or Program Administrator has confirmed acceptability of the Funding Request Package, the Program Administrator will prepare the Property Owner Agreement ("POA") for the homeowner(s) to review and sign, and the General Manager of Planning and Economic Development or his designate to sign.

Upon signing of the POA, the homeowner will commence with providing the City with (access to) utility usage and bills or other applicable fuel receipts for the time period commencing two calendar years prior to the date of signing of the POA and ending five (5) years thereafter, in order to assist staff calculating GHG emissions and energy savings.

Step 6: Completing Retrofit Measures and Funding Disbursement

A. Initial Funding Disbursement

Following execution by both parties and certification of the POA by the City Clerk as final and binding and verification that the property is free of construction liens and writs of execution, the City will provide the homeowner with the initial disbursement agreed upon and pursuant to the terms outlined in the POA. A maximum disbursement of 30% of the total amount approved by the City may be used by the homeowner to pay any upfront deposits required by the contractor.

Following the release of any upfront deposits, the homeowner shall begin work within three (3) months of receiving the funds from the City. Pursuant to the terms of the POA, the homeowner will be obligated to repay the initial disbursement to the City, should the homeowner not begin the retrofits within the time specified.

B. Project Completion Package

The agreed upon retrofits must be completed within six (months) upon signing the POA. The homeowner can request an extension, if required. The extension will be granted at the sole discretion by the City of Hamilton or Program Administrator.

Within fourteen (14) days upon completion of the agreed upon retrofits, the applicant must prepare and submit the City's prescribed Project Completion Package, which includes:

- Details of the actual eligible energy retrofit measures implemented and actual costs incurred;
- All copies of contractor invoices (and receipts) for the approved Work(s) completed; and,
- If, applicable, all documentation from the post-retrofit home energy assessment.

C. Final Funding Disbursement

As detailed in the POA, the City will provide the final disbursement after:

- The homeowner has provided the City with (access to) utility usage and bills or other applicable fuel receipts for the time period commencing two calendar years prior to the date of signing of the POA.
- If applicable, the homeowner has provided the City with the post-retrofit home energy assessment documentation from the REA; and,
- The homeowner has submitted the Project Completion Package to the City's satisfaction following completion of the Work, for determination by the City, in accordance with the POA, of any Final Disbursement for which the Property qualifies.

Step 7: Local Improvement Charge Repayment

Following the City Treasurer's, Deputy Treasurer (or delegated authority) periodic certification of the local improvement roll (which occurs after the improvements on a given set of properties are complete and the final amounts of funding are confirmed), a by-law will be presented to City Council pursuant to Section 36.14 of O.Reg. 586/06 that imposes the special charges on the participating properties.

For each property included in the by-law, the Treasurer, Deputy Treasurer (or delegated authority) will then add to the City of Hamilton’s tax account for that property each year that portion of the imposed special charge that is due in that year. These collective steps will provide priority lien status for the annual amount that the Treasurer, Deputy Treasurer (or delegated authority) adds to the tax account and will ensure that any subsequent property, who was not a party to the POA, is bound to pay that amount.

At any time, a homeowner can make a one-time payment of the total outstanding commuted value of the LIC charge. Failure to make payments is treated with the same remedy as uncollected property taxes, which may include penalties and interest charges. Unpaid LIC will be subject to the City’s tax collection policy.

1.9. Local Improvement Charge Disclosure

As stated in O.Reg 518/06, the special charge imposed on the homeowner's property constitutes a special lien that is binding on all future owners, even though future owners are not parties to the original POA. In addition to the notice that the City of Hamilton will be providing in accordance with the provisions of O.Reg. 586/06, the POA will require an assignment agreement when a property with an LIC loan is transferred. The City of Hamilton may also update the Tax Certificate to include the amount payable in the current year and outstanding amounts owing. The City maintains the option to post information on their website to communicate the special charge by-law.

1.10. Quality Control

As a means of additional oversight to confirm that the funded improvements have been completed as approved, the POA will indicate that the City reserves the right to have a City official or third-party contractor enter the property to inspect the completion of the work for up to five (5) years following completion. The homeowner is responsible for keeping original copies of contractor invoices and also photos of installed measures (particularly for measures that are difficult to inspect, such as insulation), and shall disclose this information to the City upon request.

1.11. Measurement and Verification

Pursuant to the POA, the homeowner must agree to provide the City with access to the property's utility usage data, or other fuel purchases as applicable, in order to monitor results and evaluate the program's effectiveness for a period of up to five (5) years after completion of the retrofit. The homeowner must also agree to participate in surveys and other follow-up activities to help the City evaluate the effectiveness and improve the program process and outcomes.

LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT SUB-COMMITTEE
MINUTES LRTC 26-001
1:30 p.m.
March 31, 2026
Council Chambers (Hybrid), City Hall, 2nd Floor
71 Main Street West, Hamilton, Ontario

Present:	Councillors N. Nann (Chair), C. Kroetsch (Vice Chair), C. Cassar, M. Francis (Virtual) and T. Hwang
Absent with Regrets:	Mayor A. Horwath - City Business Councillor M. Wilson - Personal

1. CALL TO ORDER

Committee Chair Nann called the meeting to order at 1:30 p.m.

2. CEREMONIAL ACTIVITIES

There were no Ceremonial Activities.

3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

(Hwang/Kroetsch)
That the agenda for the March 31, 2026, Light Rail Transit Sub-Committee be approved, as presented.

CARRIED

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

5. ADOPTION OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

5.1 December 12, 2025

(Cassar/Hwang)
That the Minutes of the December 12, 2025 meeting of the Light Rail Transit Sub-Committee be adopted, as presented.

CARRIED

Refer to the April 15, 2026, General Issues Committee Minutes for the disposition of these matters.

7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

7.1 PED26069
Change Tracking Program for the Hamilton Light Rail Transit (City Wide)

Farhad Shahla, Manager - LRT Technical Services and Approvals Coordination, addressed Committee respecting Report PED 26069, Change Tracking Program for the Hamilton Light Rail Transit (City Wide), with the aid of a PowerPoint presentation.

(i) **(Cassar/Hwang)**
That Report PED26069, dated March 31, 2026, respecting Change Tracking Program for the Hamilton Light Rail Transit (City Wide), and the accompanying presentation, be received.

(ii) The following friendly amendment was accepted by the mover and seconder of the Motion:

That the Motion be ***amended*** to read as follows:

(a) That Report PED26069, dated March 31, 2026, respecting Change Tracking Program for the Hamilton Light Rail Transit (City Wide), and the accompanying presentation, be received***, and;***

(b) That staff be directed to change the name of the Change Tracking Program for the Hamilton LRT to Social, Environmental and Economic Indicators; and

(c) That staff be directed to integrate the following categories:

(i) Air quality under Environmental;
(ii) Type of businesses as well as number of businesses open and number of businesses closed under Economic;
(iii) Inequality and poverty measure and eviction data;
(iv) Rental unit data; and
(v) Equity/racialization indicators of population for residents and business owners.

Result: **MOTION, *as Amended*, CARRIED by a vote of 5 to 0, as follows**:

Absent - Mayor Andrea Horwath
Absent - Ward 1 Councillor Maureen Wilson

Refer to the April 15, 2026, General Issues Committee Minutes for the disposition of these matters.

Yes - Ward 2 Councillor Cameron Kroetsch
Yes - Ward 3 Councillor Nrinder Nann
Yes - Ward 4 Councillor Tammy Hwang
Yes - Ward 5 Councillor Matt Francis
Yes - Ward 12 Councillor Craig Cassar

8. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

8.1 Amendments to the Outstanding Business List:

(Kroetsch/Hwang)
That the following Items be removed from the Outstanding Business List:

(a) Strategic Land Acquisition Plan Along the Hamilton LRT Corridor (Item 8.1(a)(a))
Added: April 6, 2022
Addressed: Report PED23142, General Issues Committee Report 23-022, Item 12 and Report PED23142(a), Light Rail Transit Sub-Committee Report 23-005, Item 15.2

(b) Small Business Supports During Light Rail Transit Major Construction (Item 8.1((a)(b)
Added: May 23, 2024
Addressed: Report PED24182, Light Rail Transit Sub-Committee Report 24-004, Item 2

(c) Establishing a Baseline of Measures respecting Getting Hamilton's Light Rail Transit on the Right Track a (Item 8.1(a)(c))
Added: September 20, 2024
Addressed: Report PED24207, Light Rail Transit Sub-Committee Report 24-004, Item 1

(d) Terms of Reference for a Change Tracking Framework for the Hamilton Light Rail Transit (PED24207) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item) (Item 8.1(a)(d))
Added: November 15, 2024
Addressed: Report PED24207, Light Rail Transit Sub-Committee Report 24-004, Item 1

Result: **MOTION, CARRIED by a vote of 5 to 0, as follows**:

Absent - Mayor Andrea Horwath
Absent - Ward 1 Councillor Maureen Wilson
Yes - Ward 2 Councillor Cameron Kroetsch
Yes - Ward 3 Councillor Nrinder Nann
Yes - Ward 4 Councillor Tammy Hwang

Refer to the April 15, 2026, General Issues Committee Minutes for the disposition of these matters.

Yes - Ward 5 Councillor Matt Francis
Yes - Ward 12 Councillor Craig Cassar

9. MOTIONS

There were no Motions.

10. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

There were no Notice of Motions.

11. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Light Rail Transit Sub-Committee was adjourned at 2:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carrie McIntosh
Legislative Coordinator
Office of the City Clerk

Councillor Nrinder Nann
Chair, Light Rail Transit Sub-Committee

Refer to the April 15, 2026, General Issues Committee Minutes for the disposition of these matters.

City of Hamilton
Report for Consideration

To:	Chair and Members General Issues Committee
Date:	April 15, 2026
Report No:	HSC26020
Subject/Title:	Housing Focused Community Liaison Group
Ward(s) Affected:	(City Wide)

Recommendations

a) That the Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee **BE DISSOLVED** and;

b) That the Housing Services Division and the Housing Secretariat **BE DIRECTED** to continue community engagement through existing City-led community tables.

Key Facts

- At the February 2025 Council meeting, staff were directed to report back to the General Issues Committee on the further development of a community liaison group to replace the Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee, expanding their mandate to work to address the needs of residents within the community for whom barriers exist to accessing safe, suitable, and affordable housing, including the supports needed to enable citizens to obtain and retain their homes.
- The Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee was established in 2015 through report CES15053 with a mandate to support the implementation of the City of Hamilton's 10-year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan.
- Since the establishment of the Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee, the following additional groups have been created and remain active:
    - The Housing and Homelessness Action Plan Planning Group, established in 2013 with updated Terms of Reference in 2018.
    - The Community Partnership Action Table (CPAT), established by the Housing Secretariat.
    - A new community research table as part of the Tenant Support Program, as approved in report HSC23023(b), established by the Housing Services Division.

Financial Considerations

In 2024, the approved budget(s) assigned to the Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee was transferred to the Housing Secretariat Division to support Community Partnership Action Table.

There are no further financial considerations associated with this Report and its recommendations.

Background

In February 2025, the Volunteer Advisory Committee Review (report CM23025(b)) directed Housing Secretariat staff, in partnership with Housing Services Division staff, to report back to the General Issues Committee on the development of a community liaison group to replace the Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee. This expanded the group's mandate to work to address the needs of residents within the community for whom barriers exist to accessing safe, suitable, and affordable housing, including the supports needed to enable citizens to obtain and retain their homes; and that the 2024 approved budget currently assigned to the Housing and Homelessness Committee be transferred to the Housing Secretariat Division to support this working group.

The Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee was established through Report CES15053 in November 2015. The full mandate of the group was to communicate and work to address the needs of citizens within the community for whom barriers exist to accessing safe, suitable, and affordable housing, including the supports needed to enable citizens to obtain and retain their homes, and; support the City of Hamilton's 10-year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan by providing information, advice, and recommendations to the Emergency & Community Services Committee regarding the Action Plan's successful and implementation.

Since establishing the Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee, the City of Hamilton has also renewed and updated the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan Planning Group Terms of Reference, created the Community Partnership Action Table, and created the Community Research Table within the Tenant Support Program.

The Housing and Homelessness Action Plan Planning Group has two core functions:

1. Working with the City of Hamilton Housing Services Divisions to guide the implementation and evaluation of the 10-year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan as written by the Planning Group and endorsed by Hamilton City Council.
2. Fulfil the required role of Community Advisory Board (CAB) for engagement and consultation as mandated by Provincial and Federal funding agreements.

The Community Partnership Action Table was established in 2024 as part of the Housing Sustainability and Investment Roadmap to seek input from community partners and individuals with life experience to identify housing needs and priorities.

On August 17, 2023, through the Hamilton Tenant Support Program, (Report HSC23023(b)), Council approved the creation of the Community Research Table with the direction to provide a vehicle for communication between the City of Hamilton, tenant advocacy organizations, tenant support service providers, and tenant support-related stakeholders. This table will be co-led by Housing Services Division staff and community partners and will allow the City of Hamilton and community to develop proposals for the creation of greater coordination and integration of tenant supports. This table will also plan and implement direct tenant engagement activities to ensure tenants can have input on future program changes.

Analysis

The Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee was established with the mandate to provide support and input on the implementation of the City's 10-year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan and provide a vehicle for communication to the City for persons with lived experience. During the time which the Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee was active the agendas were created by the committee with support from the staff liaison. The meetings regularly included presentations about current and planned investments in the affordable housing and homelessness serving sectors, and allowed for committee feedback on implementation plans of the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan.

The membership of the Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee included a diverse group of individuals and experiences. Members had lived and living experience, development experience, work experience in the sectors, and came from diverse backgrounds. Since the establishment of the Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee a number of additional tables have been created or enhanced through Council and staff direction. The whole of Hamilton approach to housing now includes three key community engagement tables (the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan Planning Group, Community Partnership Action Table, Community Research Table) that all include mandates to have individuals with lived experience and also include a broad cross section of key stakeholders. Feedback and engagement with these three groups is then partnered with the City's internal policy development, and a framework for engagement with individuals with lived experience.

These existing tables all have integrated membership that includes individuals with lived experience as part of their terms of reference. The Housing and Homelessness Action Plan Planning Group takes a high-level systems approach to the housing and homelessness system, whereas the Community Partnership Action Table and Community Research Table are working at a more tangible level of support of individuals who are currently impacted by the affordable and supportive housing system. These complimentary focuses support community feedback about how best to structure the engagement around housing and homelessness issues from the previous members of the Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee who provided feedback on the Community Liaison Group report.

It is staff's recommendation that a new Community Liaison Group related to housing at the City of Hamilton would be a duplication of effort and that the City should allow

existing groups and engagement practices to continue to operate with their current mandates. Through the existing groups and their inputs City Council would be informed of the feedback received through ongoing City reports that are informed by these tables. Through ongoing community engagement staff will be sure to include feedback in future reports. In keeping with the direction to report back on the formation of a community liaison group, these tables and alternative groups are already fulfilling that requirement by connecting the community with staff to provide feedback on initiatives, projects and plans. Staff can include these groups as part of the City's forthcoming Civic Engagement webpage with staff contact information and share information about the template community report as appropriate.

The existing tables and their mandates may fulfil the core requirements, mandate and goals of the Community Liaison Groups. Staff believe that creating a new housing focused Community Liaison Group would be a duplication of resources already functioning in the community.

Past members of the Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee were invited to share feedback on creating a Community Liaison Group or approaching engagement through the already existing tables. The feedback received from the past members supported the focus of engagement through existing tables with a focus on actionable support for those currently in rental housing or experiencing homelessness. The importance of including a variety of community voices into the existing engagement tables was highlighted by past members of the committee. In the consultation the group stressed the importance of having diverse voices and a balanced blend of committee members who work directly in housing or with those who are experiencing homelessness around the table with individuals with lived or living experience.

Alternatives

Create a Community Liaison Group, inviting members of these pre-existing groups to consult with and engage directly with the City on this development, including review the Community Partnership Action Table or Community Research Table to become the official Community Liaison Group for housing related matters and amend their existing Terms of Reference if required.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

1. Safe & Thriving Neighbourhoods
   1.1. Increase the supply of affordable and supportive housing and reduce chronic homelessness
   The engagement being done by Housing Services Division and the Housing Secretariat are supporting this outcome. Through robust community dialogue these Divisions are working to implement their strategic plans to increase the supply of affordable and supportive housing and reduce chronic homelessness.
2. Responsiveness & Transparency
   2.1. Prioritize customer service and proactive communication

This approach will ensure that community members who are currently investing their time and talents to the existing committees time is honoured and they continue to have input on the strategic direction and implementation of whole of Hamilton housing strategies.

2.2. Get more people involved in decision making and problem solving

The acknowledgement of the existing engagement tables that are operating ensures that key stakeholders and voices in the community have opportunities to engage with staff on work being done, but also work to avoid burn out or volunteers and stakeholders.

Previous Reports Submitted

Hamilton Tenant Support Program (HSC23023(b)) August 17, 2023, Emergency & Community Services Committee

Volunteer Advisory Committee Review (CM23025(b)) February 26, 2025, General Issues Committee

Consultation

- City Clerk
- Communications and Engagement Division, City Manager's Office
- Housing Secretariat Division
- Members of the previous term of the Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee were invited to engage about this report in February 2026. A focus group was held Feb 10, 2026, with interested members of this former committee.

Appendices and Schedules Attached

N/A

Prepared by:	James O'Brien, Manager Business Operations Healthy and Safe Communities, Housing Services Division
Submitted and recommended by:	Michelle Baird, Director Housing Services Healthy and Safe Communities, Housing Services Division

City of Hamilton

Report for Consideration

To:	Chair and Members General Issues Committee
Date:	April 15, 2026
Report No:	PED26082
Subject/Title:	Biodiversity Action Plan Agreement and Progress
Ward(s) Affected:	City Wide

Recommendations

a) That the General Managers of Planning and Economic Development and Public Works, or the designate of either General Manager, **BE AUTHORIZED** and directed to:

i. Execute, on behalf of the City of Hamilton, the Biodiversity Action Plan Implementation Agreement (the "**BAP Implementation Agreement**") in substantially the form attached as Appendix A to this Report, which includes the Terms of Reference in substantially the form attached as Schedule "A" to the BAP Implementation Agreement;

ii. Negotiate, enter into, and execute, on behalf of the City of Hamilton, all agreements, amendments, extensions, renewals, applications, letters, City led or Collaborating Agency led grant applications, or any other documents ancillary to or respecting the BAP Implementation Agreement, the Biodiversity Action Plan ("**BAP**"), or any BAP related actions, including

but not limited to permissions to authorize BAP related work on City owned lands, letters of support, and grant applications and agreements, provided same are on terms satisfactory to the General Managers of Planning and Economic Development and Public Works and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor;

iii. Appoint and provide direction to the City of Hamilton's member for the Management Committee and the Steering Committee as required by the BAP Implementation Agreement.

Key Facts

- This report stems from staff's undertaking in PED21065(d)/PW24040 to bring the BAP Implementation Agreement forward for ratification.
- Hamilton's BAP was adopted by Council on June 26, 2024, and contains strategic actions to be undertaken by the City together with Collaborating Agencies, being Bay Area Restoration Council, Green Venture, Hamilton Conservation Authority, Hamilton Naturalists' Club and McMaster University (collectively referred to as the "**Collaborating Agencies**") over five years to protect, restore, connect, and explore biodiversity in Hamilton.
- The BAP is a multi-agency plan created in collaboration with the BAP Working Group, which includes City of Hamilton staff.
- Out of a total of 68 actions, the City of Hamilton is the lead on 32 actions and supports 24 actions. The remaining actions are led by Collaborating Agencies.
- Since June 2024, the City has been collaborating with Biodiversity Action Plan Collaborating Agencies to protect and enhance natural areas and greenspaces across the city, strengthen community awareness and engagement in biodiversity, align City-wide efforts to support biodiversity, restore biodiversity across public and private lands, and develop a transparent, inclusive, and effective governance and reporting structure. An

annual report on overall progress between July 2024 to December 2025 is being prepared for presentation to Council in the Summer 2026.

- Execution of the BAP Implementation Agreement, in substantially the form attached as Appendix A to Report PED26082, will formalize BAP governance to ensure coordinated actions and ongoing communication between the City and the Collaborating Agencies and the development of long-term funding strategies to implement the BAP for the protection and enhancement of the natural environment to improve biodiversity (Actions 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 of the BAP).

Financial Considerations

There are no financial implications associated with the execution of the BAP Implementation Agreement attached as Appendix A to this Report.

Through Report PED21065(d)/PW24040, Council approved one new FTE position in the Planning and Economic Development Department (**"PED"**) as well as FTE positions in Public Works (**"PW"**) Department through the 2025 budget process. The PED position was hired in October 2025 and is supporting the completion of Planning Division led Biodiversity Action Plan actions and, for an 18-month interim period, is leading the overall coordination of the BAP. The PW FTE positions are supporting the completion of Environmental Services and Landscape Architectural Services led Biodiversity Action Plan actions. As of October 2025, the PED position and two PW positions have been filled and are working to complete BAP actions associated with environmental stewardship, natural areas management plan development and others.

In October 2025, an FTE position in the Planning and Economic Development was filled to support completion of Planning Division led Biodiversity Action Plan actions and, for an 18-month interim period, lead the overall coordination of the BAP. Two Public Works FTE positions are supporting the completion of Environmental Services and Landscape Architectural Services led Biodiversity Action Plan actions.

Background

The BAP was adopted by Council on June 26, 2024. Developed by the City, Collaborating Agencies, supporting agencies and the community, the BAP contains strategic actions that protect, restore, connect, and explore biodiversity across the City of Hamilton. A complete chronology of significant dates associated with the Biodiversity Action Plan development was provided in Report PED21065(c) and Report PED21065(d)/PW24040. A summary of the community consultation led by the Biodiversity Action Plan Working Group during the summer and fall of 2023 is also provided in Report PED21065(d)/PW24040.

Of the 68 actions in the BAP, the City is the lead for 32 actions and supporting as a Collaborating Agency for 24 actions. Of the City actions, PED is leading 12 actions, and PW is leading 19 actions. One action is led by the Finance and Corporate Services Department. A report respecting the progress made on City of Hamilton led actions in Year One of the BAP (July 2024 to June 2025) was provided to the General Issues Committee on July 9, 2025. The remaining actions are led by Collaborating Agencies.

Annual reporting on the progress of the City of Hamilton actions, as well as any other related actions, was a recommendation of Report PED21065(d)/PW24040. In addition to the Collaborating Agency action tracking form, a community portal is being developed to capture progress led by community members and stakeholders. An annual report on Collaborating Agency and community led progress between June 2024 to December 2025 is being prepared for Summer 2026.

Analysis

Implementation Agreement and Terms of Reference

City staff worked with the Collaborating Agencies to develop the BAP Implementation Agreement and Terms of Reference attached as Appendix A to this Report, which outlines commitments to:

1) Delivering BAP actions
    a. each agency signing the agreement (referred to individually a **"Party"** and collectively the "**Parties** ") is identified as a lead for one or more BAP actions. The lead Party is responsible for implementing the action, identifying opportunities for collaboration with other Parties and stakeholders, and reporting on progress to the BAP Coordinator.
2) A framework for joint decision-making
    a. The framework consists of two committees:
        i. A Management Committee made up of a management level staff person from each Party that will be responsible for the overall leadership of the BAP (including matters with legal and financial implications), and
        ii. A Steering Committee made up of a staff level representative from each Party and additional representatives from the local community. This Committee is responsible for implementing BAP actions.
3) BAP related fundraising, communications, and outreach
    a. It is the responsibility of the BAP Steering Committee, which is established through the Terms of Reference, to determine the long-term governance, financial, and administrative support to implement the BAP.

Information respecting the development of the BAP governance structure was provided in Report PED21065(c) and Report PED21065(d)/PW24040. A summary of the community consultation led by the Biodiversity Action Plan Working Group during the summer and fall of 2023 is also provided in Report PED21065(d)/PW24040. The BAP Implementation Agreement is intended to formalize a decision-making process that will enable the development of a long-term governance model, fundraising strategy, and administrative capacity for the BAP.

Alternatives

Should the General Manager, Planning and Economic Development, the General Manager, Public Works, or their designate, not be authorized delegated authority, BAP implementation and governance would become more time consuming and potentially disrupt project delivery**.** Staff would need to obtain Council approval for each request related to agreements, amendments, extensions, renewals, applications, letters, or grant applications with Collaborating Agencies.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

1. Sustainable Economic & Ecological Development
    - 1.3 Accelerate our response to climate change
    - 1.4 Protect green spaces and waterways
3. Responsiveness & Transparency
    - 3.1 Prioritize customer service and proactive communication
    - 3.2 Get more people involved in decision making and problem solving

Previous Reports Submitted

PED25163 – Hamilton's Biodiversity Action Plan 2025 Annual Update

PED21065(d)/ PW24040 – Hamilton's Biodiversity Action Plan

PED21065 – Feasibility Report for a Biodiversity Action Plan

PED21065(a) – Biodiversity Action Plan – Execution of Agreement with the Hamilton Naturalists' Club

PED21065(b) – Biodiversity Action Plan – Six-Month Update

PED21065(c) – Draft Biodiversity Action Plan for Consultation

Consultation

Stacey Applebee, Solicitor, Legal and Risk Management Services, Finance and Corporate Services

Appendices and Schedules Attached

Appendix A: BAP Implementation Agreement and Terms of Reference

Prepared by:

Johnathan Vandriel, Senior Project Manager - Parks Operations, Public Works Department, Environmental Services Division

Tomasz Wiercioch, Senior Program Coordinator - Biodiversity Action Plan, Planning and Economic Development Department, Planning Division

Submitted and Recommended by:

Anita Fabac, Acting Director of Planning and Chief Planner, Planning and Economic Development Department, Planning Division

Cynthia Graham, Director, Public Works Department, Environmental Services Division

Biodiversity Action Plan Implementation Agreement (the **"Agreement")**

effective the _____day of _____, 2026 (the "**Effective Date**").

BETWEEN:

BAY AREA RESTORATION COUNCIL OF HAMILTON AND HALTON INC. ("BARC")

and

CITY OF HAMILTON (the "City")

and

HAMILTON-WENTWORTH GREEN VENTURE O/A GREEN VENTURE ("Green Venture")

and

HAMILTON REGION CONSERVATION AUTHORITY ("HCA")

and

HAMILTON NATURALISTS' CLUB ("HNC")

and

MCMASTER UNIVERSITY ("McMaster")

(hereafter "the Parties" or singularly, "Party")

1. RECITALS

Whereas:

(1) The Biodiversity Action Plan (the "**BAP**") is a multi-agency initiative that will guide strategic actions related to biodiversity improvement across the city of Hamilton. It is intended to outline actions by lead organizations that can be undertaken in the next five years to protect, restore, connect, and explore biodiversity in Hamilton.

(2) The Parties intend to define their respective and collaborative responsibilities with respect to BAP implementation.

(3) The Parties to this Agreement have committed to be the leads for the implementation of the BAP actions. Additional community organizations will be involved in BAP implementation as supporting advisors and are not required to be signatories to this Agreement.

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(4) Now therefore, in consideration of the payments, covenants, terms, warranties, conditions and provisos contained in this Agreement, the receipt and sufficiency of which is hereby acknowledged, the Parties agree as follows:

2. TERM

(1) This Agreement will be in effect until June 18, 2029 , unless terminated in accordance with the Agreement.

(2) This Agreement may be renewed for a defined term with the written agreement of the Parties. The Parties agree to commence discussions respecting a renewal of this Agreement not less than six (6) months prior to expiry of the Term.

3. BAP RESPONSBILITIES

(1) Each Party agrees to:

a) implement all Actions identified in the 2024-2029 BAP for which they are the lead;

b) make best efforts to support and secure a BAP Coordinator position;

c) develop a community communication and engagement strategy;

d) make a strong commitment to collaborative initiatives including fundraising, stakeholder engagement, communications and outreach, administration and reporting; and

e) conduct annual public reporting on the implementation of the BAP, and the status of actions under the BAP with an emphasis on the impact of achievements.

4. CONTRIBUTIONS

(1) Each Party shall provide the following during the Term of this Agreement:

a) 1 plus alternate management level representative to represent the Party on the BAP Management Committee (the "**Management Committee**");

b) 1 plus alternate staff level representative to represent the Party on the BAP Steering Committee (the "**Steering Committee**");

c) Communications and publicity respecting the BAP as agreed upon by the Parties in accordance with the approved communication materials;

d) In-kind project management advice to other Parties to this Agreement;

e) Where Parties have volunteer resources to draw from as well as volunteer management capacity, volunteers to help undertake some BAP activities.

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(2) In addition to the above noted Contributions,

a) the City shall provide:

i. one staff person who will perform the BAP Coordinator role for a period of no longer than 18 months from the date of a new position being filled in Planning and Economic Development Department, being October 6, 2025. The Parties agree to review how the BAP Coordinator position is to be funded and housed effective April 6, 2027. Amendments to this Agreement respecting the BAP Coordinator position shall be made in accordance with section 12(1)(b) of this Agreement.

5. FRAMEWORK FOR JOINT DECISION-MAKING

(1) The BAP will be implemented under the direction of the two committees as specified below:

a) **Management Committee** – made up of 1 senior/management level representative from each Party to provide overall leadership for BAP implementation. It has authority for decisions concerning BAP governance and strategic planning and is responsible for providing guidance on matters deemed by the Steering Committee to have legal and significant financial implications and any other matters identified by the Management Committee at its discretion.

b) **Steering Committee** – made up of 1 staff level representative from each Party to support the BAP coordinator and Management Committee in implementing BAP actions. It has authority for decisions concerning collaborative and respective agency led projects and initiatives that support BAP actions, except for matters which may have or are believed to have significant legal and financial implications, in which case they will be referred to the Management Committee. Additional representatives from other local community biodiversity champions, academics and grassroots organizations may attend Steering Committee meetings but will not have voting rights.

(2) The Terms of Reference for the Committees, which are attached as Schedule “A” hereto form part of this Agreement. The Terms of Reference may be revised by the Management Committee from time to time.

6. CONFLICT

(1) In the event of a conflict between the provisions of this Agreement and the Schedules attached hereto, the provisions of this Agreement will prevail and be given effect.

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7. TERMINATION

(1) Any Party may terminate its involvement in the Agreement upon 90 days notice submitted in writing to the Management Committee. Any Party that becomes insolvent and/or ceases operations will no longer be a Party to this Agreement, with immediate effect.

(2) This Agreement will be terminated upon written request of at least two thirds of the Parties. Unless otherwise specified, the termination will take effect 90 days from the date of the request.

(3) The termination of this Agreement will not affect any other agreements or obligations entered into by any of the Parties which are separate and apart from the subject matter of this Agreement or are meant to survive the termination of this Agreement.

8. PRIVACY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

(1) The Parties acknowledge that during the term of this Agreement, each may have access to confidential information, including but not limited to systems, services or planned services, suppliers, data, financial information, processes, methods, knowledge, ideas, marketing promotions, current or planned activities, research, development, and other information relating to the other Parties and/or third parties ("**Confidential Information**"). Confidential Information disclosed by any of the Parties to any other Party, if in written form, shall be marked or identified as confidential at the time of disclosure. If the Confidential Information is in oral or visual form, it shall be identified as confidential at the time of disclosure and shall be subsequently designated as such by way of a written memorandum sent to the recipient of the Confidential Information within 30 days following the disclosure. Confidential Information does not include information that, (i) is or becomes generally known to the public through no act or omission of any Party; (ii) is disclosed to a Party on a non-confidential basis by a third party who has a lawful right to make such disclosure; or (iii) is required to be disclosed by law or court order, provided that the disclosing Party gives prompt notice to the other Parties of such requirement (to the extent legally permissible) and cooperates with any efforts to contest or limit the scope of the required disclosure.

(2) Each Party receiving Confidential Information shall not disclose the Confidential Information to any third party or use the Confidential Information for any purpose other than for fulfilling its obligations under this Agreement. Each Party shall use at least the same standard of care in protecting the Confidential Information of other Parties as it uses in protecting its own information of a similar nature but, in any event, no less than a reasonable standard of care. The receiving Party may disclose the Confidential Information only to its employees, directors, officers, agents,

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students and consultants who have a need to know the Confidential Information for the purpose of fulfilling the Party's obligations under this Agreement, and who are bound by substantially the same obligations as the Party with respect to the Confidential Information. Upon termination of this Agreement, each Party that is in possession of Confidential Information received from another Party shall forthwith return to the disclosing Party or destroy the Confidential Information as directed by the disclosing Party, except where it is required by law to retain the Confidential Information.

(3) Notwithstanding the foregoing or any other provision of this Agreement, the Parties acknowledge that some Parties are subject to privacy legislation, including the *Municipal Freedom of* Information *and Protection of Privacy Act* (Ontario), and accordingly, any information which is collected by those Parties is subject to the rights and safeguards provided for in the privacy legislation.

(4) Notwithstanding the non-commercial context of this Agreement, those Parties which are not subject to privacy legislation agree to comply with the PIPEDA Fair Information Principles attached hereto as Schedule "B" (the "**Privacy Principles**") with respect to its use of Personal Information (**"PI**") gathered through this Agreement. For greater certainty these principles should not be interpreted to limit in any way the ability of such Parties to use PI as permitted or required by law.

9. INSURANCE AND INDEMNITY

(1) Throughout the term of the Agreement (including any renewal thereof), each Party shall obtain and maintain at its own expense, including the cost of any applicable deductible, the following policies of insurance:

a) Commercial General Liability Insurance, written on IBC Form 2100 or its equivalent, including but not limited to bodily injury and personal injury liability, property damage, products liability, completed operations liability, owners & contractors protective liability, blanket contractual liability, premises liability, broad form property damage, employer's liability and voluntary compensation and contingent employer's liability coverage, having an inclusive limit of not less than $5,000,000 per occurrence. If a policy has an aggregate limit, the amount of the aggregate shall be double the required per occurrence limit. Coverage shall be included for injury/loss/damage, due to pollution arising from "hostile fires". The policy shall be endorsed to include the other Parties as additional insured;

b) Standard Form Automobile Liability Insurance that complies with all requirements of the current legislation of the Province of Ontario, having an inclusive limit of not less than $2,000,000 for Third Party Liability, in respect of the use or operation of vehicles owned, operated or leased for the provision of services;

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c) Non-Owned Automobile Liability Insurance in standard form having an inclusive limit of not less than $2,000,000 per occurrence in respect of vehicles not owned by the Successful Bidder, that are used or operated on its behalf for the provision of services under the Contract;

d) Umbrella and/or Excess Liability Insurance policies may be applied to increase liability limits. Certificate(s) of insurance must specify the underlying policies to which the umbrella/excess coverages apply and indicate any applicable aggregates; and

(2) Each Party (the "**Indemnifying Party**") shall indemnify, defend and hold harmless the other Parties (the "**Indemnified Parties**") for any losses for bodily injury or damages to real property resulting directly from the Indemnifying Party's negligence or willful misconduct. The Indemnifying Party hereby agrees to indemnify, defend and hold harmless the Indemnified Parties from and against any and all liability, loss, costs, damages and expenses (including reasonable legal, expert and consultant fees), causes of action, actions, claims, demands, lawsuits or other proceedings, (collectively, "**Claims**"), by whomever made, sustained, incurred, brought or prosecuted, including for breaches of confidentiality or privacy or for third party bodily injury (including death), personal injury and property damage, in any way based upon, occasioned by or attributable to anything done or omitted to be done by the Indemnifying Party, its subcontractors or their respective directors, officers, agents, employees, partners, affiliates, volunteers or independent contractors in the course of performance of the Indemnifying Party's obligations under, or otherwise in connection with, the Agreement. The Indemnifying Party shall not be liable for consequential, indirect, or special damages unless arising from gross negligence or willful misconduct. These indemnification obligations shall survive the termination of this Agreement.

10. PUBLICTY

(1) No Party shall use the name, trade names, trademarks, logos, or any other proprietary designations (the "**Marks**") of any other Party in any manner, including but not limited to press releases, marketing materials, or public statements, without the prior written consent of the relevant Party whose name or Marks are to be used. For greater certainty, the non-commercial use of Marks for purposes consistent with this Agreement which have been considered and approved during a Steering Committee or Management Committee Meeting shall be deemed to be sufficient consent of the relevant Party as required by this section. In addition, the City hereby consents to the use of the BAP logo and branded materials created by the City by all Parties to the Agreement for purposes contemplated pursuant to this Agreement.

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(2) This restriction applies to all Parties and shall remain in effect both during the term of this Agreement and thereafter, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the affected Party.

11. LIMITATION

(1) Nothing in this Agreement shall oblige any Party to enter into any other agreement.

(2) Nothing in this Agreement is intended to, or shall be deemed to, constitute a partnership, joint venture, agency or employment relationship between the Parties. Neither Party has the authority to bind, represent or make commitments on behalf of any other Party except as expressly provided in this Agreement.

12. GENERAL

(1) This Agreement, together with any Schedules attached hereto:

a) constitutes the entire agreement between the Parties respecting the subject matter hereof and supersedes all prior negotiations, representations, understanding or agreements, written or oral, between parties;

b) may only be amended by mutual agreement, in writing, of the Parties hereto;

c) shall be governed by and construed in accordance with the laws of the Province of Ontario and the laws of Canada applicable therein, and the parties hereto irrevocably attorn to the exclusive jurisdiction of the courts of the City of Hamilton in the event of a dispute hereunder; and

d) may be executed in counterparts, including digital counterparts, each of which shall be deemed an original, but all of which shall together constitute one and the same agreement.

(2) No Party to this Agreement is responsible for any delay or failure to perform its obligations under this Agreement where such delay or failure is due to fire, explosion, flood, war, embargo, governmental action, act or order of a public authority, strike, public health emergency or communicable disease outbreak or to any other cause beyond its control ("**Force Majeure Event**"). Should the Force Majeure Event last longer than sixty (60) days, each Party to this Agreement reserves the right in its sole discretion to terminate their involvement in this Agreement, in whole or in part, upon notice to the other Parties, without further liability, expense or cost of any kind.

(3) Neither the rights nor obligations under this Agreement may be assigned or otherwise disposed of without prior written consent of the non-assigning Parties.

(4) Each Party acknowledges and agrees that this Agreement is non-exclusive. Nothing in this Agreement shall be construed to prevent any Party from entering into similar

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agreements or arrangements with third parties, including those that may be competitive with the subject matter of this Agreement, provided that such activities do not breach the terms and obligations set forth herein.

(5) Notwithstanding the expiry or termination of this Agreement, the Party's agree that any provision of this Agreement which, by its nature, is intended to survive the expiration or termination of this Agreement shall so survive such expiration or termination and shall remain in full force and effect until fully performed or satisfied or indefinitely, as the context may require.

(6) Any notice required by, or to be given under this Agreement shall be effective when delivered by email from the Party giving the said notice, to the Party or Parties to which the notice is owed at the email address as provided below:

To BARC:

To the City: biodiversityactionplan@hamilton.ca

To Green Venture:

To HCA:

To the HNC:

To McMaster:

To the Management Committee:

To the Steering Committee:

[EXECUTION PAGE FOLLOWS]

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IN WITNESS WHEREOF the Parties have signed this Agreement as of the effective date as provided on the first page of this Agreement

BAY AREA RESTORATION COUNCIL OF HAMILTON AND HALTON INC.

Per: _____
Name:
Title:

MCMASTER UNIVERSITY

Per: _____
Name:
Title:

CITY OF HAMILTON

Per: _____
Name:
Title:

HAMILTON NATURALISTS' CLUB

Per: _____
Name:
Title:

GREEN VENTURE HAMILTON-WENTWORTH GREEN VENTURE O/A GREEN VENTURE

Per: _____
Name:
Title:

HAMILTON CONSERVATION AUTHORITY

Per: _____
Name:
Title:

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SCHEDULE "A"

TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE COMMITTEES

1. PURPOSE OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

These Terms of Reference define the functions and procedure for meetings of the Management Committee and the Steering Committee.

2. FUNCTION OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

The Management Committee provides leadership for implementing the BAP. It has authority for decisions concerning governance and strategic planning and potential new Parties, to provide guidance on matters with legal and significant financial implications, and any other matters identified by the Management Committee at its discretion. Each Management Committee member will also be required to review and sign off on the BAP implementation annual reporting.

3. FUNCTION OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE

The Steering Committee provides tactical leadership for implementing the BAP and for implementing the strategic direction and decisions of the Management Committee. It has authority for decisions concerning specific projects and initiatives, except for matters with significant legal and financial implications, in which case they will be referred to the Management Committee. The Steering Committee provides direction to the BAP Coordinator.

4. MEMBERSHIP

Management Committee

Each Party to this Agreement shall appoint one (1) senior/management level representative as a regular member to the Management Committee ("**Management Committee Member**"). Each Management Committee Member agrees to appoint a designate in writing who will act in the stead of the Management Committee Member when they are not available to participate in the Management Committee. Members shall serve for a 5-year Term, concurrent with the length of the initial term of the Biodiversity Action Plan Implementation Agreement. Where the Agreement is renewed, each Party shall be entitled to appoint 1 new senior/management level representative to sit as a regular member during the renewal term.

Each Management Committee Member shall be able to readily obtain authorization from their home organization, if required, to make decisions and commitments on behalf of that organization, including, inter alia, decisions with financial, human resource or legal implications. Each Management Committee Member shall be entitled to obtain authorization from their home organization in accordance with that organization's applicable governance and decision-making processes.

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Each Party to this Agreement will determine the mechanisms and processes by which Management Committee matters and decisions are taken through its internal organizational and decision-making structure, including to its Board or Council.

Steering Committee

Each Party to this Agreement shall appoint one (1) staff representative (preferably a staff member actively working on the Actions identified in the BAP) as a regular member to the Steering Committee (the "**Steering Committee Member**"). Members shall serve for a 5-year Term, concurrent with the length of the initial term of the Biodiversity Action Plan Implementation Agreement. Where the Agreement is renewed, each Party shall be entitled to appoint 1 new staff representative to sit as a regular member during the renewal term. Additional members of the Steering Committee Member's organization can attend the meetings but will not have voting powers. Representatives from supporting organizations and community representatives (ie. biodiversity groups, academia and grassroots organizations) ("**Community Representatives**") can attend Steering Committee meetings but will not have voting powers. The number of Community Representatives that can attend the meetings will be determined by the Steering Committee.

Each Steering Committee Member shall be able to readily obtain authorization from their home organization, if required, to make operational decisions and commitments on behalf of that organization from time to time.

Each Steering Committee representative will actively participate in meetings by:

- Reviewing materials and communications from BAP Coordinator.
- Reporting on progress towards committed-to Actions of the Party that it represents, including highlighting barriers to implementation and opportunities for collaboration.

5. COMMITTEE PROCEDURE

The Management and Steering Committee Members will elect from among their respective membership a Chair and Vice Chair (who will assume the role of Chair if the Chair is unavailable). The Chair will preside at meetings of the Committee and assist in reaching consensus on fundamental issues of concern. It shall be the duty of the Chair, with respect to any meetings over which they preside, to:

- Preserve order and decide all questions of order;
- Record minutes of all meetings or require that minutes be recorded by the BAP Coordinator or designate;
- Receive and submit to a vote all motions presented by the Members of the Committee where consensus cannot otherwise be achieved in accordance with section 9 (voting) below;
- Announce the results of the vote for any motions so presented;

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- Decline to put to a vote, motions which infringe upon the rules of procedure, or which are beyond the jurisdiction of the Committee;
- Enforce on all occasions the observance of order and decorum among the Members;
- Adjourn the meeting when business is concluded; and,
- Perform other duties when directed to do so by resolution of the Committee.

6. COMMITTEE MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

The Members of the **Management Committee** shall:

- Provide guidance to the Steering Committee and the BAP Coordinator;
- Attend and actively participate in all Management Committee meetings;
- Consider input gathered from Community Representatives;
- Review the progress of BAP Coordinator projects; and
- Stay informed by reviewing minutes from BAP Steering Committee meetings which shall be forwarded by BAP Coordinator to Management Committee.

The Members of the **Steering Committee** shall:

- Provide support to Management Committee and the BAP Coordinator;
- Report to BAP Coordinator about progress on Actions and track their agency's implementation and success of Actions;
- Consider Actions that could be missing from BAP, and/or develop Actions to address emerging issues for consideration of the Management Committee;
- Attend and actively participate in all Steering Committee meetings;
- Provide in-kind project management advice to other Parties to this Agreement
- Provide guidance to BAP Coordinator on BAP communications and share BAP related posts, mentions, articles and their "reach" (metrics) from their agency; and
- Review the progress of BAP Coordinator and Steering Committee Actions.

7. Consensus

Consensus is a core value of the Parties. To promote consensus, the Chairs must work to ensure that Committee Members consider all views and objections, and endeavour to resolve them, whether these views and objections are expressed by Members of the Committee or by others (including but not limited to user groups, stakeholders, or the general public).

The Chairs have the role of assessing consensus within the respective Committee.

Any Committee Member who would like to formally object to a Committee decision should articulate the reasons for their objection and propose changes that would remove the objection.

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Participation shall be subject to Section 12 of the Terms of Reference for the Committees - Conflict of Interest.

8. Voting

The Committees should only conduct a vote to approve or reject a proposition after the Chair has determined that all available means of reaching consensus through discussion and compromise have failed, and that a vote is necessary to break a deadlock. In this case the Chair must record the following in the minutes of the meeting:

- An explanation of the issue being voted on;
- The decision to conduct a vote to resolve the issue;
- Each Committee Member and their vote;
- The outcome of the vote; and
- Any formal objections.

Each Committee Member or a Committee Member's authorized delegate has one vote, including the Chair.

Propositions to be decided by vote will be considered approved if voted for by a simple majority of Committee Members present, to be taken as 50% plus one. A vote on a proposition that results in a tie shall be deemed lost.

Participation shall be subject to Section 12 of the Terms of Reference for the Committees- Conflict of Interest.

9. Meetings

Each Chair will prepare an annual schedule of regular meetings of its respective Committee, to be held at times and places agreed to by the members. Unless otherwise decided by the Committee, regular Committee Meetings shall occur not less than annually for the Management Committee and quarterly for the Steering Committee. In addition to regular meetings, the Chair may call special meetings to be held at times and places as may be determined by the Chair. Members may attend meetings virtually with the approval of the Chair.

Each Chair shall ensure that an agenda for its respecting Committee meeting is circulated to the members of the Committee not less than five (5) Business Days prior to the meeting.

Minutes of meetings shall record decisions made, factors considered, and information presented during the meeting. They will also include action items as a reminder to Committee Members. Minutes of previous meetings shall be approved by Committee Members as part of the agenda.

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The Chair may invite an individual or individuals with a particular expertise or interest to attend a Committee Meeting on an exceptional basis. Such persons will be deemed guests and will not have voting rights.

10. Quorum

A quorum of the Committee shall consist of a simple majority (50% plus one) of Committee Members being present in person, virtually or by proxy at a Committee Meeting. If a quorum is not present for any meeting of the Committee within 15 minutes of the time fixed for the commencement of the meeting, the meeting will be cancelled and rescheduled. If a quorum cannot be maintained during a Committee Meeting in progress, then no decisions can be made by the Committee during the absence of quorum. Matters of information may be presented but not decided upon during the absence of quorum. Decisions on such matters must be deferred to a subsequent quorate meeting.

11. Maintenance AND REFINEMENT OF TERMS OF REFERENCE

These Terms of Reference should be maintained by the Committees and be reviewed biannually, or as need arises, by the Committees to see if changes are required. Any proposed changes to the approved Terms of Reference shall be circulated to the Parties, through their respective Committee Member, for their information prior to consideration of such changes by the Management Committee. Only the Management Committee may approve changes to the Terms of Reference.

12. Declaration OF INTEREST

At the beginning of every meeting of each Committee, Committee Members must declare any conflicts of interest, real- either disqualifying or non-disqualifying, or potential, that they have with items for discussion at the meeting. In the event of a disqualifying conflict of interest, the Member shall recuse themselves from discussion of the item in question, or decision-making with respect to that item.

13. Confidentiality

All Committee Members acknowledge that while participating as a Member of any Committee, they may have access to confidential information, including but not limited to systems, services or planned services, suppliers, data, financial information, processes, methods, knowledge, ideas, marketing promotions, current or planned activities, research, development, and other information received in confidence relating to a Party to the Biodiversity Action Plan Implementation Agreement ("**Confidential Information**"). Confidential Information disclosed by any Committee Member to any other Committee Member, if in written form, shall be marked or identified as confidential at the time of disclosure. If the Confidential Information is in oral or visual form, it shall be identified as confidential at the time of disclosure and shall subsequently be designated as such by way of a written memorandum sent to the recipient of the confidential information within 30 days following the disclosure. Confidential Information does not include information that,

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(i) is or becomes generally known to the public through no act or omission of any Party; (ii) is disclosed to a Party on a non-confidential basis by a third party who has a lawful right to make such disclosure; or (iii) is required to be disclosed by law or court order, provided that the disclosing Party gives prompt notice to the other Parties of such requirement (to the extent legally permissible) and cooperates with any efforts to contest or limit the scope of the required disclosure.

No Committee Member receiving Confidential Information acquired by virtue of their office, except as required by law, shall disclose the Confidential Information to any third party or use the Confidential Information for any purpose other than for fulfilling its obligations under these Terms of Reference. Each Committee Member shall use at least the same standard of care in protecting the Confidential Information of other Committee Members as it uses in protecting its own information of a similar nature but, in any event, no less than a reasonable standard of care. The receiving Party may disclose the Confidential Information only to members of the Party which it represents, that Party's employees, directors, officers, agents, students and consultants who have a need to know the Confidential Information for the purpose of fulfilling the Committee Member's obligations under these Terms of Reference, and who are bound by substantially the same obligations as the Committee Member with respect to the Confidential Information. Upon termination of this Agreement, each Committee Member that is in possession of Confidential Information received from another Party to the BAP Implementation Agreement shall forthwith return to the disclosing Party or destroy the Confidential Information as directed by the disclosing Party, except where it is required by law to retain the Confidential Information.

14. Records

The Party acting as the BAP Coordinator host from time to time shall co-ordinate and retain Committee records including agendas, minutes, reports and work plans. As per the Biodiversity Action Plan Implementation Agreement, this will be the responsibility of the City for no longer than 18 months from the date of a new position being filled in Planning and Economic Development Department, following which this obligation shall transfer to the new BAP Coordinator host.

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SCHEDULE "B"

PIPEDA FAIR INFORMATION PRINCIPLES

Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada

PIPEDA's 10 fair information principles form the ground rules for the collection, use and disclosure of personal information, as well as for providing access to personal information. They give individuals control over how their personal information is handled in the private sector.

In addition to these principles, PIPEDA states that any collection, use or disclosure of personal information must only be for purposes that a reasonable person would consider appropriate in the circumstances.

The OPC has determined that the following purposes would generally be considered inappropriate by a reasonable person (i.e., no-go zones):

- collecting, using or disclosing personal information in ways that are otherwise unlawful;
- profiling or categorizing individuals in a way that leads to unfair, unethical or discriminatory treatment contrary to human rights law;
- collecting, using or disclosing personal information for purposes that are known or likely to cause significant harm to the individual;
- publishing personal information with the intent of charging people for its removal;
- requiring passwords to social media accounts for the purpose of employee screening; and
- conducting surveillance on an individual using their own device's audio or video functions.

This section sets out organizations' responsibilities for each of the 10 fair information principles. It outlines how to fulfill these responsibilities and offers some tips.

Principle 1 - Accountability

An organization is responsible for personal information under its control. It must appoint someone to be accountable for its compliance with these fair information principles.

Principle 2 - Identifying Purposes

The purposes for which the personal information is being collected must be identified by the organization before or at the time of collection.

Principle 3 – Consent

The knowledge and consent of the individual are required for the collection, use, or disclosure of personal information, except where inappropriate.

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Principle 4 - Limiting Collection

The collection of personal information must be limited to that which is needed for the purposes identified by the organization. Information must be collected by fair and lawful means.

Principle 5 - Limiting Use, Disclosure, and Retention

Unless the individual consents otherwise or it is required by law, personal information can only be used or disclosed for the purposes for which it was collected. Personal information must only be kept as long as required to serve those purposes.

Principle 6 - Accuracy

Personal information must be as accurate, complete, and up-to-date as possible in order to properly satisfy the purposes for which it is to be used.

Principle 7 - Safeguards

Personal information must be protected by appropriate security relative to the sensitivity of the information.

Principle 8 - Openness

An organization must make detailed information about its policies and practices relating to the management of personal information publicly and readily available.

Principle 9 - Individual Access

Upon request, an individual must be informed of the existence, use, and disclosure of their personal information and be given access to that information. An individual shall be able to challenge the accuracy and completeness of the information and have it amended as appropriate.

Principle 10 - Challenging Compliance

An individual shall be able to challenge an organization's compliance with the above principles. Their challenge should be addressed to the person accountable for the organization's compliance with PIPEDA, usually their Chief Privacy Officer.

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HAMILTON-WENTWORTH DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD (HWDSB)
LIAISON COMMITTEE
MINUTES PBLC 26-001

11:00 a.m.
April 2, 2026
Room 264 (Hybrid)
Hamilton City Hall
71 Main Street West

Present: HWDSB Chair M. Felix-Miller (Co-Chair) (Virtual)
Trustees T. White (Co-Vice Chair) and P. Tut
Councillors J. Beattie (Co-Vice Chair) and M. Tadeson

Absent with regrets: Mayor A. Horwath (Co-Chair) – City Business

1. CALL TO ORDER

Co-Vice Chair Beattie called the meeting to order at 11:00 a.m.

2. CEREMONIAL ACTIVITIES

There were no Ceremonial Activities.

3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

(Tadeson/Tut)
That the agenda for the April 1, 2026, meeting of the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board Liaison Committee, be approved, as presented.

CARRIED

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

5.1 December 11, 2025

Refer to the April 15, 2026, General Issues Committee Minutes for the disposition of these matters.

(Tut/Tadeson)
That the Minutes of the December 11, 2025, meeting of the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board Liaison Committee, be adopted, as presented.

CARRIED

6 DELEGATIONS

There were no Delegations.

7. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

7.1 HSC26021
Dundas Valley Secondary School Court Revitalization Feasibility (Ward 13) (Outstanding Business List Item)

(i) (Tut/Tadeson)
That Report HSC26021, dated April 2, 2026, respecting Dundas Valley Secondary School Court Revitalization Feasibility (Ward 13), be received.

(ii) (Beattie/Tut)
That Report HSC26021, respecting Dundas Valley Secondary School Court Revitalization Feasibility (Ward 13), be REFFERED to a future Public Works Committee meeting and that staff be directed to:

(a) Provide a Report to the Public Works Committee on the next steps in the Dundas Valley Secondary School project, including all financial challenges with relation to the 2027 Capital Budget; and,

(b) Provide an information report to HWDSB Liaison Committee on the status of the Dundas Valley Secondary School project following Public Works Committee's consideration.

CARRIED

7.1(a) Correspondence from Christine Roarke, respecting Dundas Valley Secondary School Court Revitalization Feasibility (Ward 13)

(Tut/Felix-Miller)
That the Correspondence respecting Dundas Valley Secondary School Court Revitalization Feasibility (Ward 13), be received.

CARRIED

7.2 Joint Property Asset Committee Minutes

(White/Tut)
(a) June 3, 2025
(b) November 4, 2025

CARRIED

8. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

8.1 Joint Property Asset Committee Terms of Reference

(Tut/Felix-Miller)
That the Joint Property Asset Committee Terms of Refence, be approved.

CARRIED

8.2 Amendments to the Outstanding Business List

(Tut/Felix-Miller)
That the Amendments to the Outstanding Business List, be approved, as follows:

8.1(a) Items Requiring a New Due Date:

(i) Hamilton School Boards' Stormwater Fee Implementation Information Session (FCS25051) (City Wide)
Added: September 25, 2025 (Item 7.2 (ii)(b))
Current Due Date: Q1 2026
Proposed New Due Date: June 11, 2026

(ii) Brightside Park
Added: December 11, 2026
Current Due Date: April 2, 2026
Proposed New Due Date: June 11, 2026

CARRIED

9. MOTIONS

There were no Motions.

10. NOTICE OF MOTIONS

There were no Notice of Motions.

11. GENERAL INFORMATION / OTHER BUSINESS

There were no General Information / Other Business.

12. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board Liaison Committee meeting adjourned, at 11:42 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Versace
Legislative Coordinator
Office of the City Clerk

Councillor Jeff Beattie
Co-Vice Chair, Hamilton-Wentworth
District School Board Liaison Committee

City of Hamilton

Report for Consideration

To:	Mayor and Members General Issues Committee
Date:	April 15, 2026
Report No:	PED24163(e)
Subject/Title:	Final 10-Year Downtown Hamilton Revitalization Strategy
Ward(s) Affected:	City Wide

Recommendations

a) That the 10-Year Downtown Hamilton Revitalization Strategy, contained in Appendix "A" to Report PED24163(e) **BE APPROVED;**

b) That staff **BE DIRECTED** to incorporate the directions and actions of the 10-Year Downtown Hamilton Revitalization into all applicable City departmental and divisional work plans;

c) That the City Manager or designate **BE REQUESTED** to complete a governance review of departmental roles and responsibilities respecting the Downtown and West Harbour and report back to General Issues Committee by the end of Q1 2027 with recommendations for any organizational structural improvements or refinements to roles and responsibilities needed to support the efficient and timely implementation of the 10-Year Downtown Hamilton Revitalization Strategy, and that this review **BE**

FUNDED from Economic Development Initiatives Project 3621708900 to a maximum of $75,000;

d) That until such time as a Downtown and West Harbour governance review is completed, the Economic Development Division **BE DIRECTED** to continue as the interim coordination and implementation planning lead for the 10-Year Downtown Hamilton Revitalization Strategy across all City departments;

e) That the General Manager of Public Works **BE DIRECTED** to identify existing response times for service requests within Downtown public rights-of- way and parks, and where deemed insufficient, identify potential opportunities to improve response times benchmarked against those achieved for Downtowns in comparable municipalities, and report back in advance of the 2027 budget process on any budget pressures that would result from achieving those improved standards;

f) That the Economic Development Division, in collaboration with identified departments/divisions, **BE DIRECTED** to undertake the following initiatives to support downtown revitalization, commencing in 2026, and funded entirely through existing departmental/divisional resources**:**

    i. Explore and implement a pilot project for permanent infrastructure improvements on James Street North between York Boulevard and the West Harbour GO Station that would better enable recurring and cost-effective temporary street closures for festivals and events in collaboration with the Transportation Division, Transportation Planning and Parking Division, Transit (Hamilton Street Railway), Hamilton Police Services, and the Tourism and Culture Division;

    ii. Identify and implement improvements to John-Rebecca Park that would better enable greater public use of the park including through placemaking events and activations, public art and other temporary amenities in collaboration with

the Tourism and Culture Division and Environmental Services Division;

iii. Develop and implement a Wayfinding Strategy, including updated pedestrian, active transportation and vehicular directional signage to strategic destinations, parking amenities, transit, and other visitor focused needs in alignment with the City Wide 2024-2028 Tourism Strategy and in collaboration with the Tourism and Culture, Transportation Planning and Parking, and Transportation Divisions;

iv. Identify and implement pilot projects that will support street-level activation on York Boulevard to increase vibrancy and pedestrian activity in collaboration with the Hamilton Farmer's Market, Tourism and Culture Division and Transportation Division;

v. Investigate the current state of use and physical condition of Commonwealth Square and report back to General Issues Committee in Q1 2027 respecting potential next steps to address the future/role function of the Square;

vi. That the Public Works, Healthy and Safe Communities, and Planning and Economic Development Departments **BE DIRECTED** to jointly undertake a comprehensive audit of Downtown lighting and other safety-related conditions within public rights-of-way, public parks, and municipal parking lots, and to develop and implement a work plan that expedites interim and permanent improvements and/or mitigation measures to enhance overall safety in the Downtown;

g) That the Planning Division **BE DIRECTED** to prepare a Precinct Plan for the area around TD Coliseum, identified as an area to leverage in the 10-Year Downtown Hamilton Revitalization Strategy, to develop a framework for coordinating future development, infrastructure and urban design needs required to achieve an identifiable and vibrant entertainment district within Downtown;

h) That the Tourism and Culture Division **BE DIRECTED** to engage the Downtown Business Improvement Area as the on-going operator of the King William Summer Pedestrianization Program to support continued and uninterrupted activation and placemaking with such costs limited to $50,000 annually, with annual increases tied to inflation, and with such agreement to be executed by the General Manager of the Planning and Economic Development Department including such terms and conditions as determined by the General Manager of the Planning and Economic Development Department and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor;

i) That the Economic Development Division **BE DIRECTED** to provide annual updates on the status of implementing the 10-Year Downtown Hamilton Revitalization Strategy through Economic Development's annual State of the Downtown reporting to the General Issues Committee over the duration of the Straetgy's implementation;

j) That Clerks **BE DIRECTED** to remove Outstanding Business List Item GIC-12/04/24-10.5l.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this Report is to present for approval the Final 10-Year Downtown Hamilton Revitalization Strategy (the Strategy) prepared by project consultants Cultural Spaces (the Consultants).

- The Strategy comprises a mission statement, vision, guiding principles, priorities, and implementing actions.

- The Strategy and associated implementing actions are rooted in public and stakeholder consultation, and Council feedback.

- The Strategy identifies areas of focus for City advocacy to other levels of government needed to support long-lasting revitalization of Downtown as well as a potential measurement and reporting framework to inform annual reporting on the Strategy's implementation and progress to Council and the community; and,

- Base level annual funding of $1,000,000 will be put towards the implementation of the Strategy from existing financial resources allocated to the Economic Development Division annually over the duration of the Strategy's implementation.

Financial Considerations

There are no financial considerations arising from this Report. Given the financial and budgetary pressures of the City, it is staff's intent that the Strategy's implementation be facilitated primarily through the following means unless otherwise directed by Council:

- Reallocation/reprioritization of existing resources;

- Funding already allocated to the Economic Development Division annually intended to support Downtown revitalization initiatives in the amount of $1,000,000; and,

- Where implementation of certain actions may require additional funding/resources, that these be brought forward by respective departments/divisions through individual business cases and the regular budget cycle cross-departmentally and in collaboration with the Economic Development Division.

Background

On December 11, 2024, City Council approved the amended recommendations of Report PED24163 respecting a series of initiatives to be led by the Economic Development Division respecting Downtown, including the development of the Strategy.

These initiatives were intended to recognize community concern respecting the current state of the Downtown and to kick-start a renewed City priority for sustained and on-going revitalization efforts in the Downtown.

On July 9, 2025, staff presented information Report PED24163(c) to the General Issues Committee which provided a project update and an interim Consultant's Report identifying the key themes heard through community and key participant engagement about the current state of the Downtown.

Although the July Report was originally intended to present a draft vision and guiding principles, key observations and insights respecting the strategy's future vision and guiding principles were provided as staff and the Consultants believed that, based on the engagement feedback heard at that time, it was too soon to engage in discussions around a draft vision and guiding principles and that further consultation, data collection and analysis were required.

As a further supplement to the July Report, a subsequent Communication Update was provided to Council and the community on August 21, 2025, detailing the results of online engagement activities carried out through Engage Hamilton up until the end of July 2025. These results provided more specific insights into the opinions and views of those who responded with the results further reinforcing the key themes and findings presented in the Consultant's Interim Report.

On December 3, 2025, Report PED24163(d) presented the Draft Strategy including mission statement, vision, guiding principles and action markers to General Issues Committee. Report PED24163(d) provided an opportunity for Council feedback as well as an opportunity for additional consultation with over 100 City staff focused on the development of the priority actions.

Additional consultation occurred in Q1 2026 which reconfirmed the draft mandate, vision and guiding principles, while simultaneously assisting with the development of the implementing actions. Consultation focused on leveraging existing assets, resources, budgets and relationships, gave a high-level idea of the financial costs, and identified possible barriers to implementation of the actions. Prioritization of actions was discussed as the first years of implementation of the Strategy are imperative to seeing its success through trust building and momentum building.

Analysis

Appendix A contains the final version of the Strategy prepared by the Consultants. The Final Strategy is largely consistent with the Draft version presented on December 3, 2025, through Staff Report PED24163(d), with the addition of finalized actions and the identification of strategic locations with the potential to have a transformative impact on the Downtown. The Final Strategy reflects feedback received from the public, Council, and key stakeholders.

Successful delivery of the Strategy depends on the early implementation of high-impact actions that demonstrate how its priorities can work together to achieve positive outcomes and build public confidence. The identified actions represent practical steps to advance implementation and have been prioritized to deliver quick wins while building on work already underway to support revitalization of Downtown.

Actions scheduled for Years one to three focus on establishing momentum and trust by achieving measurable progress early. These actions emphasize cleanliness, rapid maintenance and repair, reliable lighting, consistent activation of public spaces, and direct support for businesses and residents. Implementation during this initial phase will leverage existing funding and prioritize collaboration across departments and with external partners to ensure early, visible success.

Actions identified for Years three to five builds on this foundation and are intended to advance more complex initiatives, including catalytic redevelopment projects, permanent transformations, the creation of signature public spaces, and the development of a more cohesive public realm. The first five years of implementation are critical for demonstrating progress, achieving early successes, and applying a mindset of learning and continuous improvement. Early and sustained success will help build confidence among the public, internal stakeholders, and other levels of government, potentially enabling future investment opportunities. Visible improvements to physical infrastructure and overall perception of the Downtown will serve as key indicators of progress.

The Strategy and its associated actions have been designed to remain flexible, allowing implementation leads to adapt based on outcomes and lessons learned. Successful implementation will require alignment across City programs, investments, and partnerships so that actions reinforce one another in support of the Strategy's Vision. No additional budget requests are being made at this time; however, as implementation progresses, additional funding requirements may arise and would be brought forward through subsequent reports as appropriate.

Beyond Downtown

While the Strategy is focused on revitalization efforts for Downtown, the challenges giving rise to this Strategy are not isolated to Downtown and can be found in other neighbourhoods of the City to varying degrees.

As such, it is staff's intent that the opportunities this Strategy will provide to pilot and test new ideas and explore new ways of doing things will, if successful Downtown, could have the potential to inform urban revitalization efforts in other areas of the City.

Governance Review and Interim Implementation

To support the efficient and timely implementation of the 10-Year Downtown Hamilton Revitalization Strategy, the Consultants have recommended that a review of departmental roles and responsibilities respecting Downtown occur to identify potential opportunities for organizational improvements and/or refined roles and responsibilities across City divisions and departments. Recommendation associated with this review would be expected to come to Council for consideration and discussion before the end of Q1 2027 The goal of the review would focus on identifying opportunities to improve organization structure with a view to identifying efficiencies, reprioritization and reallocation of existing resources which will put in place an administrative model that allow for timely and accountable implementation of the Strategy.

Ahead of the completion of the governance review, Economic Development Division staff who have worked with the consultants on the preparation of the Strategy will be the interim leads for the continued coordination and implementation planning of the Strategy. Economic Development Division staff are equipped to temporarily lead the implementation and coordination of actions within the initial year, however past the initial year, impacts to core job duties would occur.

To further assist with coordination and implementation planning of the Strategy, staff are also recommending that the terms of reference for the existing internal Downtown and West Harbour Coordinating Committee be updated to identify it as the primary means through which cross-departmental collaboration and implementation planning for the 10-Strategy will occur until such time as the Downtown and West Harbour governance and program review is completed.

The Downtown and West Harbour Coordinating Committee is made up of staff representing divisions across the City and meets monthly to coordinate matters impacting the Downtown and West Harbour.

Coordination of Efforts and Downtown Service Standards

Through the development of the Strategy, staff repeatedly heard that Downtown Hamilton’s infrastructure within the public realm and public parks and waste collection

efforts are not meeting the standards that residents, businesses and visitors expect of a Downtown. As a result, staff are seeking direction to explore opportunities to exceed the current service standards and identify the associated cost implications for improving current service standards, benchmarked against other comparable municipalities, for future consideration by Council. As part of this exercise, efforts to improve coordination and find efficiencies in service delivery will be explored. Should there be associated budget pressures resulting from implementing improved service standards for Downtown, these needs will come forward for consideration through the 2027 budget process.

Permanent Infrastructure Improvements for Temporary Road Closures on James Street North

The temporary closure of James Street North to support festivals and activations has been occurring for years, with growing frequency. Given the frequency of activations, and the costs associated with street closure, staffing and rental of temporary Hostile Vehicle Mitigation measures, staff are recommending exploring permanent infrastructure to reduce annual costs of street festivals and activations on James Street North. This recommendation also provides an opportunity to work with Tourism and Culture Division staff to incorporate art or beautification with any permanent infrastructure to facilitate temporary road closures.

Report PW26003 discusses pedestrian and crowd safety measures and the associated budget costs to implement, which are estimated at $300,000 for 2026 across the City. Economic Development budget also support deficit costs associated with 2025 closures in the amount of $150,000. It is the intent of this recommendation to reduce the costs associated with the road closure and hostile vehicle mitigation measures. Coordination with Hamilton Police and internal Divisions will occur.

John-Rebecca Park

John-Rebecca Park opened in November 2019 in anticipation of significant redevelopment in the surrounding area, which was expected to bring an influx of residents who would benefit from additional outdoor public open space. However, due to the impacts of COVID-19 and shifts in the development landscape, the anticipated redevelopment of surrounding properties has not yet occurred. As a result, the park is currently underutilized relative to original expectations.

Recognizing the ongoing market challenges delaying the development of new housing in the vicinity of the park, it is recommended that staff pursue temporary park activations and improvements with the goal of improving the visitor experience. A combination of programming, minor physical improvements (such as the addition of shaded seating and activities), and public art installations would help activate the park and enhance its usability. Parks Operations staff are also in the process of installing tamper-proof electrical access to further support future activations.

This recommendation aligns with a broader action in the Strategy to review all public spaces in the Downtown area in order to create a comprehensive catalogue of spaces and the amenities and features they provide.

Downtown Wayfinding Strategy

The ability to navigate into, within, and out of the Downtown—and to easily locate key destinations such as parking facilities, commercial shopping districts, the GO Train Stations and the bus terminal, and major cultural attractions—is essential to a successful visitor experience. Effective wayfinding extends beyond individual signs; it is a coordinated system that helps residents and visitors orient themselves and move through the Downtown in an intuitive and informative manner.

Ahead of the City-wide Wayfinding Strategy, identified as an action in the Tourism Strategy, staff are recommending the preparation and implementation of a Downtown Wayfinding Strategy. This initiative will allow the City to pilot a specific design approach and visual style to present a more cohesive visual identity for Downtown, while also providing valuable insights to inform the future City-wide Wayfinding Strategy.

Report PED14218 previously outlined wayfinding initiatives intended to support growth and development in the Downtown. Building on this earlier work, and in coordination with other internal divisions currently undertaking signage initiatives (such as Active Transportation and cycling route signage), a collaborative approach is essential to creating a downtown that is easy to navigate, cohesive, and welcoming.

York Boulevard and Farmers' Market Activation

There is an opportunity to collaborate with the Hamilton Farmers' Market to pilot an activation along York Boulevard that utilizes both the sidewalk and interior space along the front of the Market building. Potential activations would aim to increase pedestrian activity and vibrancy along this stretch of York Boulevard, while providing opportunities to expand Market programming and vendor presence during the busy fall harvest season and in conjunction with events at TD Coliseum.

The initial pilot will focus on activations from September to October 2026 and would coincide with Supercrawl as well as several evening events at TD Coliseum. The recommended investment would support the provision of temporary outdoor seating along the front of the Market, as well as the installation of necessary infrastructure and support to enable the interior space to accommodate multiple vendor stalls and special event programming.

Lessons learned from this pilot activation would inform future activations for the Hamilton Farmers' Market and could provide a model for other property owners along York Boulevard between Bay Street North and James Street North—an area that is experiencing increased foot traffic following the reopening of the arena and ongoing redevelopment along the corridor.

Commonwealth Square

The Strategy identifies several strategic locations with the potential to support transformative change, including Commonwealth Square. Commonwealth Square is a

municipally owned asset, elevated above Summer's Lane between the Art Gallery of Hamilton—where a master plan with proposed expansion is being contemplated—and the Hamilton Convention Centre, which is currently undergoing aesthetic and functional improvements.

This recommendation focuses on undertaking a review of the Square's current condition, use, and performance, and on developing a plan to explore potential future uses of Commonwealth Square. The outcomes of this work would be reported back to Council with options and recommendations to guide next steps.

Staff note that the Commonwealth Square is one of a number of examples of urban renewal efforts in the Downtown dating to the 1970's and 1980's and which are reaching a point in their lifecycle when major considerations about their future use/role and cost to maintain must be considered. Meanwhile, these strategic assets, such as Commonwealth Square, represent a unique opportunity to serve as a catalyst for change by supporting the creation of welcoming, high-quality public spaces that strengthen connections between key cultural and civic destinations. Advancing planning efforts for this site, as well as other past urban renewal projects, would contribute directly to the implementation of the Strategy, help activate the surrounding area, and demonstrate visible momentum toward the broader revitalization objectives for Downtown.

Entertainment District Precinct Plan

The preparation of a Precinct Plan is recommended for the area surrounding the TD Coliseum. The Plan would establish a strategic framework for development and urban design as well as coordinate public infrastructure—such as streets, parks, and community facilities—with private development to support the creation of a vibrant, cohesive and identifiable entertainment district within Downtown. The plan would allow the City to further leverage investments and success-to-date of TD Coliseum to the benefit the broader public and the revitalization of Downtown through an enhanced public realm including through the development of a network of distinctive and dynamic

public spaces centered around the TD Coliseum and strengthened connections to surrounding commercial corridors.

King William Street Activation

Building on the success of the Summer 2025 King William Street Pedestrianization Program, which was undertaken in conjunction with the Downtown Hamilton Business Improvement Area, staff recommend that the Downtown Hamilton Business Improvement Area be supported in leading the delivery of the Pedestrianization Program going forward. King William Street, between James Street North and Hughson Street North, is located entirely within the Business Improvement Area's boundary, enabling the Business Improvement Area to directly support businesses and respond to local needs within its established mandate and administrative structure.

The 2025 programming was well received by businesses, residents, and visitors, and leveraged existing partnerships, most notably with Fringe Fest, which can be maintained and strengthened through continued Business Improvement Area leadership. Retaining the Downtown Hamilton Business Improvement Area as the Program lead allows the City to build on proven operational capacity, established relationships, and lessons learned. Continued Business Improvement Area leadership provides consistency, cost efficiency, and program continuity, while aligning with Strategy actions that emphasize easing barriers to activation and scaling successful initiatives. This approach supports incremental improvement of the Program over time and ensures momentum is maintained in activating King William Street.

Based on staff's experience to date, staff recommend that the City's annual contribution to support the Downtown Hamilton Business Improvement Area as the operator of the King William Pedestrianization Program be capped at $50,000, with annual adjustments indexed to inflation.

Alternatives

In the event that the Final 10-Year Downtown Hamilton Revitalization Strategy is not approved by Council, it should be referred to staff for further refinement and consultation.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

The Strategy identifies a number of priorities and actions for Downtown that, if implemented, would support several priorities of Council including the following:

See 2022-2026 Council Priorities, Outcomes & Measures of Success | City of Hamilton for more information on Council's Priorities.

1. Sustainable Economic & Ecological Development
   1.1. Reduce the burden on residential taxpayers
   1.2. Facilitate the growth of key sectors

2. Safe & Thriving Neighbourhoods
   2.1. Increase the supply of affordable and supportive housing and reduce chronic homelessness
   2.2. Make sure people can safely and efficiently move around by foot, bike, transit or car
   2.3. Provide vibrant parks, recreation and public space

3. Responsiveness & Transparency
   3.1. Prioritize customer service and proactive communication
   3.2. Get more people involved in decision making and problem solving
   3.3. Build a high performing public service
   3.4. Modernize City systems

Previous Reports Submitted

- PED24163(d) Draft 10-Year Downtown Revitalization Strategy

- PED24163(c) 10-Year Downtown Revitalization Strategy Project Update and Interim Consultant's Report (Ward 2)
- Our Future Downtown: 10 Year Downtown Revitalization Strategy Project Update
- Our Future Downtown: 10-Year Downtown Revitalization Strategy Interim Engage Hamilton Summary Findings Report
- PED24163 Downtown Hamilton Office and Storefront Commercial Sector Update and Action Report
- PW26003 Pedestrian and Crowd Safety Measures with the City's Municipal Right of Way

Consultation

Consultation undertaken during Phase One of the project, through July 2025, was detailed in Report PED24163(c). Phase Two consultation was summarized in Report PED24163(d) which included how the feedback was incorporated into the Draft Strategy presented at the December 3, 2025 General Issues Committee.

Subsequently, through Q1 2026, staff reengaged with a number of key stakeholders externally as well as internally with over 100 City staff across all departments to refine the final Strategy and its actions to support successful implementation. Should the Strategy be approved, staff have recommended that the Strategy and its actions inform and be incorporated into departmental/divisional works plans across the City, where applicable.

Appendices and Schedules Attached

Appendix "A": 10-Year Downtown Hamilton Revitalization Strategy – Final Report

Prepared by:

Jennifer Roth, Senior Business Development Consultant, Commercial Districts and Small Business, Economic Development Division, Planning and Economic Development Department

Phil Caldwell, Manager of Commercial Districts and Small Business, Economic Development Division, Planning and Economic Development Department

Submitted and Recommended by:

Norm Schleehahn, Director of Economic Development Division, Planning and Economic Development Department

FINAL REPORT

10-YEAR DOWNTOWN HAMILTON REVITALIZATION STRATEGY

CITY OF HAMILTON

MARCH 2026



Cultural Spaces
People and Places

CVLNS | Hamilton

This report was prepared by Cultural Spaces, a firm based in Ottawa that is dedicated to envisioning human and natural spaces differently for a sustainable future. Specialized in strategies for sustainable urban environments, protected areas, and heritage conservation. We partnered with CVLNS an urban design and planning firm based in Winnipeg that emphasizes collaboration to devise creative and sustainable solutions to existing and emerging challenges.

Cultural Spaces
Christophe Rivet, Principal

Tania Contrucci
Valentina Samoylenko
Leanna Wigboldus

CVLNS
Tom Janzen, Principal

Cover Illustration:

Cultural Spaces, 2025.

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Executive Summary

Downtown Hamilton is the city's shared civic heart and front door: a place where Hamiltonians from every ward come for culture, services, work, and public life—and where visitors form their first impressions of Hamilton. The strategy argues that when Downtown feels safe, clean, and welcoming, confidence rises citywide; when it struggles, the impacts ripple outward into investment decisions, civic pride, and Hamilton's reputation.

The case for action is practical and citywide. Downtown concentrates major economic and civic value: the Urban Growth Centre (UGC) includes roughly **13,000 residents** and over **28,000 jobs**, while the broader Community Improvement Plan Area (CIPA) includes roughly **31,000 residents** and remains a centre for institutions and employment.

Downtown's assessed value is substantial—estimated at **~$5B** in the CIPA and **~$3.5B** in the UGC—representing roughly **5.1%** of Hamilton's **$93.8B** total assessment base (2025).

At the same time, visible social pressures have intensified: the strategy notes homelessness rising from approximately **1,200 (2024)** to **2,000+ (2025)**, with roughly **600 shelter beds** currently operated by the City and partners, underscoring the need for coordinated, compassionate, and sustained responses alongside public-order improvements.

A strategy designed to appeal across Council priorities. The document is intentionally not a "silver bullet" plan; it is a delivery framework built around visible basics, measured outcomes, and phased implementation that lets the City **try, learn, and scale what works**.

It emphasizes:

- **Back-to-basics delivery** (cleanliness, lighting reliability, repairs, visible presence) to restore confidence quickly.
- **Fiscal discipline and leverage** by aligning and sequencing existing programs and capital, and using partnerships and external funding to multiply municipal dollars.
- **Accountability** through a public dashboard / State of Downtown reporting so Council and residents can see what is improving, where, and at what unit cost.

Vision and approach. The vision is a Downtown that is safe, green, and welcoming. It hosts tree-lined streets, lively plazas, active ground floors, shaded transit stops, that are a destination for visitors, support main streets and businesses, and offer a stronger resident base to sustain street life day and night.

Implementation is structured so near-term actions are clearer and more delivery-focused, while later actions remain adaptable as conditions change and evidence accumulates.

Seven priorities give Council a clear, balanced agenda. The strategy's priorities are framed to combine public confidence, economic renewal, governance/accountability, and longer-term city-building:

1. Increase safety and well-being for all (care, presence, design, not enforcement alone)
2. Drive transformation through coordinated investments (reduce silos; make investments feel cumulative)
3. Enable future opportunities (housing, adaptive reuse, climate readiness, infrastructure readiness)
4. Protect main streets (stabilize corridors through reinvestment and visibility during disruption)
5. Support economic drivers (jobs, institutions, talent attraction, workforce mobility)
6. Set up a Downtown-focused governance model (clear accountability, faster coordination)
7. Retrofit Downtown (conversion and reuse of existing assets; modernize what already exists)

Five transformative initiatives illustrate what "serious" looks like—without overcommitting upfront. The strategy uses a small set of high-impact initiatives (e.g., a rent-to-own pathway pilot; strategic redevelopment proof points; an incentives/approvals "acceleration engine"; main street lift programming and design; and new/improved public spaces) to show how the priorities can combine into visible outcomes and build momentum with partners.

What Council is being asked to do:

1. **Adopt the Strategy as a learning-by-doing implementation guide.**
   Approve this Strategy as a practical roadmap, designed to test, learn, and scale what works, rather than a fixed blueprint. Actions will be refined as evidence and conditions evolve.
2. **Direct immediate delivery of visible, trust-building actions in the first 1–3 years.**
   Signal clear support to prioritize early wins, cleanliness, quick repairs, lighting reliability, visible presence, support to businesses and residents, and consistent activation, so Downtown shows measurable progress quickly.
3. **Begin now to build the 3–5 year pipeline of consequential projects and programs.**
   Instruct City staff to advance the studies, partnerships, approvals pathways, and capital sequencing needed to unlock catalytic redevelopment, conversion/retrofit projects, permanent main-street transformations, and signature public spaces in the next term.
4. **Commit to a blended funding approach: reallocation, program review, prioritization, and partnerships.**
   Endorse implementation on the basis that resources will come from aligning and concentrating existing spending, reviewing programs to reduce duplication and improve performance, prioritizing capital investments for cumulative Downtown impact, and leveraging institutional, private, and provincial/federal partnerships.
5. **Make this a City leadership commitment, from Council direction to City Hall execution.**
   Pair adoption with a clear expectation of coordinated delivery across departments, with defined accountability, shared performance reporting, and a culture of responsiveness so every City function that touches Downtown contributes to visible improvement and sustained momentum.

Acknowledgements

This Strategy was shaped through the time, insight, and commitment of many individuals and organizations who care deeply about the future of Downtown Hamilton. We extend our sincere thanks to the residents, business owners, workers, property owners, community organizations, and institutions who shared their experiences and priorities, and who helped ground this work in the realities of daily life Downtown.

We offer specific thanks to the City of Hamilton's Economic Development team for providing leadership throughout the process, guiding engagement, convening partners, and coordinating input from City staff across departments. Their stewardship helped translate a wide range of perspectives into a practical strategy focused on implementation, measurable outcomes, and coordinated impact. We also acknowledge the support of the City's senior leadership, whose direction and participation helped ensure the work was informed by operational realities and aligned with the City's broader priorities and service delivery responsibilities.

We acknowledge and thank the many partners and City divisions who contributed their time, data, operational expertise, constructive feedback, and who were actively engaged in sharing their reality and imagining things differently. Revitalizing Downtown is not the responsibility of any single group. It requires sustained collaboration, shared accountability, and a commitment to continuous improvement. This Strategy reflects that shared effort, and we are grateful to everyone who contributed to its development.



1 Introduction

Hamilton has always been a city built on hard work, resilience, and quiet determination. Forged in its industrial roots, it is a city that knows how to build, repair, and reinvent, not through pretension, but through perseverance. Its people have weathered change and challenge with a steady focus on possibility, turning setbacks into momentum and effort into progress. This character runs through the city's streets and skyline: in the repurposed factories now alive with artists and entrepreneurs, in the cranes that mark new growth, and in the deep pride Hamiltonians take in their community. Hamilton's strength has never been about show; it has always been about substance, the conviction that the city's best days are still ahead, built by the same hands that shaped its past.

At the heart of that spirit are Hamiltonians themselves: resilient, caring, and deeply connected to one another. Through every challenge, from economic shifts to social pressures, the people of this city have responded with compassion and determination. They have built networks of mutual support, led grassroots revitalization efforts, and shown that care for community is one of Hamilton's defining strengths. This reputation for empathy and perseverance continues to attract people who want to make a difference, people who see Hamilton not as a finished product, but as a shared project.

Before the pandemic, Downtown Hamilton was on a clear upward trajectory. New businesses were opening, cultural venues were flourishing, and long-vacant buildings were coming back to life. The energy was palpable: people were choosing to live, work, and invest Downtown. Yet the pandemic disrupted that momentum, exposing vulnerabilities that had long existed beneath the surface. Today, downtown faces serious challenges: empty storefronts, safety concerns, social pressures, and shifting work patterns that have reduced daily foot traffic. In many ways, the downtown is in crisis. But this moment also presents an opportunity; to rethink how the city, its partners, and its people can come together to restore confidence and vitality in the core.

Downtown Hamilton is the city's shared civic heart: the one place where Hamiltonians from every neighbourhood come together for culture, services, work, and public life. When Downtown feels safe, clean, and welcoming, it strengthens pride and confidence across the entire city; when it struggles, the impacts ripple outward—shaping investment decisions, perceptions of safety, and Hamilton's reputation. Revitalizing Downtown is therefore not just about buildings or events; it is about restoring a Downtown that Hamiltonians choose to use every day and that visitors experience as a compelling front door to the city.

The desire to rebuild and care for Downtown remains strong. Business owners, property developers, cultural organizations, residents, and community advocates are ready to act but they cannot do it alone. They need a City that is a true partner: one that listens, collaborates, and removes barriers to good ideas. Revitalization requires coordination, shared responsibility, and trust. The City must work hand in hand with all those who are willing to invest in, care for, and champion Downtown aligning resources, policies, and creativity to spark renewal that is inclusive, lasting, and visible in every block.

This report does not claim to offer a silver bullet or a single, definitive solution. Downtown revitalization is complex, dynamic, and deeply human work. Instead, this strategy lays out a "path forward", a framework for action, learning, and collaboration. It invites decision-makers, business owners, community partners, and residents to focus on outcomes rather than perfection, to test ideas, measure impact, and adjust along the way. Progress will come not from avoiding risk but from the courage to experiment, to try new approaches, and to learn together. By embracing this mindset, Hamilton can continue to evolve, resilient, compassionate, and confident in its ability to shape its own future.



2 Why we are revitalizing Downtown

2.1. What is a Downtown?

Downtowns emerged historically as the geographic and functional cores of urban life. They were compact areas where commerce, governance, transportation, and culture intersected. They were designed for proximity and exchange, concentrating banks, department stores, theatres, and civic buildings within walkable distances. This concentration gave downtowns a symbolic role as the “front door” of the city, the place that represented its economic strength, civic pride, and collective identity.

By the mid-20th century, downtowns had evolved into concentrated centres of administration, finance, and professional services, structured around the conventional 9-to-5 workday. They also accommodated a growing concentration of cultural and entertainment assets, including museums, art galleries, theatres, arenas, restaurants, and bars, that extended activity into the evening and supported regional tourism and leisure economies. The urban form of these downtowns was increasingly shaped by automobile dependency: roadway networks were designed for high-capacity movement, parking supply became a central planning consideration, and land-use patterns adapted to facilitate vehicle access. This functional model produced a distinct temporal pattern of high daytime activity associated with office employment, complemented by evening and weekend visitation linked to events and entertainment, but limited continuous residential presence or around-the-clock use.

In recent decades, downtowns have been redefined as multi-functional urban ecosystems that combine employment, culture, education, residential life, and social services within a dense, walkable environment. This redefinition has guided planning policy and investment, seeking to create downtowns that are active throughout the day and inclusive of diverse users. However, this vision is now under pressure. Structural shifts, such as hybrid work models, e-commerce, and the visible concentration of social and housing challenges in central areas, have disrupted established assumptions about how downtowns operate and what roles they should play in urban life. The result is an ongoing transition, in which cities must reassess how to sustain vibrancy and economic relevance amid changing patterns of use.

The vitality of downtowns is closely tied to perceptions of safety, cleanliness, and opportunity. Post-pandemic shifts have challenged these conditions: hybrid work has reduced daily office populations, retail patterns have changed, and social pressures have become more visible in central urban spaces. As a result, many downtowns now face a transition period and are no longer defined solely by traditional economic activity, but by their ability to adapt and diversify.

Resilient downtowns are those that have embraced flexibility and innovation. They invest in housing to broaden their population base, support small and creative businesses to sustain local character, and enhance public spaces to foster inclusion and belonging. Increasingly, revitalization strategies emphasize collaboration, bringing together municipalities, property owners, community organizations, and residents to align investments and coordinate outcomes. The downtown becomes not just a business district, but a platform for civic partnership and experimentation.

Downtowns remain the last truly shared civic spaces. They are physical environments where people from all walks of life can encounter one

Figure 1- Hamilton, Canada West. From the mountain painting 1854. Credit: Library and Archives Canada, R13133-393.

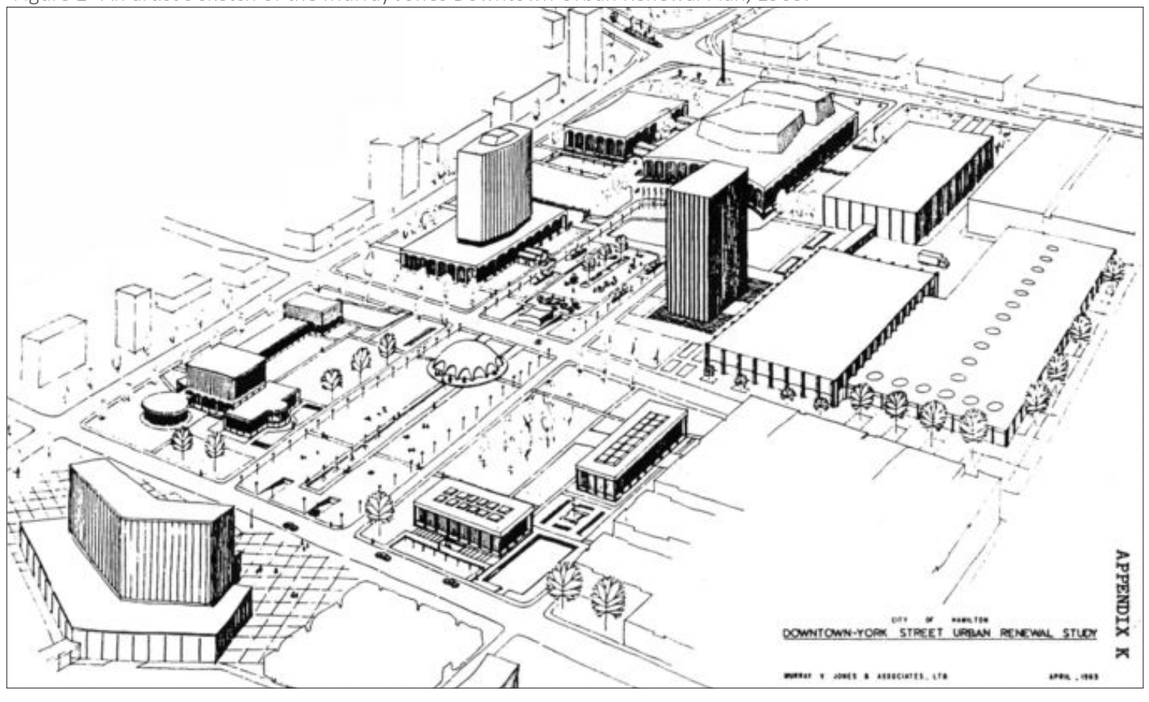


another in meaningful, spontaneous ways. They are the social commons of urban life, where difference, creativity, and commerce intersect in tangible form. Yet the context around them is shifting again. The emerging industrial revolutions in automation, artificial intelligence, green energy, and digital connectivity, are transforming how cities create and distribute value. As production becomes more decentralized and knowledge work more virtual, downtowns must redefine their function. Their future relevance will lie not only in economic output but in their capacity to cultivate human connection, creativity, and collaboration, qualities that cannot be automated or digitized. Reimagined downtowns can serve as the physical and social infrastructure of the next economy: places that bring people together to innovate, deliberate, and build shared prosperity in an increasingly complex world.

2.2. Downtown yesterday and today

Hamilton emerged in the early nineteenth century as a centre of manufacturing and administration, rooted between the Niagara Escarpment and Lake Ontario. Its rapid industrialization in the mid-1800s, driven by the railways and British immigration, gave rise to a dense commercial and working-class core. By the early twentieth century, Hamilton's factories supplied textiles, steel, and metal goods nationwide, while its Downtown supported a vibrant mix of retail hubs, civic institutions, and residential neighbourhoods. It was particularly strategic during the World Wars, with many weapons and goods being produced in the city's local industries.

Figure 2- An artist's sketch of the Murray Jones Downtown Urban Renewal Plan, 1965.



However, the city's heavy reliance on manufacturing, especially steel, meant that it was especially vulnerable to the shifting global markets, and as the reliance on steel and manufacturing decreased, the city experienced a period of decline. After the 1950s, suburban expansion drew residents away from the urban centre, and the closure of textile mills and light-manufacturing plants reduced downtown employment. This economic slump, coupled with the loss of residential populations and a consistent workforce, as well as aging infrastructure, marked the beginning of a long cycle of decline.

Following the World Wars, leaders at the City of Hamilton attempted to respond to the deterioration of downtown areas with mid-century urban-renewal strategies rooted in modernist planning principles. From the 1950s through the 1980s, Hamilton sought to rebuild the city centre into a cultural and economic hub. Efforts included the widening of King Street, the creation of a one-way street grid to manage congestion, and the clearance of older houses and buildings to make way for large civic and commercial projects.

In 1959, the city focused on redevelopment and renewal of a central downtown area with changes to City Hall and the Court House. The construction of Jackson Square in the 1970s was a keystone in the urban renewal project for Hamilton, with the creation of a mixed-use project retail mall. Further developments around Jackson Square and along main transport corridors like King, James, and Bay Streets included notable areas like Hamilton Place (built in 1973 as a multi-purpose arts centre), the Hamilton Art Gallery (1977), and the Copps Coliseum (opened in 1985 as a large-scale sports arena). Green spaces in the city core were also modified, with Gore Park dramatically altered in 1983 with the removal of all original trees from the area to make space for a new type of urban park. Transportation hubs, like the Rebecca Street bus terminal, were demolished and replaced by new centres in an attempt to improve access and alternative transport systems.

These projects embodied this redevelopment approach, with the intent to replace aging



Figure 3- The intersection of King Street West and James Street, summer 1971. Credit: Phil Aggus.

structures with cultural and commercial spaces which would draw people, encourage new investments, and restore civic pride. However, the large-scale changes and interventions succeeded mainly in demolishing entire blocks of historic buildings, displacing small businesses and erasing much of the local built urban fabric. The physical transformation was dramatic, but the hoped-for social and economic goals fell short, as the new monumental changes did not encourage residential growth or visitor interest in the downtown core as anticipated. This strategy takes the opposite approach: wherever possible, it treats Downtown's historic fabric as an advantage, repairing, retrofitting, and adaptively reusing buildings to support today's needs while maintaining character.

By the 1990s, the issues from Hamilton's earlier renewal projects became more apparent as downtown continued to decline. Despite numerous projects and initiatives focused on revitalization attempts and investment, vacancy rates remained high and an ongoing lack of activity. Several local initiatives were instigated, such as the Downtown Hamilton Ideas Charrette (1996), Restore the Core (1997), and Core Heritage 2000, which revealed a growing desire for change. Residents and workers cited outdated infrastructure, parking challenges, high taxes, and a lack of coordinated planning, all of which had caused ongoing problems for a lively and engaging downtown.

Failure for these projects partly stemmed from the gap between planning intent and implementation. Projects were often designed separately, with limited integration between economic, social, and cultural goals. The emphasis on commercial and industrial redevelopment removed Hamilton's downtown role as a residential and cultural centre.

Moreover, as the steel industry declined through the 1980s–2000s, Hamilton lost major employers, and with them, the stable working population that once sustained local businesses.

Before the pandemic, Downtown Hamilton was showing steady signs of economic recovery and renewal, supported by employment growth, decreasing office vacancies, and an increasingly vibrant street-level economy. According to the City's 2019 *Downtown Office Vacancy and Employment Survey (PED20006)*, the Downtown Urban Growth Centre (UGC), bound by Queen Street, Victoria Avenue, Hunter Street, and Cannon Street, contained 26,305 jobs, marking a modest 0.7% increase (186 jobs) over the previous year. The density of jobs and residents reached 209 persons and jobs per hectare (pjh), reflecting progress toward Hamilton's official plan target of 250 pjh by 2031. Most jobs were full-time (68.9%), followed by part-time (23.6%) and seasonal (7.5%), indicating a stable employment base in the city's core.

The office market in late 2019 was in its strongest position in nearly a decade. The survey recorded 5.6 million sq. ft. of office space in the Downtown, of which 667,720 sq. ft. was vacant, an 11.9% vacancy rate, down 0.8 percentage points from 2018. This was the first time since 2011 that the vacancy rate fell below 12%, signalling improving economic conditions and renewed investor confidence. Most of the empty space was concentrated in a few large office towers, meaning smaller buildings and mixed-use properties were performing far better, with a "functional" vacancy closer to 7% if those large towers were excluded.

At street level, Downtown was visibly more active and appealing. The survey found a 9.9% commercial street-front vacancy rate, down from 10.4% in 2018. Some vacancies were temporary, caused by renovations or restorations, suggesting an underlying trend of reinvestment and turnover rather than long-term decline. City staff noted "fewer vacancies across the board," contributing to a more positive and vibrant public realm, with more active storefronts, pedestrian traffic, and signs of small-business confidence.

Downtown

$5B

in assessed value

22%

overall assessment growth in 5 years

+28000

Jobs

38%

of total assessed value of all BIAs citywide

Taken together, these data show that Downtown Hamilton was on a clear upward trajectory immediately prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Modest but steady job growth, rising employment density, and a tightening commercial real-estate market reflected increasing confidence among employers, investors, and residents. The combination of renewed investment, adaptive reuse, and consistent City monitoring positioned the core as a regional employment and service hub. The 2019 report painted a picture of a Downtown that, while still recovering from decades of economic transition, had entered a period of measurable improvement and cautious optimism, setting the stage for both the challenges and opportunities that would emerge in the years that followed.

Profile of Downtown today

Downtown Hamilton today reflects both the city's enduring strengths and its complex urban challenges. Within the Downtown Urban Growth Centre (UGC), the heart of Hamilton's core, the population is approximately 13,000 residents, while the broader Community Improvement Plan Area (CIPA) supports about 31,000 residents. The area continues to function as the city's economic and institutional core, hosting over 28,000 jobs, a diverse range of businesses, and many of Hamilton's most important civic, cultural, and educational institutions. Despite facing social and economic pressures in recent years, Downtown remains a vital centre of activity, creativity, and identity for the entire city.

The economic footprint of Downtown is significant. The combined assessed property

value of the CIPA area is estimated at $5 billion, while the UGC represents approximately $3.5 billion. Together, the largest area accounts for roughly 5.1% of Hamilton's total assessment base, which stands at $93.8 billion in 2025. Within the network of Hamilton's Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), the Downtown Hamilton BIA and the International Village BIA together have an assessed value of about $288 million, representing approximately 38% of the total assessed value of all BIAs citywide. This concentration of value underscores Downtown's continued fiscal and economic importance to Hamilton, particularly in commercial and mixed-use properties that drive municipal revenues and local employment.

Demographically, Downtown Hamilton's population skews younger and more diverse than the citywide average. A large proportion of residents are between 25 and 44 years old, reflecting the growing presence of young professionals, students, and newcomers drawn by relative housing affordability and proximity to services, transit, and culture. At the same time, Downtown also includes higher proportions of single-person and lower-income households, as well as residents facing housing precarity. This diversity is one of Downtown's defining features, a blend of creative workers, long-term residents, newcomers, and vulnerable populations sharing the same urban space. The housing landscape is evolving rapidly: hundreds of new residential units were completed or under construction in 2024 and 2025, primarily in mixed-use and mid-rise developments along the LRT corridor and in adaptive reuse projects. These new homes represent early progress toward intensification goals and a partial response to housing demand pressures in the core.

At the same time, social pressures have intensified. The number of individuals experiencing homelessness in Hamilton has risen from approximately 1,200 in 2024 to over 2,000 in 2025, reflecting a deepening housing and affordability crisis. The City and its partners currently operate roughly 600 shelter beds, including emergency, transitional, and low-barrier spaces, which meet only part of the need. Downtown remains the focal point of visible homelessness and social vulnerability in Hamilton, where housing instability intersects with public health, mental health, and addiction challenges. These conditions have heightened community concern and reinforced the need for coordinated, compassionate, and sustained action.

Despite these challenges, Downtown Hamilton continues to demonstrate resilience and potential. The growth in residential population, steady employment base, and enduring concentration of economic and cultural assets provide a foundation for recovery and renewal. The combination of historic architecture, creative entrepreneurship, and new investments in housing and infrastructure position the Downtown to play a leading role in Hamilton's transition toward a more inclusive, sustainable, and prosperous future.

Downtown today is therefore a place of contrasts, a core rich in potential but burdened by visible inequities, a centre of economic productivity and civic pride that also bears the weight of the city's most complex social issues. It remains Hamilton's symbolic and functional heart, where the city's economic vitality, creativity, and compassion converge. The path forward will depend on aligning investment, governance, and community partnerships to ensure that this heart continues to beat strongly for all who call Hamilton home.

Downtown Hamilton is not only a destination and employment centre. It is first and foremost a neighbourhood. A significant portion of Downtown households are renters, including single-person households, young workers, students, newcomers, and residents on fixed or lower incomes. This matters for revitalization because renters experience Downtown differently than owners. They are often more exposed to housing-cost volatility, to maintenance conditions in older buildings, and to disruption from construction or neighbourhood change. When renters cannot find stable, well-maintained homes, Downtown loses the everyday population that sustains street life, supports local businesses, and strengthens safety through regular presence.

A Downtown strategy that is serious about revitalization must be serious about the lived experience of renters. This includes improving the quality and upkeep of the rental housing stock, strengthening pathways to affordability and stability, and ensuring that Downtown functions well for daily life, not only for events or visitors. Clean and safe streets, access to groceries and services, nearby green spaces, and a sense of belonging are not secondary issues. These are core conditions that shape whether residents stay, invest socially, and build community in the heart of the city.

2.3. Recent and current City initiatives

The City of Hamilton's Cross-Departmental Downtown Revitalization Initiative Update (Report PW25053) provides a comprehensive overview of the City's coordinated efforts to restore vitality, safety, and economic strength to the downtown core. The report emphasizes that a clean, safe, and vibrant downtown is essential to Hamilton's civic identity and economic future. The initiative brings together multiple departments under a unified strategy focused on four key pillars: Beautification & Cleanliness, Tourism, Safety, and Economic Development.

The Beautification & Cleanliness pillar highlights extensive service enhancements implemented since 2023, such as expanding litter collection to seven days a week, increasing street and bike lane sweeping, and launching a summer Downtown Clean Team. These actions are supported by new tools like a centralized graffiti-reporting system and a forthcoming public Graffiti Dashboard to promote transparency and community participation. The City has also stepped up enforcement around vacant and heritage buildings, property standards, and graffiti removal on private property, demonstrating a data-driven, proactive approach to maintenance and enforcement. Taken together, these efforts create a strong platform for a heritage-and-reuse approach: protecting buildings at risk, improving compliance and maintenance, and then pairing enforcement with incentives and streamlined pathways to bring buildings back into productive use.

Under the Tourism pillar, the City is investing in placemaking, cultural programming, and public art to re-establish downtown as a cultural and entertainment hub. Initiatives include gateway enhancements, Hamilton's "Year of Music" in 2026 timed with the JUNO Awards, and adaptive reuse projects like Magnolia Hall. Public art and pedestrianization pilots on key streets are also being introduced to animate downtown and improve its appeal for both residents and visitors.

The Safety pillar outlines a coordinated approach that includes the Encampment Response Team, housing outreach through BIAs, infrastructure repairs, and enhanced road safety measures. The Hamilton Police Service's Core Patrol initiative employs data-driven, community-based policing to target visible disorder and

improve perceptions of safety. These efforts are complemented by new safety infrastructure such as lighting upgrades and the Hostile Vehicle Mitigation pilot for large public events.

Finally, the Economic Development pillar tackles structural challenges such as rising office vacancies, hybrid work, and low storefront occupancy. Key programs include the Downtown Office-to-Residential/Hotel Conversion Grant, the permanent Graffiti Grant Program. Continuous engagement with BIAs, local businesses, and property owners remains central to aligning revitalization with investment and growth. The report concludes that sustained cross-departmental coordination is critical to achieving a cleaner, safer, more inclusive, and economically vibrant downtown, one that reflects Hamilton's values of equity, diversity, and accessibility while strengthening civic pride and resilience.

2.4. Downtown matters

Downtown Hamilton is the heart of the city's identity and the centre of its civic, cultural, and economic life. It is the place where Hamilton's history meets its future, where the city's industrial legacy, artistic creativity, and entrepreneurial spirit converge. A strong Downtown signals a strong Hamilton: it represents the city's collective ambition, its confidence, and its capacity to adapt. Downtown is not simply another neighbourhood. It is a shared civic asset that connects residents from every part of the city. It is where people gather to celebrate, to create, to learn, and to engage, a physical expression of Hamilton's care, diversity, and community resilience.

Downtown is one of Hamilton's most productive and impactful urban areas. It generates a disproportionately high share of employment, investment, and cultural activity relative to its geographic size. Within roughly two square kilometres, Downtown Hamilton accommodates more than 28,000 jobs, 13,000 residents, and a concentration of municipal, health, and educational institutions that serve the entire region. It is home to some of the city's most significant cultural assets, including the Art Gallery of Hamilton, FirstOntario Concert Hall, and the Hamilton Public Library, as well as a growing network of creative industries, restaurants, and small businesses. This density of economic and cultural activity creates powerful multiplier effects. Every dollar invested Downtown returns value city-wide through tax revenue, visitor spending, and employment growth.

Downtown also anchors Hamilton's transit, infrastructure, and housing systems. It is the hub of the Light Rail Transit (LRT) corridor, linking east and west Hamilton and connecting future growth nodes. Investments in Downtown infrastructure, from utilities to green stormwater systems, strengthen the city's ability to absorb new residents and businesses without expanding its footprint. As Hamilton grows, the Downtown's capacity for intensification and adaptive reuse will be key to meeting housing targets under both provincial and federal mandates. This makes Downtown renewal not just a local goal, but a strategic necessity for managing growth sustainably.

Downtown's heritage, its historic main streets, landmark civic buildings, and fine-grained storefront fabric, is not just nostalgia; it is a core economic asset. Heritage places signal authenticity, reduce 'anywhere-city' sameness, and provide the adaptable building stock that can host new housing, small businesses, and cultural uses. Protecting and reusing heritage buildings is therefore a practical revitalization tool: it strengthens identity, supports tourism and local pride, and creates a distinctive environment that attracts residents, talent, and investment.

Downtown's renewal is an adaptation opportunity. Every time the City rebuilds a street, upgrades utilities, or improves a plaza, it can reduce heat stress, manage stormwater more safely, and improve comfort for pedestrians and transit users. These are not "extra" features: they protect investment, reduce service disruptions, and make Downtown a more reliable place to live, work, and run a business as extreme weather becomes more common.

Equally important are the social and qualitative dimensions. Downtown is where Hamilton's commitment to care, inclusion, and equity is most visible and most tested. It is home to vital social services, affordable housing, and community organizations that support vulnerable populations. When Downtown succeeds, it creates pathways to opportunity for residents across the city. When it struggles, the impacts ripple outward. Investing in safety, housing, and social cohesion Downtown therefore strengthens Hamilton's entire social fabric.

Finally, a thriving Downtown is central to Hamilton's image and competitiveness. It is what visitors experience first, what students and entrepreneurs consider when choosing where to live or work, and what investors look to as a measure of civic vitality. Research consistently shows that strong downtowns contribute to higher citywide property values, increased tourism, and greater business confidence. For Hamilton, revitalizing the Downtown is about more than urban renewal. It is about affirming the city's trajectory, attracting the next generation of residents and businesses, and ensuring that prosperity is shared.

Downtown Hamilton: the heart of the city and the front door to the region

Downtown Hamilton matters because it is the city's most concentrated expression of identity, function, and daily life. It is where Hamilton's civic institutions, cultural assets, employment, services, and public spaces converge within a walkable footprint. Downtown is also where the city's strengths and challenges are most visible at the same time: the creative energy of artists and entrepreneurs, the presence of key venues and institutions, and the lived realities of affordability pressures and social vulnerability. This concentration is not incidental; it is precisely what makes Downtown consequential. Decisions made Downtown about safety, cleanliness, public space, housing, and investment, shape how Hamilton feels about itself and how others judge its confidence and direction.

Downtown is more than a destination. It is a neighbourhood with hundreds of businesses and tens of thousands of residents, many of whom are renters, and whose quality of life depends on the basics being done well: clean sidewalks, good lighting, safe and dignified public spaces, reliable transit access, and everyday amenities. When these conditions are strong, Downtown becomes the foundation of citywide vitality: residents stay longer, businesses invest, visitors linger, and the city benefits from a stable, active street life that supports safety through regular presence. When these conditions weaken, Downtown loses the everyday activity that sustains local commerce and civic pride, and the challenges of vacancy, disorder, and disconnection become more acute.

Downtown also matters because it is one of Hamilton's highest-value and highest-impact geographies. It concentrates jobs, cultural venues, public institutions, and tax-generating

properties in a compact area, producing strong citywide return when investments are aligned and visible. In practical terms, Downtown is where improvements to public space, streets, and building reuse can generate outsized effects by supporting main street businesses, strengthening the visitor economy, enabling housing intensification, and improving mobility across the city. This is why revitalization must focus on coordinated, cumulative action: when investments in safety, maintenance, housing, streetscape, and programming reinforce one another, the lift effect multiplies.

Downtown is Hamilton's front door. For Hamiltonians, it is where the city's pride is tested, where people decide whether their city feels cared for, welcoming, and worth spending time in. For visitors, including many from the Greater Toronto Area, Downtown is often the first and most memorable experience of Hamilton. The opportunity is not to imitate Toronto's scale or polish, but to distinguish Hamilton through authenticity: heritage streets and industrial character, independent businesses, strong cultural venues, and an easy-to-navigate, human-scale downtown that feels discovered rather than manufactured. A revitalized Downtown can be both a daily living room for Hamiltonians and an authentic urban destination for visitors, a place that strengthens citywide identity while supporting economic growth and social well-being.



3 DESIGNING THE STRATEGY

3.1. Engaging Hamiltonians

As directed by Council, the project made a concerted effort to engage Hamiltonians from all walks of life, hearing from hundreds of residents, business owners, creators, service providers, and community partners across the Downtown and beyond. This process captured a meaningful cross-section of perspectives, revealing both the challenges and the aspirations that define Downtown today. While there are still voices yet to be heard, the City and project team remain firmly committed to continuing engagement, ensuring that future phases of the strategy reflect the full diversity and lived experience of Hamilton's community.

The first phase of the Downtown Hamilton Revitalization Strategy placed engagement at the centre of its approach. From the outset, the process was designed to reach a broad and representative cross-section of those who live, work, create, and invest in the Downtown. Beginning in early March 2025, the project team, led by Cultural Spaces in partnership with City staff, developed an engagement structure that could both capture diverse perspectives and allow for open, honest dialogue. The goal was to listen before planning, to understand the lived experience of Downtown from multiple viewpoints, and to establish the foundation for an authentic, shared direction.

Between March and June 2025, engagement unfolded across multiple platforms and settings. Nine thematic conversations were organized around key areas shaping Downtown life: Arts, Culture and Entertainment; Small and Mid-Size



Figure 4- Invitation to "Our Future Downtown" public consultation portal. Credit: City of Hamilton.

Businesses; Transportation and Mobility; Safety and Social Services; Downtown Marketing and Tourism; Housing; Commercial Properties; and the Urban Fabric and Public Realm. Each session brought together an average of fifteen participants, representing local businesses, cultural organizations, social agencies, property owners, and residents. Several of these sessions were co-hosted with external partners, including Business Improvement Areas and established social-service and housing networks. In total, hundreds of stakeholders contributed to this phase, offering a credible cross-section of those most invested in Downtown's future.

Public consultation complemented these thematic discussions and was reported to Council on July 9, 2025. This included a series of open houses, interviews, and pop-up engagements, as well as an immersive field component in which the team conducted four extended visits, ten days in total, walking the streets, visiting local establishments, and conversing informally with residents and business owners. This hands-on approach allowed the team to experience Downtown's rhythms by day and night and to capture perspectives often missed in formal consultations. Feedback from these sessions reflected both pride and frustration: pride in Downtown's creativity, diversity, and entrepreneurial energy, and frustration at perceptions of neglect, safety concerns, and slow municipal responsiveness.

A series of working-group meetings with City departments, senior leadership, and the Hamilton Police Service further deepened the dialogue. These sessions explored internal coordination, data requirements, and the City's role as both regulator and partner in revitalization. Two online engagement tools were also launched: one for City staff to share ideas and align on internal roles, and another for external stakeholders to highlight their own initiatives to make Downtown more welcoming. Together, these digital platforms expanded reach and accessibility, ensuring that participation was not limited to those able to attend in person.

This first phase confirmed that Hamiltonians care deeply about their Downtown and want to be active participants in its renewal. Stakeholders consistently expressed a desire for better communication with the City, clearer priorities, and a sense of shared ownership in the revitalization effort. The engagement findings presented to Council in July 2025 highlight both the strength of local commitment and the urgency for the City to work hand-in-hand with residents, businesses, and institutions to restore confidence and momentum.

Following the presentation to Council, engagement entered a second phase focused on crafting the vision, principles, transformative ideas and early actions for the strategy. The project team reached out to the original stakeholders and partners to test emerging ideas and refine priorities. These discussions took place through a combination of in-person meetings, virtual meetings, and ongoing online feedback channels hosted on *Engage Hamilton*. The intent was to maintain continuity, strengthen relationships, and ensure that the strategy evolved collaboratively rather than being imposed top-down. This iterative engagement continues to reinforce the shared ownership of Downtown's future and the collective responsibility for implementing meaningful, lasting change.

What we heard

Across all stages of engagement, one message was consistent: people care deeply about Downtown Hamilton. Residents, businesses, artists, community organizations, and service providers spoke with pride, frustration, and hope. They described Downtown as both a neighbourhood and a destination. It is a place that reflects Hamilton's diversity, creativity, and resilience, but also one that faces significant challenges requiring sustained attention and coordinated action.

Stakeholders see Downtown as a living community, not just a commercial centre. It is home to tens of thousands of residents, many of them renters, creators, and small business owners, and the livelihood of hundreds of independent entrepreneurs. Renters and other residents have raised consistently the importance of the basics of daily life Downtown: the need for clean and well-lit streets, reliable building maintenance, and safer and more comfortable public spaces, especially near transit stops, main corridors, and civic destinations. Many residents and businesses described feeling that their quality of life depends on quick response to small problems, like graffiti, broken lighting, litter, damaged sidewalks, before they become defining features of the Downtown experience. Renters also emphasized the importance of everyday amenities like grocery options, accessible green space, places to sit and gather, schools, and inclusive community activity, because these needs cannot be met by a neighbourhood that is designed primarily around 9-to-5 workers or special events.

People value Downtown's walkability, heritage buildings, and cultural energy, but they also want it to function as a complete neighbourhood. People also linked heritage to everyday livability: human-scale blocks that feel walkable, older buildings that can host independent businesses and cultural uses, and streets that 'feel like Hamilton' rather than interchangeable. For many, Downtown's greatest strength is its sense of authenticity and human scale, the feeling that it belongs to everyone.

At the same time, participants voiced strong feelings of neglect and disconnection. Many described frustration with the visible deterioration of the public realm, the concentration of social challenges, and a perception that the City has not consistently prioritized the area. Stakeholders expressed a need for improved communication, clearer decision-making, and greater alignment between civic priorities and community-led efforts. They want a City that listens, responds, and acts, one that matches the care and investment that residents and businesses already demonstrate daily.

Throughout the consultations that followed the July 2025 Council presentation, participants also emphasized a desire for clarity and collaboration in shaping a shared vision. They want a revitalization strategy that is practical, inclusive, and transparent. The strategy must build confidence through visible progress and steady, coordinated effort. Discussions about draft principles revealed a strong preference for a "people-first" approach: maintaining and caring for what exists, encouraging initiative, improving safety and accessibility, and supporting those who contribute to the social and cultural fabric of Downtown.

Finally, there is a clear collective aspiration for Downtown to once again reflect Hamilton's pride and potential. Stakeholders want a Downtown that welcomes everyone, where residents feel safe, where businesses can thrive, and where the City demonstrates leadership through partnership and presence. They recognize that transformation will not happen overnight, but they share a readiness to collaborate, experiment, and take ownership of the process. They also wish to see immediate action on critical matters as collective frustration has reached a peak.

2.3. Methodology

The methodology for the Downtown Hamilton Revitalization Strategy has been guided by a sustainability framework that considers the cultural, economic, social, and environmental dimensions of Downtown life as interconnected and mutually reinforcing. The work recognizes that Downtown is both a reflection of Hamilton as a whole and a vital contributor to its broader prosperity and identity. A strong, inclusive, and resilient Downtown supports the success of the entire city, just as the city's overall health shapes the experience of its core. From this perspective, Downtown is understood not as a separate district but as a living expression of Hamilton's collective ambition: a place where investments in culture, infrastructure, and community directly benefit residents citywide. Practically, this includes integrating climate adaptation into the same decisions that shape revitalization, streetscape design, public space renewal, building retrofits, and infrastructure sequencing, so resilience is delivered through everyday city-building. This framework ensures that the strategy integrates people, place, and prosperity in a coherent and balanced way.

This is an mission-oriented strategy that is different from a traditional planning document. It is intended to set a clear course for change by focusing on practical outcomes, measurable progress, and visible results. At its foundation lies the belief that good process is essential to good outcomes. Effective revitalization depends on process that is transparent, well-coordinated, and rooted in shared purpose, one that builds momentum and confidence. A sound process is neither so slow and fragmented that progress stalls, nor so reactive that opportunities are missed or decisions are made without lasting benefit. The direction provided through this strategy is therefore one of balance: deliberate in design, but agile in execution to ensure that the City acts decisively while maintaining the discipline and collaboration required to deliver meaningful, long-term change.

To inform this work, the project team gathered and analyzed a comprehensive set of the most current and credible data available. Quantitative and qualitative information were brought together to describe Downtown's realities from multiple perspectives. Demographic and socioeconomic data were reviewed to understand the people who live Downtown, their changing needs, and how they experience their community. Business and employment data were analyzed to assess the scale, diversity, and resilience of the local economy, alongside property and land-use records that reveal investment patterns and the structure of Downtown's economic base.

In parallel with this local data analysis, the team looked at revitalization initiatives and strategies across Canada. This included examining approaches in Ottawa, Winnipeg, London, Montreal, Calgary, Victoria, Halifax, and Edmonton, cities that, like Hamilton, are addressing similar challenges in their downtowns. The review explored policies and projects related to a breadth of issues including homelessness and supportive housing, adaptive reuse and office-to-residential conversions, activation of entertainment and cultural districts, and the design and management of public spaces. These comparative insights provided valuable context for understanding how other municipalities are balancing economic development, social equity, and public realm renewal in post-pandemic environments.

The analysis of these external examples helped

identify transferable practices and innovative models that can inform Hamilton's path forward. While there are a range of ideas and solutions that can be gleaned on the entire scope of Downtown challenges, this analysis focused on a selection of critical solutions relevant to priorities for Hamilton. Lessons were drawn from both successful interventions and ongoing challenges.

The methodology also included a review of data related to safety, mobility, and accessibility, drawing on collaboration with municipal departments, the Hamilton Police Service, and social-sector partners. These datasets, paired with observations from a number of site visits, offered insight into how people move through and experience Downtown, and how perceptions of safety and maintenance align with measurable conditions.

Finally, recognizing that Hamilton's Downtown is as much a cultural hub as it is an economic one, data on arts, cultural activity, and tourism were analyzed to capture the broader creative and experiential economy and understand how Downtown's cultural life drives visitation, identity, and economic impact.

Together, these lines of inquiry have produced an integrated, multi-dimensional understanding of Downtown Hamilton's current reality. The resulting analysis not only identifies challenges but also defines opportunities for immediate, coordinated action.

Strategic Structure

The Downtown Hamilton Revitalization Strategy is organized around a clear and connected structure that moves from vision to implementation. Each level of this structure serves a specific function, and together they provide an organized and flexible framework for coordinated action.

The **Mission** defines the purpose of the Strategy and is a reminder of why this revitalization work is being done.

The **Vision** expresses the shared aspiration for what Downtown Hamilton should become over the next decade.

The **Principles** establish the values and operating standards that guide decision-making across the Strategy. They are particularly powerful when adopted within the municipal organization to focus attention, align resources, and improve coordination across departments. By providing a consistent framework for evaluating choices and setting priorities, the Principles help ensure that the City's actions are coherent, transparent, and responsive. Beyond City Hall, they serve as a shared reference point for stakeholders, enabling businesses, community organizations, and residents to work toward a common direction grounded in mutual understanding and accountability.

The **Levers** identify the key sectors and assets that have the greatest potential to influence change and generate a lift effect across the Downtown ecosystem. These include areas such as arts and culture, housing and development, small business and entrepreneurship, mobility and public space, and the renewal of civic and cultural infrastructure. When investments are aligned within these interconnected levers, their impacts multiply.

The **Priorities** translate this framework into a focused set of specific activities to be completed within three to five years. They concentrate resources and coordination where immediate results can be achieved and confidence restored, while laying the groundwork for longer-term transformation.

The **Transformative Initiatives** represent high-impact, cross-cutting projects combining these levers to produce visible and lasting results. They are efforts that can redefine how Downtown functions and feels.

The **Actions** operationalize the priorities through clear, implementable steps specifying leadership, partnerships, timelines, and potential cost. A set of proposed **Key Performance Indicators** offer measurable outcomes to ensure accountability and progress.

This structure ensures that the Strategy functions as both a directional framework and an implementation roadmap. It connects long-term ambition to short-term delivery, linking vision and evidence to tangible outcomes. By aligning values, levers, and initiatives within a coherent system, the Strategy provides Hamilton with a unified approach to revitalizing Downtown that recognizes its complexity, harnesses its assets, and directs collective effort towards sustainable citywide benefits.

4 Foundation for Change

Mission

Reignite Downtown's potential by addressing its decline and transforming it into the authentic, renewed heart of the city.

Vision

Downtown Hamilton is a **safe, green and welcoming core** where tree-lined streets, lively plazas, exceptional artistic, cultural, food-related and entertainment venues, and shaded transit stops make it easy to walk, roll and linger day and night. **Mixed-income homes**—including a strong share of permanently affordable, especially to support Downtown's work force, and non-profit housing—sit above active, transparent ground floors, bringing **more neighbours onto the sidewalks and eyes onto the street**. Storefronts are full, with a curated mix of local shops, markets and restaurants that spill onto parkettes and promenades, while music, art and festivals animate evenings and weekends. **Streets feel cared for**—well lit, clean and accessible—with ambassadors, outreach teams and businesses working together so everyone feels comfortable and supported. Frequent transit and seamless bike connections knit the district to the wider city, and clear wayfinding celebrates Hamilton's arts, cultural and culinary scene. Downtown residents can build stable lives with access to daily needs, green space, and a welcoming community experience.

The exciting and **creative qualities of Hamiltonians are on full display** to attract visitors from outside the city and contribute to a positive reputation. Downtown is **home to venues, destinations, and businesses that are unique in the city**. The result is a Downtown where Hamiltonians of all ages and incomes choose to live, visit and invest—often, happily and for longer.

The following principles, when applied together, help guide decisions for maximum impact in revitalizing Downtown. They are a reminder of 'why we are doing this' as actions and initiatives are proposed and implemented. They help get action underway.

a. Address the basics

The building blocks of a thriving Downtown, namely the condition of public assets, safety, and cleanliness, are taken care of and prioritized.

This principle focuses the priorities on laying down strong foundations for everything else to be built on. The condition of sidewalks, parks, and other public assets and their ongoing maintenance are key to motivating people to come, to invest, and to get a positive impression of Downtown. Equally important is the feeling of safety which is balanced by urban design, the ongoing visible presence of City authority, enforcement of rules, and inclusive activities and events.

b. Generate value

Downtown generates social and economic value for Hamilton.

This principle focuses on Downtown having a purpose for its residents and for the city as a whole. Decisions lead to positive social and economic outcomes, including fewer unhoused individuals, accessible services, increased affordable housing, new creative hubs, diverse entertainment destinations, needed community assets, and a favourable business environment.

c. Invest in people

Resources are spent on supporting individuals, businesses, and the community.

This principle focuses on directing resources where they matter most to reinvigorate Downtown which includes supporting initiatives, activities, assets, and programmes that help people develop their full potential with positive ripple effects on Downtown.

d. Drive change

Decisions are made that lead to meaningful and desired change.

This principle emphasizes the commitment to change through leadership. This includes encouraging initiative, looking for authenticity in experiences and assets (i.e. it makes sense for Hamilton and its citizens), and the ability to make difficult, impactful and timely decisions.

e. Make it work

Take action and avoid waiting for the perfect circumstances.

This principle is an invitation to spend more time and resources on action and implementation than on policy design and process. The intent is to focus on impact and outcome so that change can occur. The context of action may not be perfect or ideal but it should not be a reason to stop, to avoid taking initiatives, and to try new things.

f. Be positive

How we communicate about, plan for, and intervene in Downtown reinforces positive change.

This principle requires a sustained and conscious effort to develop a positive narrative around Downtown and the city. This includes aiming for excellence, believing in the city's identity, being assertive with talents and abilities, expecting the best, communicate City and partner successes, embracing change, and demonstrate how things are changing.

g. Fix it

Small and big issues are fixed in a timely manner without waiting for 'the big project that's coming'

This principle leads to action and supports a positive approach to decisions. If something is broken or not working, fix it before it becomes a negative. It encourages organizations and individuals to address the problems or let others who can address them perform. It also stresses the importance of not waiting or delaying before taking action, not always waiting for the 'big project' to be underway before addressing critical things, like sidewalks, city lights, roads, or graffiti.

h. Work together

A thriving city is the result of a diversity of citizens, organizations, public and private decision-makers working together.

This principle commits to a shared governance model where each of the private, public, individual and stakeholder contributors to a city's fabric work together around a shared vision and these principles. Each contributes its strengths and leverages the other's contributions. This includes considering private and public partnerships, measuring the public impact of private investments, and decentralizing action. The city as a whole owns Downtown and celebrates its urban experience.

i. Pride

Expect quality and keep things tidy.

This principle sets the expectation that anything being built, designed, or improved, whether by the private or public sector, should be something that Hamiltonians are proud of. Stepping into Downtown should feel comfortable, clean, and positively stimulating for the senses. It enhances the well-being of its residents. Downtown is where Hamilton welcomes visitors and like a home expecting guests, what can be experienced from the public realm is always clean and maintained.

Principles



5 LEVERS OF CHANGE

5.1. What is a lever?

Levers are the key sectors, systems, and assets through which the City and its partners can influence the course of Downtown Hamilton's revitalization. They represent the domains of action where focused investment and coordination can produce a lift effect to improve how Downtown looks, feels, and functions. Each lever reflects an essential part of the Downtown ecosystem: Aesthetics and Beautification; Connectivity and Transportation; Cultural Assets, Activities, and Entertainment; Development Environment; Economic Opportunities; Main Streets; Public and Green Spaces and Assets; Public Safety; and Residents, Visitors, and Workers. Together, these areas define the physical, social, and economic foundations of a thriving Downtown and serve as the mechanisms through which meaningful change can occur.

The levers are interdependent and mutually reinforcing. Investments in one often strengthen outcomes in others. For example, improving Public and Green Spaces enhances Aesthetics and Beautification, supports Economic Opportunities, and contributes to Public Safety by increasing activity and visibility. Similarly, a strong Development Environment enables new housing and adaptive reuse, while Cultural Assets and Entertainment attract people and investment to support local businesses. By intentionally aligning these levers, rather than approaching them as separate initiatives, the City can create a coordinated, systemic approach to revitalization. This integrated perspective ensures that progress in Downtown Hamilton is not incremental or isolated but cumulative, producing lasting benefits that extend across the entire city.

Each of the levers is accompanied by a check list to guide actions and to help ground the effective use if these levers. It answers this question: if we're pulling this lever well, what should be true on the ground?

5.2. Aesthetics and Beautification

Why is this important?

Aesthetics and beautification are powerful levers of revitalization because they shape how people feel about, experience, and value Downtown. The visual quality of streets, buildings, and public spaces communicates confidence and care and it signals that a place matters. Clean, well-maintained, and visually engaging environments attract visitors, invite investment, and encourage people to spend time, not just pass through. In Downtown Hamilton, targeted investments in design, lighting, landscaping, and building façades can transform perceptions, strengthen safety, and enhance the daily experience for residents, workers, and tourists alike. Beautification also fosters civic pride and stewardship: when the environment is attractive and inviting, people are more likely to care for it and participate in its renewal. Beautification should treat heritage features, historic façades, masonry, signage patterns, and landmark streetscapes, as priority assets for care, lighting, and repair, because they are the quickest way to make Downtown feel distinctive and well looked-after. Beyond appearance, aesthetics are an expression of Hamilton's identity, its creativity, resilience, and industrial character, transforming the Downtown into a visible statement of the city's aspirations and values.

Impact

Increase in visitors, increase in spending, increase in sense of wellbeing, collective pride

Checklist

- ☐ Streets and sidewalks are **consistently clean** (litter, gum, debris addressed on a predictable cycle)
- ☐ **Graffiti is removed quickly,** and repeat hotspots are visibly improving
- ☐ Building frontages show **care and pride (**façades maintained, blank walls treated, lighting functional)
- ☐ **Greenery is visible and maintained (**trees, planters, seasonal planting, watering plan)
- ☐ Public art is **protected, promoted, and legible (**wayfinding, lighting, maintenance)
- ☐ "Fix-it" issues are resolved quickly (broken furniture, cracked pavers, missing bins)
- ☐ Key arrival points and gateways feel **welcoming and coherent (**signage, lighting, cleanliness)

Example: Philadelphia, PA (United States) (Mural Arts Philadelphia)

Philadelphia's Mural Arts program is a strong example of beautification used as a city-scale revitalization tool because it is not treated as occasional decoration, it's treated as a repeatable public program with delivery capacity. Founded in **1984**, the initiative has produced **nearly 4,000 artworks** that transform public spaces through collaborative projects that involve artists and community partners. The key outcome here is scale and permanence: the cumulative volume of projects makes "care and pride" visible across many blocks, turning blank walls and neglected surfaces into civic assets.



Figure 5- Mural in Philadelphia. Credit: Beyond My Ken

5.3. Connectivity and transportation

Why is it important?

Connectivity and transportation are the structural backbone of Downtown vitality. A successful Downtown must be easy to reach, safe to move through, and pleasant to explore. Efficient transit systems, walkable streets, and cycling infrastructure connect people to jobs, services, and culture while reducing congestion and emissions. Transit stops are shaded/cool and safe during extreme weather; key walking routes have shade, drainage, and winter maintenance. The arrival of the LRT creates an unprecedented opportunity to reimagine Downtown's mobility network, shifting from car-dominated corridors to multi-modal, human-centered streets that encourage economic and social activity. Strengthening east–west and north–south connections will enhance accessibility between neighbourhoods, institutions, and attractions, ensuring that Downtown serves as a true regional hub. Improving connectivity is not only about moving people efficiently, but about linking opportunity, accessibility, and inclusion in the heart of the city.

Impact

Increase in visitors, increase in spending, increase in services, increase in safety

Checklist

- ☐ Downtown is easy to reach by **transit, walking, cycling, and car** (clear access, minimal confusion)
- ☐ Transit stops are **safe, lit, sheltered, and dignified** (seating, shade, cleanliness, visibility)
- ☐ Pedestrian routes prioritize safety: **crossings, curb ramps, sidewalk continuity**
- ☐ Cycling connections are continuous and protected where possible; bike parking is available
- ☐ Construction impacts are managed: **predictable detours, signage, safe routes maintained**
- ☐ Curb space is organized (loading, deliveries, drop-off, accessible parking)
- ☐ Wayfinding is clear for all users (including visitors): **routes to civic/cultural**
- ☐ **anchors are legible**

Example: Montréal, QC (Canada) (Express Bike Network / REV)

Montréal's Express Bike Network (EBN/REV) shows how a city can change core-area access by committing to a network that is coherent, legible, and continuous rather than scattered. The EBN is a **191-kilometre** protected bike network planned as **17 routes** that is **accessible year-round**, explicitly designed to connect points of interest with safe, efficient cycling infrastructure. The "numbers outcome" is important: the city can point to a defined network footprint and route count, which makes it easy to communicate progress and to close remaining gaps over time.

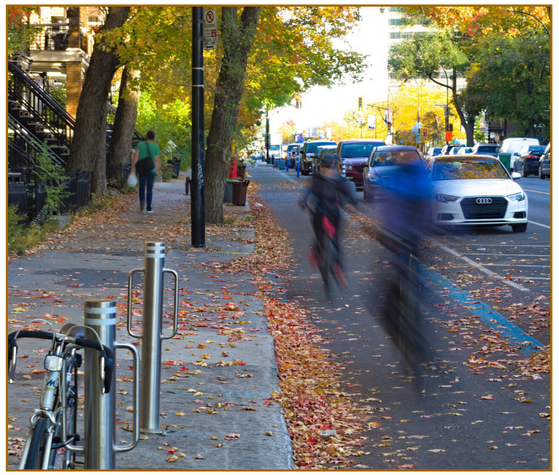


Figure 6- Montreal's REV. Credit: JBouchez

Example: Toronto, ON (Canada) (Queens Quay revitalization: streetcar + cars + pedestrians)

Toronto's **Queens Quay revitalization** is a strong "balanced" connectivity precedent because it deliberately restructured a major waterfront corridor to work for **public transit, cars, pedestrians, and cycling** at the same time, without turning it into a transit-only or car-free street. The project rebuilt **1.7 kilometres** of Queens Quay (Bay St. to Yo-Yo Ma Lane) into a "showpiece waterfront boulevard" with improved pedestrian, cycling, and transit facilities while still accommodating vehicle traffic.

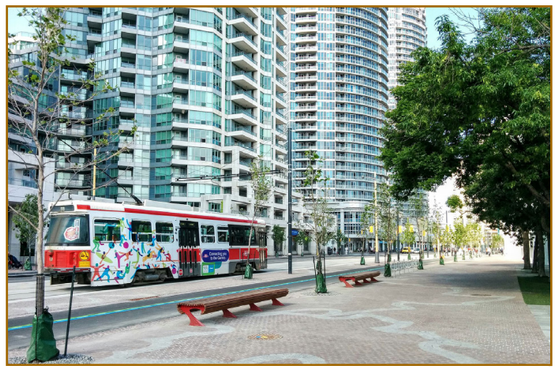


Figure 7- Toronto's Queens Quay. Credit: Natural RX

Mechanically, the design is explicitly multimodal and spatially legible. The corridor is therefore "place-first" in experience, with wide promenades, shade, and continuous walking/cycling, while remaining a functioning access route for transit operations and essential vehicle movement.

5.3. Connectivity and transportation

The map that follows highlights Downtown Hamilton's current and projected transportation, transit, and connectivity network, the system that determines how people arrive, move through, and experience the core. It illustrates today's key mobility infrastructure, including major corridors and downtown transit hubs, and it also points to the step-change that will come with the Hamilton LRT: a new rapid-transit spine running through the heart of the city that will reshape travel patterns, intensify activity around stops, and raise expectations for street design, wayfinding, and the quality of the public realm.

This map also reinforces a central implementation principle of the Strategy: bringing more people Downtown depends on two related conditions. First, Downtown must be easy to access by public transit and individual vehicles, with reliable day and night transit service and clear, predictable routes for drivers, deliveries, and pick-ups, especially during periods of construction and change. Second, once people arrive, Downtown must be enjoyable to be in: reducing friction and conflict between different road users, improving safety for walking and cycling, and making it easy to connect destinations on foot through comfortable routes, clear crossings, lighting, and wayfinding. The City is not starting from zero: the directions established in the Downtown Streets Plan, Hamilton's Cycling Master Plan, the Vision Zero Action Plan, and the Complete, Livable, Better Streets Policy and Framework provide the policy foundation for a safer, more people-focused Downtown network. The opportunity through this Strategy is to align these tools with LRT delivery and main-street redesign so mobility supports experience, creating streets that function as both connectors and public spaces, and a Downtown where key civic, cultural, and commercial destinations feel seamlessly linked.

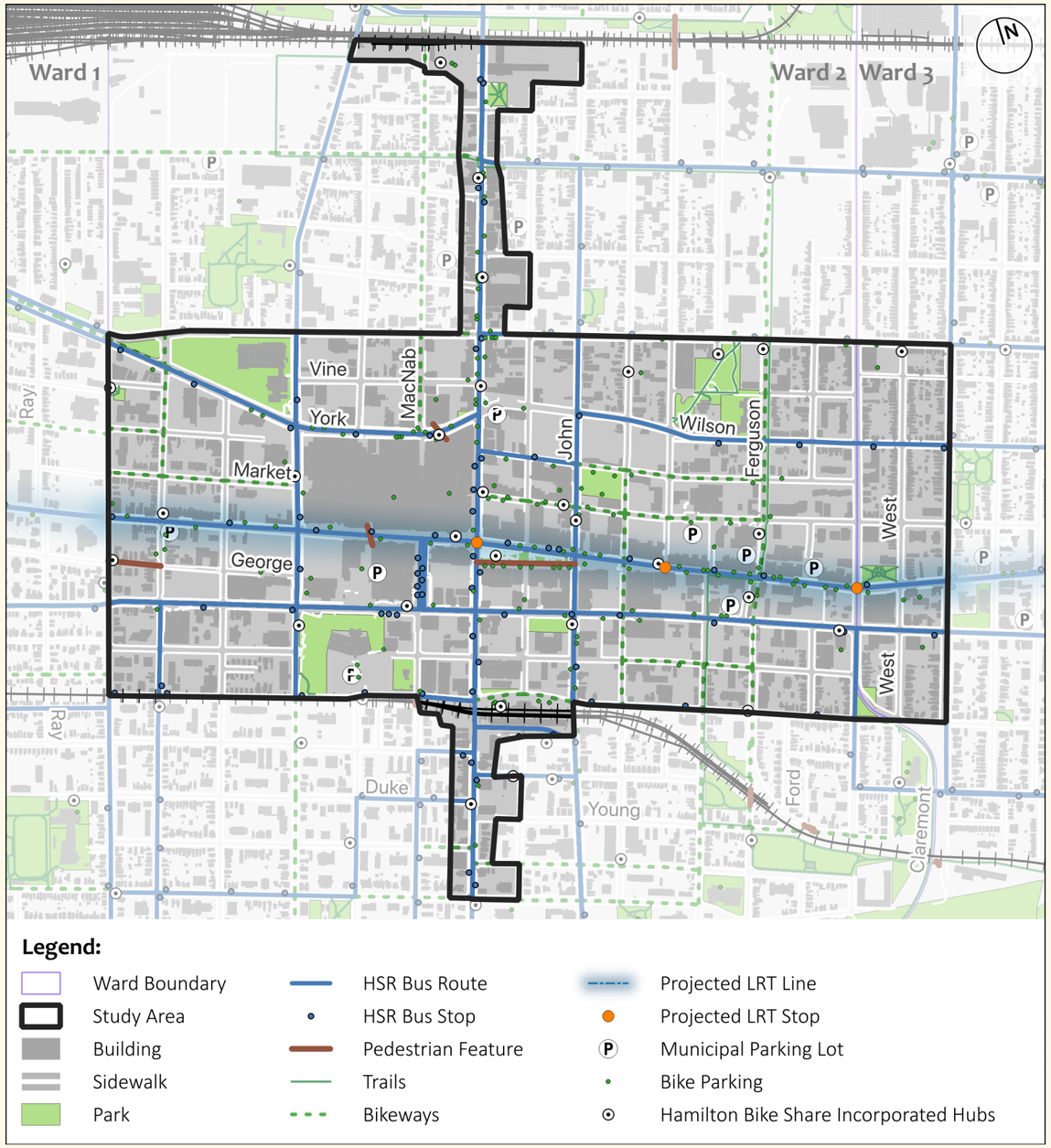


Figure 8- Map showing existing and proposed public transportation links. Credit: Cultural Spaces.

5.4. Cultural Assets, Activities, and Entertainment

Why is it important?

Culture and entertainment are the lifeblood of great downtowns. They generate energy, attract people, and define a city's character. Downtown Hamilton is home to many of the city's most important cultural and entertainment institutions and creative enterprises, including galleries, theatres, festivals, live music venues, and the arena. These assets are key to attracting visitors, residents, and talent, and to building a sense of belonging and civic pride. Investing in cultural programming, events, and spaces brings streets to life and supports the creative economy that fuels innovation and growth. Strengthening Hamilton's cultural ecosystem Downtown reinforces its identity as a creative, welcoming, and distinctive city, while supporting tourism, small business, and community cohesion.

Impact

ROI per $, number of jobs

Checklist

- ☐ There is a **reliable year-round rhythm** of events (not just one-off activations)
- ☐ Downtown has a clear **cultural "spine" or loop** connecting venues and public spaces
- ☐ Small and mid-size venues are supported (permitting ease, noise management clarity, promotions)
- ☐ Public spaces are programmed to be **inclusive and welcoming** (families, youth, seniors, newcomers)
- ☐ Cultural participation is visible across seasons (winter programming included)
- ☐ Partnerships with institutions are active (AGH, concert hall, library, colleges, local orgs)
- ☐ Culture strengthens night-time vibrancy **without excluding** residents and vulnerable populations

Example: Pittsburgh, PA (United States) (Cultural District)

Pittsburgh's Cultural District illustrates how clustering cultural activity can anchor downtown vibrancy after office hours. The district is described as a **14-square-block** area in the heart of Downtown that includes **over 90 retail shops**, **50 dining establishments**, **seven theaters**, **eight public parks and art installations**, and **a dozen art galleries**. The outcome here is legibility and critical mass: the density of venues and supporting businesses creates a reliable reason to visit in the evenings and on weekends, and it makes downtown "easy to choose" as a destination.



Figure 9- Pittsburgh's Cultural District. Credit: Ronald C. Yochum JR.

5.4. Cultural Assets, Activities, and Entertainment

The map that follows illustrates Downtown Hamilton's arts, culture, and entertainment ecosystem, a network of venues and destinations where people experience live music, theatre, festivals, exhibitions, and nightlife, alongside the institutions and community anchors that make culture sustainable day to day. It highlights not only dedicated cultural venues and performance spaces, but also educational institutions, recreation and community centres, libraries, and places of worship, which often function as gathering spaces, hosts for performances and exhibitions, and sources of volunteer and community leadership. Together, these places create the conditions for a lively Downtown: a mix of programmed destinations and everyday "third places" that bring people into the core across different times of day and seasons.

The purpose of mapping these assets is twofold. First, it shows the existing concentration of experiences that makes Downtown Hamilton distinctive, an intensity of venues and community anchors within a walkable area that can be strengthened through better wayfinding, a coordinated calendar, and public realm improvements that connect people comfortably between destinations. Second, it helps identify opportunities to better support the creators who make Downtown's culture possible: spaces for rehearsals and production, affordable and flexible venues, streamlined permitting for pop-ups and events, and partnerships with institutions that can provide stable programming and audience development. By treating these cultural destinations and community anchors as a connected ecosystem, the City and partners can strengthen Downtown's identity, grow evening and weekend activity, and ensure that artists and cultural organizations have the conditions they need to thrive.

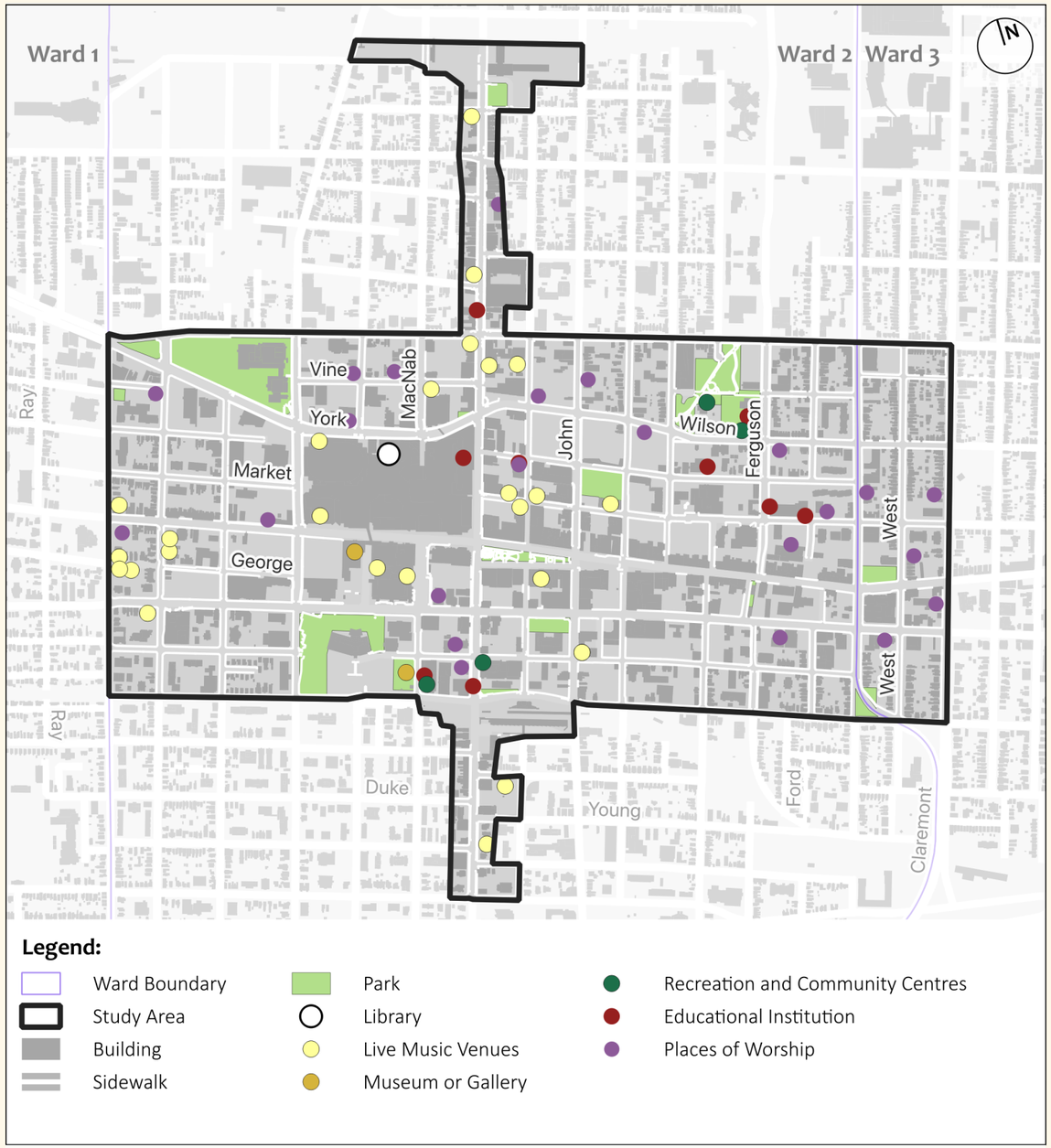


Figure 10- Map Showing Cultural Venues in Downtown Hamilton. Credit: Cultural Spaces

5.5. Development Environment

Why is it important?

The development environment determines how easily and effectively revitalization can occur. It includes the policies, approvals, incentives, and partnerships that shape what gets built and how. A streamlined, transparent, and flexible development framework can unlock private investment and accelerate transformation. Incentives and approvals reward building upgrades that reduce overheating, improve stormwater performance, and add resilience to older structures. Retrofitting should prioritize adaptive reuse of older and heritage buildings, streamlining approvals, clarifying requirements, and aligning incentives, so it's easier to convert and modernize existing assets while preserving Downtown's character. A supportive development environment ensures that public and private projects contribute to shared goals, creating a balanced mix of housing, employment, culture, and amenities. It also helps reduce risk and uncertainty, attracting the kind of long-term, quality investment that strengthens Downtown's foundation for generations.

Impact

ROI per $, number of jobs

Checklist

- ☐ The approval process is **predictable, transparent, and time-bound** (clear steps + timelines)
- ☐ Incentives are packaged into a clear "menu" and matched to desired outcomes
- ☐ Pre-consultation and zoning guidance reduce uncertainty for conversion and mixed-use projects
- ☐ Heritage assets are enabled (clear standards; incentives to renovate rather than demolish)
- ☐ Ground floors are treated as a priority (requirements and incentives for transparency/activation)
- ☐ Developers and non-profits can access a **single point of contact** (deal desk/concierge)
- ☐ The City actively manages catalytic opportunities (site readiness, partnerships, procurement pathways)

Example: Vancouver, BC (Canada) (Permitting and licensing reform: "Permitting and licensing is getting easier")

Vancouver focuses on the machinery of delivery, making approvals simpler, more transparent, and more predictable, rather than relying only on incentives. The City transformed how applicants interact with City Hall, with a stated goal that the system becomes simple, transparent, predictable, efficient, and seamless, including a more digital "one place" journey where applicants can explore requirements, upload drawings, receive feedback, apply, and track progress. The practical value is that this kind of reform directly reduces friction for small projects (tenant improvements, storefront changes) and larger redevelopment alike, exactly the kind of improvement a downtown revitalization strategy needs to unlock momentum. Vancouver pairs process improvements with policy moves that reduce the need for repeated, bespoke applications.



Figure 11- Vancouver City Hall. Credit: Jason Vanderhill.

Example: Chicago, IL (United States) (The Medallion (3121 N. Broadway): parking garage to mixed-use residential)

A parking structure can become "people space" when market conditions shift and the structure is adaptable. The Medallion was redeveloped from a 1920s-era (historic) parking garage into a 72-unit apartment building in Chicago's Lakeview neighbourhood. A key technical characteristic is that it wasn't just a light retrofit: a two-storey addition and rooftop deck added on top of the former garage turned this car-storage building into a modern residential asset. It is a practical "hybrid outcome" that's often what cities actually need: the redevelopment did not eliminate parking entirely, it retained a smaller parking supply while changing the primary use. Not every garage can become housing, but garages in walkable areas, especially those with good floor-to-floor heights, structural capacity, and strong location, can be candidates for conversion or partial conversion when demand for parking softens. This includes design contemporary parkades with conversion in mind.



Figure 12- 3121 N. Broadway, Chicago. Credit: Google Street View, 2025

5.5. Development Environment

The map that follows shows Downtown Hamilton's three Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), Downtown Hamilton BIA, International Village BIA, and Hess Village BIA. It illustrates how they function as the organizing "main street districts" of the core. BIAs in Hamilton emerged as a practical partnership model: local businesses and commercial property owners formed area-based organizations to collectively invest in beautification, promotion, and advocacy, giving Downtown a stronger identity and a more coordinated voice. Hamilton's first BIA was established in 1976 (the International Village), and the model has since become a cornerstone of how the City supports commercial districts.

While they are connected geographically and economically, each BIA has a distinct character and business mix. The International Village BIA describes itself as a hub for shopping, dining, entertainment, and financial/professional services, with a diverse membership of over 140 businesses. The Downtown Hamilton BIA, officially formed in 1982, is centred around the Gore Park heart of the city and represents over 350 businesses and 110 property owners. Its historic boundary has expanded over time to include additional Downtown streets. The newly established Hess Village BIA is centered in Hamilton's iconic entertainment district, known for patios and nightlife, with organizing work showing 65 eligible property owners and businesses in the district and programming and initiatives that attract people to a restaurant, entertainment, and personal-services-focused area. Together, these BIAs represent different "faces" of Downtown: civic and institutional core, mixed-use arts/entertainment corridor, and an emerging creative/community main street. They are connected by shared customers, shared mobility routes, and the reality that visitors experience Downtown as a network of districts rather than a single street.

These BIAs are also essential delivery partners for Main Street Lifts. They bring the capacity to organize and repeat what makes revitalization tangible: promotions, events and activations, storefront visibility, beautification and maintenance advocacy, business recruitment/retention, and real-time feedback on what is and is not working on the ground. They help translate City actions into lived experience, turning capital upgrades and policy changes into a Downtown that feels active, cared for, and legible to residents and visitors. In short, BIAs are critical to Downtown's ability to thrive because they help give each district its identity, coordinate local momentum block-by-block, and ensure that improvements are reinforced through consistent programming and place management.

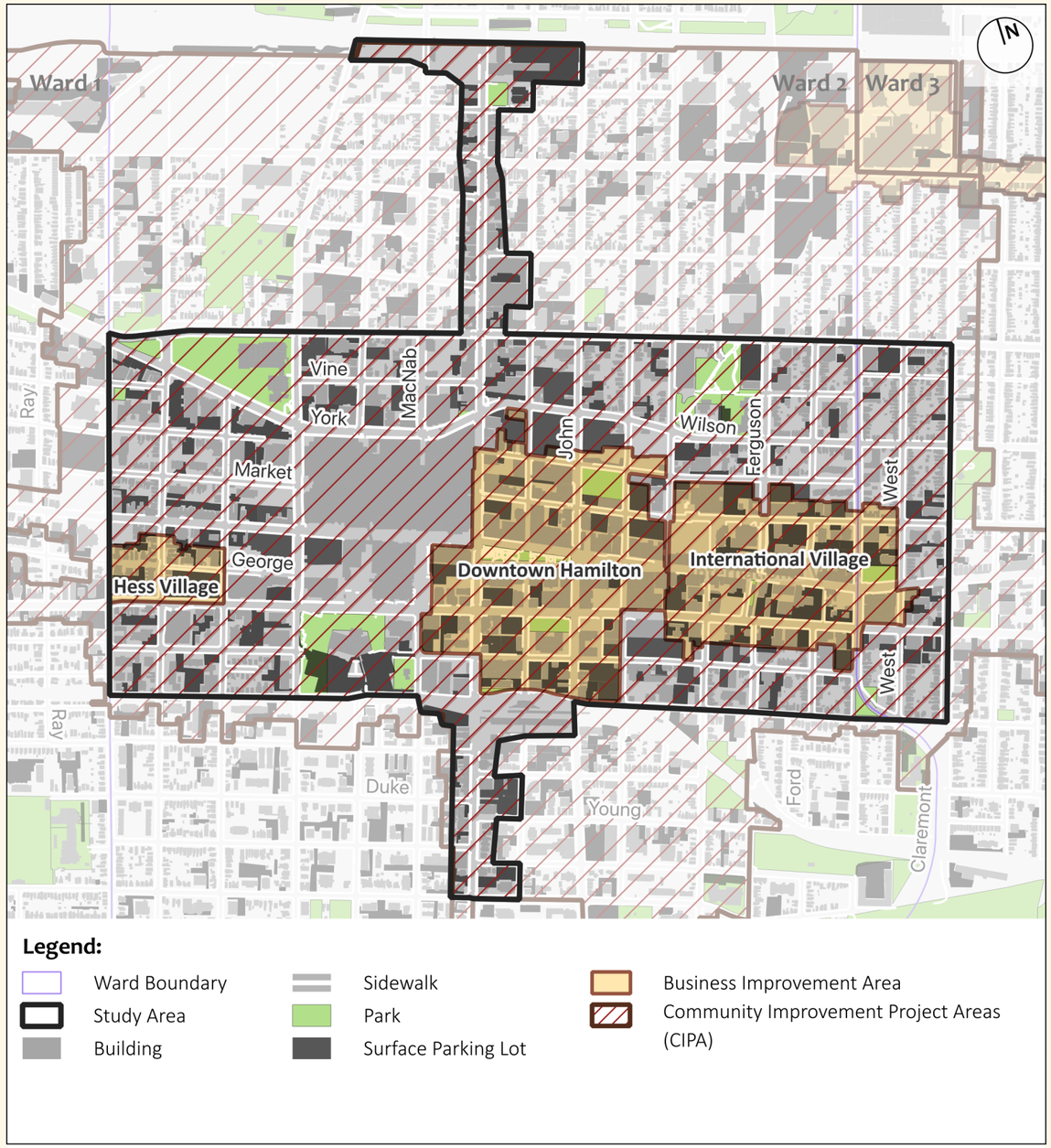


Figure 13- Map of the BIAs in Downtown Hamilton. Credit: Cultural Spaces.

5.6. Economic opportunities

Why is it important?

Downtown is a critical engine of Hamilton's economy, a place where ideas, innovation, and enterprise can converge. Creating the conditions for business growth and workforce development is essential to sustaining momentum. Economic opportunity as a lever focuses on nurturing Hamilton's economic base, from creative industries and health sciences to local retail and hospitality, to ensure that success is inclusive. Supporting entrepreneurship, small business resilience, and workforce attraction will help diversify Downtown's economy and maintain a steady flow of talent and investment. When Downtown's economy thrives, it creates value far beyond its boundaries, generating employment, tax revenue, and confidence in Hamilton's overall competitiveness.

Impact

ROI per $, number of jobs

Checklist

- ☐ Downtown supports **small business survival and growth** (tools for retention, not only attraction)
- ☐ Entrepreneur supports are visible (incubators, shared workspaces, mentorship, low-barrier pilots)
- ☐ Workforce needs are planned (mobility, amenities, childcare, daily services for workers)
- ☐ Target sectors have a clear pathway Downtown (creative, health/education, professional services, innovation)
- ☐ Office vacancy is addressed through a conversion pipeline and reinvestment strategy
- ☐ Visitor spending is supported through better experience design (safety, cleanliness, programming)
- ☐ The City tracks and reports on investment and leverage (public $ → private/non-profit $)

Example: Kitchener, ON (Innovation Arena / downtown innovation anchor)

Downtown Kitchener provides a useful example of how economic opportunity can be made tangible in the core through an institutional anchor paired with an innovation ecosystem. The University of Waterloo's Innovation Arena opened as a 90,000 sq. ft. facility in downtown Kitchener, including 20,000 sq. ft. of purpose-built lab space, and reports indicate UW's Velocity incubator is taking half the building. The outcome is visible: downtown becomes a place where new ventures are created and supported, not just a place to visit or work—strengthening daytime population and downtown identity.

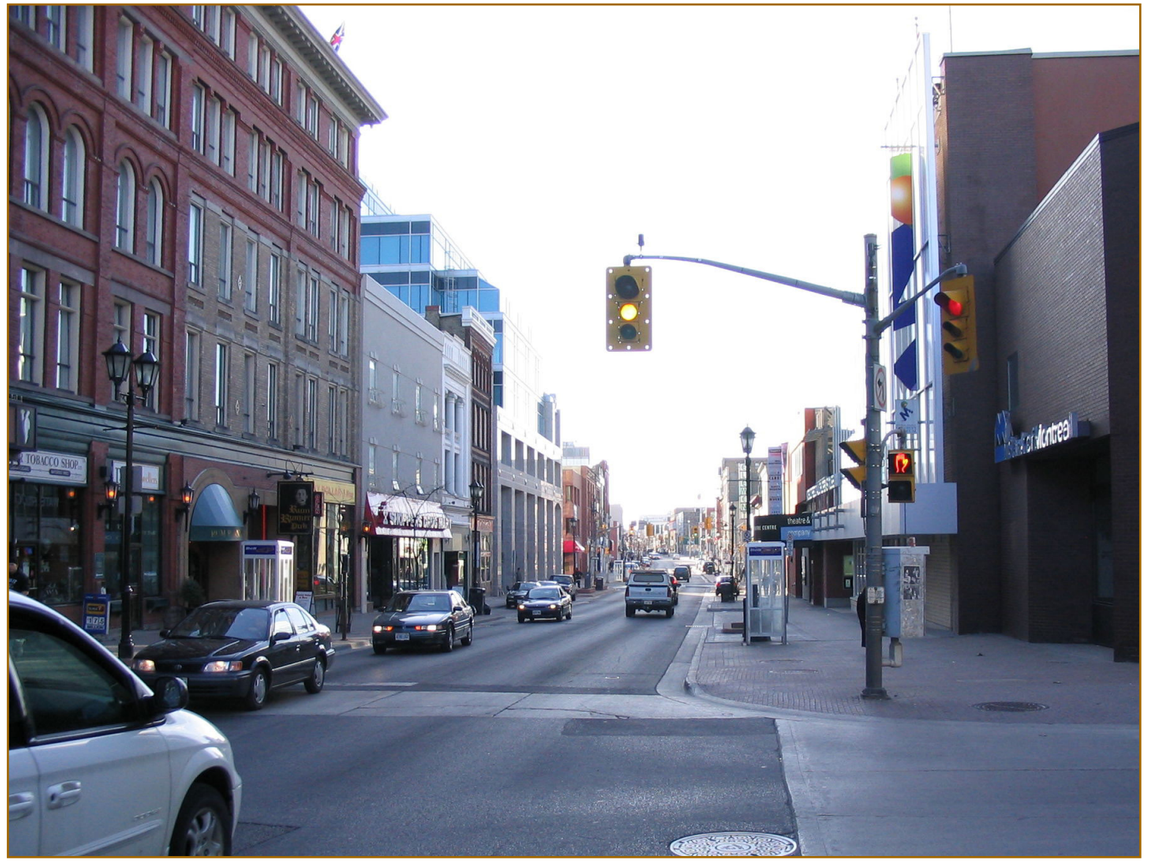


Figure 14- Downtown Kitchener. Credit: Lupin.

5.7. Main Streets

Why is it important?

Main streets are the public face of Downtown Hamilton, where commerce, culture, and community meet. They are the corridors that shape first impressions and daily experiences, lined with the small businesses and heritage buildings that define Hamilton's character. Strengthening main streets means protecting and enhancing their economic and social roles, particularly during periods of disruption such as LRT construction. Investment in façades, storefront programs, pedestrian environments, and business supports will ensure that main streets remain vibrant and resilient. Façade and storefront programs should be designed to support heritage-friendly repairs and upgrades—making it easier for owners to reinvest, reduce vacancy, and keep the character-defining fabric intact. A strong main street network makes Downtown legible, welcoming, and full of life, the kind of place where people choose to spend time, invest, and connect.

Impact

ROI per $, number of jobs

Checklist

- ☐ Priority corridors feel **active and continuous (**fewer dead zones, blank walls, empty storefronts, temporary and transitionary uses of lots)
- ☐ Storefronts are attractive and legible (lighting, signage, transparency)
- ☐ Construction mitigation protects business visibility (wayfinding, safe access, temporary design fixes)
- ☐ Streets invite lingering: seating, shade, safe crossings, patios where appropriate
- ☐ Vacancy is actively managed (pop-ups, curated recruitment, landlord engagement)
- ☐ Main streets support daily needs retail (grocers, pharmacies, services) alongside destination uses
- ☐ The City + BIAs coordinate promotions and activation with a predictable calendar

Example: London, ON (Canada) (Dundas Place "flex street" transformation)

London's Dundas Place shows how a city can convert a conventional downtown commercial corridor into a place-first main street that is designed to be programmed, to support local business visibility, and to build confidence even while major works are underway. Dundas Place is London's first flexible street, a curbless corridor with mid-block crossovers that can close to vehicle traffic for events and activations but remains open to vehicles when not being programmed.

London treated disruption as part of delivery rather than a side effect. The City invested in construction support, including pedestrian navigation maps on site, an advertising plan (billboards, buses, radio), and even creating a project-specific blog and social media presence to keep the community informed and businesses visible. Dundas Place demonstrates that a main street lift is not only capital design—it is a corridor program combining (1) a flexible, programmable street form, (2) visible, block-by-block public realm upgrades, and (3) strong communication/wayfinding that protects access and confidence



Figure 15- Downtown London. Credit: Mosbo6

5.8. Public and Green Spaces and Assets

Why is it important?

Public and green spaces, together with civic and community assets such as libraries, community centres, and sports facilities, are essential to creating a Downtown that is both livable and memorable. These spaces are where public life unfolds: where people gather, rest, learn, play, and connect. Parks, plazas, recreation facilities, and cultural venues improve health and well-being, foster inclusion, and provide opportunities for creativity and shared experience. Strengthening these assets through investment, renewal, and programming ensures that Downtown Hamilton serves all residents, families, youth, seniors, and visitors alike, and contributes to the uplift effect for other investments in the area. Linking these places through green corridors, pedestrian routes, and active transportation networks can create a cohesive system of civic spaces that amplifies Hamilton's social and environmental resilience. Parks and plazas function as cooling and refuge spaces; green infrastructure reduces runoff and flooding impacts. Beautiful, accessible, and well-programmed public and community spaces are a visible sign of collective care and investment, transforming Downtown into a welcoming, dynamic, and inclusive civic heart.

Impact

Increase sense of well-being, stronger community ties

Checklist

- ☐ Downtown has **places to pause:** seating, shade, greenery, comfort, washrooms where feasible
- ☐ Parks/plazas are safe and well managed (lighting, sightlines, maintenance, programming plan)
- ☐ Public spaces are programmed regularly (markets, performances, civic gatherings)
- ☐ Civic assets (library, arenas, halls, community facilities) are integrated into the "Downtown experience"
- ☐ Green connections link key anchors (micro-parks, planted corridors, comfortable walking routes)
- ☐ Spaces are designed for all ages and abilities (accessibility, families, seniors, youth)
- ☐ Maintenance and operations are funded and clear

Example: Winnipeg, MB (Canada) (The Forks)

Winnipeg's Forks is a standout example of public space success because it combines design with a durable stewardship and operating model. The Forks reports over 4 million visitors annually, more than 1,200 people working on-site, an economic contribution of over $235 million per year, and is financially self-sufficient for operations (not relying on government funding to operate). These figures matter because they show what sustained management and programming can achieve: a public space that functions as a year-round downtown anchor with measurable visitation and economic impact.



Figure 16- Downtown Winnipeg. Credit: Lorie Shaull

Halifax, NS (Canada) (Stillwell Beergarden) (Spring Garden Road "vacant lot" activation)

Stillwell's Spring Garden Road beer garden shows how a gap site on a prime corridor can be turned into a seasonal destination with relatively light, temporary infrastructure. The beer garden opened on the corner of Spring Garden Road and South Park Street, operating from a longtime empty 4,800 sq. ft. lot between local businesses, an explicit example of a vacant lot being reimagined as an active public-facing use. The project demonstrates how temporary uses can shift the feel of a street: an underused parcel becomes a place that draws people to linger, supports nearby commerce through increased foot traffic, and adds "eyes on the street" in an area that otherwise reads as a dead zone.

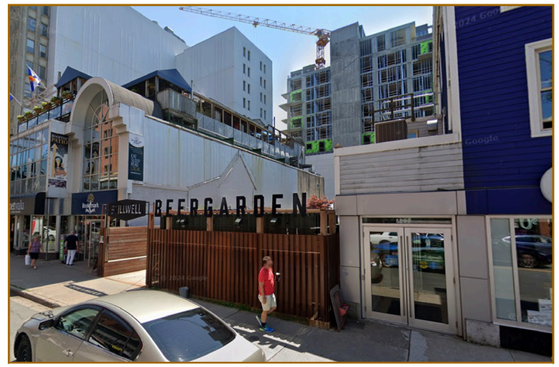


Figure 17- Beergarden, Halifax. Credit: Google Street View

5.9. Public Safety

Why is it important?

Public safety is the foundation of every thriving Downtown, the condition that makes all other forms of renewal possible. A sense of safety is created not only through enforcement, but through care, presence, and design. Clean, well-lit, and active public spaces, supported by coordinated social services, community outreach, and inclusive programming, help reduce vulnerability and build trust. By integrating public safety with social well-being, urban design, and maintenance, Hamilton can create an environment where people feel comfortable and connected throughout the day and night. A safe Downtown is not only one that prevents harm, it is one that invites participation, fosters dignity, and restores confidence in the heart of the city.

Impact

Increase sense of well-being and safety, confidence in investments, decrease in violent events

Checklist

- ☐ Safety is addressed through **presence, care, and design,** not only enforcement
- ☐ Outreach teams and service partners are coordinated, visible, and supported
- ☐ Hotspots are managed with a consistent plan (lighting + programming + maintenance + response protocols)
- ☐ Rules are enforced predictably (e.g.property standards, vacant buildings, nuisance issues)
- ☐ People feel safe at night on key routes and around transit stops (measured by perception surveys)
- ☐ Public spaces are activated so there are **“eyes on the street”**
- ☐ Safety communications are balanced (show improvements, avoid stigma, share progress transparently)

Example: Washington, DC (United States) (DowntownDC BID ambassador / place management model)

DowntownDC is a useful example of how perceived safety and comfort can be strengthened through visible, trained, non-police presence as part of a broader downtown management system. The BID describes its district as a 140-block area that includes 530 commercial properties, 30+ hotels, and 2,000+ residential units—a scale that makes the case for consistent “care and presence” services beyond municipal enforcement alone. The ambassador role is framed as welcoming visitors, providing information, serving as “eyes and ears,” and supporting a safer, more orderly environment.



Figure 18- Pennsylvania Avenue, WashingtonDC. Credit: AgnosticPreachersKid

Example: Ottawa, ON (Canada) (Shepherds of Good Hope + Ottawa Inner City Health harm-reduction and stabilization model)

Ottawa’s work with Shepherds of Good Hope treats visible disorder and crisis downtown as a health and stabilization problem as much as an enforcement problem. Shepherds operates crisis and housing programs in the ByWard Market area and partners closely with Ottawa Inner City Health to deliver pragmatic, evidence-based supports that reduce harms in public spaces while improving safety and dignity for everyone. Two concrete program elements are particularly relevant to downtown safety: a Managed Alcohol Program (MAP) and supervised consumption and treatment services integrated into a broader service ecosystem.



Figure 19- Ottawa’s Byward Market. Credit: Trappy at the English Wikipedia

5.10. Residents, Visitors and Workers

Why is it important?

Downtown's vitality depends on the experience of the people who live, work, and visit there every day. A healthy and welcoming core offers a balance of housing, employment, recreation, and community life, supported by a strong network of public amenities such as libraries, cultural venues, community centres, and parks. These assets make Downtown livable and magnetic, ensuring that residents feel rooted, workers feel supported, and visitors feel drawn to return. Strengthening everyday experiences, from walkability and cleanliness to cultural events and public gathering spaces, builds a sense of belonging and shared purpose. Investing in the comfort, accessibility, and inclusion of all users helps Downtown Hamilton function as the civic heart of the city, where economic vitality and community well-being reinforce one another.

Impact

Dynamic mixed environment, economic opportunities

Checklist

- ☐ Stable, well-maintained housing, especially rental housing, supports resident retention
- ☐ Daily needs are accessible (groceries, services, amenities within walking distance)
- ☐ Public realm is clean, lit, and comfortable for everyday use
- ☐ Workers can reach Downtown easily (transit, cycling, walking, curb management)
- ☐ Visitors experience Downtown as welcoming and legible (wayfinding, programming, safety)
- ☐ There are "third places" (indoor/outdoor) for community life beyond spending money
- ☐ Residents—including renters—have a voice in governance and feedback loops

Example: Vancouver, BC (Canada) (Downtown residential foundation and reporting discipline)

Downtown Vancouver provides a strong illustration of how a large resident base can stabilize downtown vitality beyond the 9-to-5 cycle, and how consistent reporting helps manage downtown as a system. Downtown Van's State of Downtown 2025 report highlights 140,938 people living in the Downtown district, 130,000 people working, and 106 million visits in 2024, alongside 8,000 businesses including 1,000 storefront businesses. These numbers show the structural advantage of a downtown that is both lived-in and visited at scale, supporting street life across more hours and providing a stable customer base for services and retail.



Figure 20- Vancouver Downtown Skyline. Credit: David Zhang

Example: Austin, TX (United States) (Joint Use Parking Agreement - shared access across public garages)

Austin's Joint Use Parking Agreement is an example of how structured parking can function as a shared resource rather than being dedicated to a single user group. The agreement explicitly authorizes a tenant (and the tenant's employees, patrons, customers, vendors and other invitees) to use multiple parking garages "on a non-exclusive basis" and "on the same terms and conditions as [they] are available to the general public" which is the heart of shared parking: the garage stays public-serving, but a private use is supported through defined rights.



Figure 21- One Texas Centre. Credit: LoneStarMike



6 PRIORITIES

The priorities identified in the Strategy are grounded in a comprehensive understanding of Downtown's specific conditions, its history of renewal efforts, and the many voices that have shaped its present and future. They reflect both analysis and insights gained through extensive engagement with hundreds of residents, business owners, community organizations, and institutional partners. Stakeholders consistently expressed a desire for visible progress, better coordination, and a renewed sense of shared purpose while emphasizing the need for the City to remain open, responsive, and collaborative. These priorities are therefore built on a commitment to listen and act: to transform feedback into direction, and direction into measurable outcomes.

They also acknowledge Downtown's long history of repeated cycles of investment and decline, recognizing that lasting change depends on the City's ability to sustain effort and align its tools over time. The Strategy focuses on activating the levers that drive change, the key sectors and assets such as arts and culture, housing, small business, mobility, and public infrastructure that together generate a positive lift effect when strategically reinforced. Additionally, it is particularly sensitive to target certain segments of the population that can be supported to maintain or establish a relationship with Downtown, particularly youth, the members of the arts and culture community, small and mid-sized businesses, and young entrepreneurs and workers in emerging economic driving industries. Informed by these levers and by the City's capacity to guide and convene, the priorities focus attention where the greatest collective impact can be achieved. They translate vision into near-term, coordinated action, ensuring that progress in Downtown generates confidence and benefit across the entire city.

Each of the priorities carries equal importance. Their implementation will vary in scale and timing. Some will require additional planning, design, or partnership development before they can advance, while others can be implemented quickly to demonstrate visible results and build momentum. The Strategy encourages a balance between careful preparation and agile execution. Innovation should be pursued proactively, with the City and its partners ready to seize opportunities as they arise, testing new approaches, learning from early outcomes, and scaling what works to accelerate Downtown's transformation.

1 Increase the sense of safety and well-being for all

Improving safety and well-being is foundational to Downtown Hamilton's revitalization. This priority focuses on creating an environment where everyone, residents, workers, visitors, and vulnerable populations, feels secure and supported. It builds on partnerships with community agencies, businesses, and law enforcement to address both real and perceived safety issues through coordinated action. Efforts include improving maintenance and cleanliness, expanding outreach and support services, and enhancing public spaces to foster activity and natural surveillance. By combining prevention, care, and design, this priority aims to restore confidence and ensure that Downtown is experienced as a welcoming place for all.

Why is this a priority?

Safety and well-being are fundamental to restoring confidence in Downtown Hamilton as a place to live, work, invest and visit. This priority responds to concerns about public order, cleanliness, and social supports by combining community outreach, design improvements, and coordinated municipal action to make the core feel welcoming and cared for. This priority directly improves daily life for Downtown residents, including renters, by making routes, parks, and main streets more comfortable and predictable, day and night.

Examples of scope of action: Street outreach, visible police presence, public realm maintenance, community activation.

2 Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments

Revitalization requires collective action. This priority emphasizes the alignment of public, private, and institutional investments to generate visible, lasting change. It calls for the City to act as both a leader and convener by coordinating infrastructure upgrades, incentive programs, cultural projects, and redevelopment efforts so they reinforce one another. By breaking down silos and sequencing projects strategically, the City and its partners can multiply their impact. The goal is to use every investment, whether in housing, streetscapes, or culture, to leverage others, creating a compounding effect that accelerates Downtown's transformation.

Why is this a priority?

Downtown's challenges cannot be solved by any one actor and success depends on aligning the investments and actions of many. This priority addresses the fragmentation of past efforts by coordinating City, institutional, and private investments to create visible, cumulative impact across the core. Coordinated investment should prioritize projects that residents experience every day, cleaner streets, better lighting, and improved public spaces, because these are the conditions that retain renters and other residents to stabilize Downtown.

Examples of scope of action: Capital alignment, public realm enhancements, joint planning, investment tracking, heritage/cultural anchor projects.

3 Enabling future opportunities

Downtown must be ready to seize emerging opportunities and adapt to new economic, technological, and social realities. This priority focuses on creating the conditions for long-term resilience and growth by ensuring flexibility in land use, zoning, underground infrastructure readiness, climate change adaptation, and investment readiness. It includes identifying underutilized sites, promoting adaptive reuse, and supporting initiatives that attract new residents, businesses, and talent. The City's role is to prepare the groundwork, through clear policy direction, proactive partnerships, and infrastructure planning, so that Downtown is positioned to capture future waves of innovation, investment, and community-led activity.

Why is this a priority?

Downtown must be ready to adapt to a rapidly changing economy, climate and urban environment. This priority ensures that policy, land use, and infrastructure decisions today create flexibility for new housing, creative industries, and emerging business opportunities that will sustain the core in the decades ahead. Downtown's future competitiveness depends on housing stability and livability, so enabling opportunities also means ensuring rental and non-rental housing quality, affordable pathways, and complete-neighbourhood amenities.

Examples of scope of action: Adaptive reuse, heritage-compatible adaptive reuse readiness, underground infrastructure renewal, innovation hubs, policy readiness, heat mitigation (shade, trees, cooling), green stormwater infrastructure, resilient transit stops and walking routes, and retrofit standards that reduce overheating and flood risk.

4 Protect the main streets

Hamilton's main streets, namely King, James, Main, and York, are the backbone of Downtown's identity and economic life. This priority focuses on preserving and strengthening these corridors as vibrant, mixed-use streets that sustain small businesses, cultural venues, and civic activity. It calls for reinvestment in building maintenance, storefront improvements, and the public realm to enhance appearance, accessibility, and walkability. Protecting the main streets also means retaining their authenticity, supporting long-standing businesses and creative entrepreneurs who give Downtown its character. These corridors must remain active, safe, and attractive for people at all times of day and across all seasons.

Why is this a priority?

Hamilton's main streets are the spine of its civic and commercial life but are under visible strain from vacancy and disinvestment. This priority aims to stabilize and renew these corridors through reinvestment, business support, and streetscape improvements that preserve their character and sustain their role as vibrant public places. Main streets must serve residents as well as visitors by supporting daily needs retail and services that make it easier for Downtown renters and other residents to live locally and remain in the neighbourhood.

Examples of scope of action: Façade renewal, public realm enhancements, storefront activation, heritage preservation.

5 Support the economic drivers

Downtown's revitalization depends on its ability to sustain and grow its economic base for the benefit of the city as whole. This priority focuses on reinforcing the sectors and anchors that generate jobs, attract investment, and bring people to the core, including education, healthcare, government, culture, and professional services. It seeks to align municipal tools and incentives to retain major employers, support innovation, nurture the next generation of opportunities, and attract new businesses. It recognizes that a strong Downtown economy requires more than office space: it depends on reliable transportation connections, access to services, and a built environment that supports both business operations and the daily needs of employees. Collaboration with institutions and private developers will be critical to strengthening Downtown as a centre of enterprise and opportunity. By supporting its economic drivers, Hamilton ensures that Downtown remains both a regional hub and a generator of citywide prosperity.

Why is this a priority?

Downtown's renewal depends on maintaining a diverse and resilient economic base that can adapt to new patterns of work and mobility. This priority addresses the transportation, service, and infrastructure needs of employers and workers while nurturing opportunity across sectors. Supporting economic drivers includes making Downtown workable for the workforce who lives here, through reliable mobility, affordable housing options, and amenities that support everyday life.

Examples of scope of action: Workforce mobility, business support, incubator environment, infrastructure investment.

6 Set up a Downtown focused governance and administrative model

Coordinating revitalization requires governance structures that are dedicated, empowered, and accountable. This priority establishes the foundation for a Downtown-focused administrative model that aligns City departments and external partners around shared objectives. It calls for clear leadership, transparent decision-making, dedicated budgets, and mechanisms for ongoing communication with stakeholders. This model will ensure that Downtown receives consistent attention, resources, and follow-through. Effective governance will make revitalization a continuous, coordinated effort, not a one-time initiative.

Why is this a priority?

Effective revitalization requires leadership and accountability focused squarely on Downtown because of its specific circumstances around safety, major city assets, social and economic challenges, development ecosystem, economic value, and impact on the city as a whole. This priority responds to past gaps in coordination and the need for responsiveness by establishing a dedicated structure within the City to align departments, track progress, and sustain collaboration with partners over the long term. A Downtown governance model should formalize resident input, including renter perspectives, so that day-to-day quality-of-life issues are tracked and resolved consistently.

Examples of scope of action: Dedicated office, leadership committee, budgetary priority, progress reporting.

7 Retrofit Downtown

This priority addresses the need to adapt Downtown's physical and economic fabric for a changing future. It focuses on retrofitting buildings, infrastructure, and spaces to support new uses and meet contemporary needs, from office-to-residential conversions and green retrofits to reimagining underused public assets. The goal is to evolve the current physical fabric to make it more permeable between private and public space, enhance the access to green spaces, seamlessly connect the different sections of Downtown, remove obstacles to public and private functions, and capitalize on existing space for more relevant uses for residents, businesses, innovators, and artists. By modernizing what already exists rather than relying solely on new development, Hamilton can retain Downtown's character while preparing it for the next generation of residents, businesses, and experiences.

Examples of scope of action: Building conversion, reinventing spaces, green retrofit, public space renewal, green retrofits that improve comfort during heat events, flood-resilient building upgrades, and resilience features for key civic/community assets.

Why is this a priority?

Much of Downtown's building stock and infrastructure were designed for a different era and need reinvestment to meet contemporary needs. This priority focuses on modernizing existing assets through adaptive reuse, green retrofits, and infrastructure renewal, to support new residents, businesses, and public life while preserving Downtown's character. Retrofitting must include improving existing rental housing stock and adaptive reuse that adds stable homes and resident-serving ground floors, not only new development.



7 Actions

7.1. Transformative Initiatives

To translate the Downtown Strategy into visible results, a set of five transformational initiatives illustrate how the City can pursue its priorities through action-driven, high-impact projects. These examples are designed to test, refine, and scale approaches that align municipal effort with private sector partnerships, focusing investments where they can have the greatest effect. Each initiative is conceived as a catalyst for renewal, addressing the key priorities identified in this strategy, from strengthening main streets and improving housing options to enhancing public spaces and enabling economic opportunity. Together, they demonstrate how coordinated, strategic actions can accelerate transformation.

The initiatives include a strategic rent-to-own program, the redevelopment of strategic locations, incentivizing to accelerate transformation, main street lifts, and the creation of new and improved public spaces.

Strategic Rent-to-Own Initiative

This initiative explores the creation of a pathway to ownership for specific sectors by leveraging municipal and private investment. This approach addresses the need for housing affordability and population stability, helping more residents live, stay, invest, and actively shape Downtown.

Levers: Development Environment and Residents, Visitors, and Workers



Priorities: Retrofit Downtown and Enable future opportunities.



Description: The pilot could target two priority sectors: arts and culture professionals and entrepreneurs and STEM graduates, groups whose creativity and enterprise contribute directly to Downtown's renewal. By offering rent-to-own opportunities tied to specific housing and workspace projects, the initiative helps to stabilize the residential base while cultivating a community of creators, innovators, and professionals. It would help free up capital from these groups to invest in their creations and ideas, and have an impact on the city as a whole. This approach supports the rejuvenation of Downtown through artistic expression and business creation, positioning Hamilton as a city that invests in the people who shape its future.

Public investments would be focused on strategic buildings located in areas identified for catalytic impact, properties where the introduction of new residents, studios, or small enterprises can shift perceptions, stimulate foot traffic, and attract complementary private investment. These could include new buildings as well as adaptive reuse of older commercial or civic buildings, located near incubators, educational institutions, or the health sector's emerging employment cluster, ensuring alignment with broader economic development priorities. Each project should be "climate-ready by design," integrating comfort measures as part of the core scope, not as optional extras. Examples of locations include on King Street, the former John A.MacDonald secondary school.

The initiative's impact comes from combining targeted public capital with sector-specific recruitment, using housing and workspace as tools to accelerate renewal and attract talent that will help sustain Downtown's transformation over time.

What it would look like: Strategic Rent-to-Own would create a visible pathway for people who shape Downtown's culture and economy, artists, makers, entrepreneurs, and early-career workers, to put down roots in the core. In practice, it would look like one or two Downtown buildings where residents can rent at a stable rate while building equity over time, paired with ground-floor or shared spaces that support creative work and small enterprise. The result is not only housing; it is a stronger Downtown community: more neighbours who stay longer, invest locally, and bring "eyes on the street" to main corridors. It would show, in a tangible way, that Hamilton is investing in people and making Downtown a place where talent can build a future.

Done well, the initiative would produce a recognizable cohort of people who become ambassadors for Downtown through their daily presence and their contribution to street life. It would also create a model that can be replicated with partners: non-profit housing providers, mission-aligned developers, institutions, and potentially employers. The public benefit is stability and belonging; the economic benefit is an enlarged base of residents who support local businesses and strengthen the Downtown's identity.

How we get there: Start with a pilot sized to succeed: a single building or a portion of a building (e.g., 10–25 units) in a location where added resident activity will have a catalytic effect on a key street or node. The City's role is to convene a delivery partnership, secure a workable funding stack, and define the program rules (eligibility, equity pathway, affordability protections, resale/exit terms, and anti-speculation safeguards). The pilot should be paired with clear supports such as tenant education, financial coaching, and an operating partner with experience in affordable housing management.

The first year is about design and de-risking: selecting a site, confirming partners, and getting programme governance approved. Years 2–3 are about delivery and proof: opening the pilot, recruiting the cohort, and tracking outcomes (retention, resident satisfaction, local spending, and quality-of-life improvements). Once the model works, scale it through additional buildings and partners, using what was learned to refine program terms and expand eligibility.

Strategic Rent-to-Own Initiative

Two examples

Boston, MA (United States)— "Renting to Own" (Mayor's Office of Housing)

Boston's "Renting to Own" is framed as a **city-enabled pathway from renting to ownership** for low- and moderate-income renters, using either purpose-built "rental-to-homeownership" units or **new financing tools** that let renters start building equity over time. What makes it useful as an inspiration is that the City treats rent-to-own as a **structured civic pilot** rather than a one-off private real-estate product: the City shapes the rules, selects partners, and uses pilot projects to learn and scale.

Mechanically, Boston **solicits proposals** and selects partner teams (often a consortium of developers, lenders, and service providers) to test models that create clear pathways from renting to buying. The City can provide **gap financing** based on demonstrated need and the availability of funds, and it is explicitly designed so **multiple proposals may be selected**, which is important because it allows comparison and learning rather than "betting everything" on one approach.



Figure 22- Rent-to-own in Boston

Transferable lesson for Hamilton: start with a pilot building and a partner consortium, and treat eligibility, protections, coaching/supports, equity pathway, and resale terms as core program design—just as important as the building itself.

Glasgow, Scotland (United Kingdom) — LIFT Open Market Shared Equity (OMSE)

Glasgow promotes the Scottish Government's OMSE shared equity pathway as a **programmatic, government-backed route to ownership** for first-time buyers and priority groups (including some social housing tenants). It's not quite identical to rent-to-own, but it is similar and demonstrates the mechanics of a structured ownership pathway that can be targeted to specific groups and geographies.

Mechanically, the buyer purchases the majority share (typically **60–90%**) and the government holds the remaining share under a shared equity agreement. Government support is described as **10–40%** of the valuation or sale price (whichever is lower) and the government receives the **same percentage back when the property is sold**. The buyer has "complete title," while the government's share is protected through a legal security, and in many areas buyers can increase their share over time ("staircasing").



Figure 23- Glasgow city skyline. Credit: Paul Harrop

Transferable lesson for Hamilton: design rent-to-own as a structured equity program with clear eligibility and safeguards (anti-windfall rules, transparent exit/resale terms), and scale through multiple partners while preserving program integrity.

Redevelopment of Strategic Locations

Targeting underutilized or high-visibility properties, including through City intervention, this initiative seeks to demonstrate how redevelopment can act as a catalyst for surrounding investment. These sites are chosen for their ability to signal confidence in Downtown, improve the built environment, and attract complementary private development.

Levers: Development Environment, Economic Opportunities, and Aesthetics and Beautification



Priorities: Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments and Supporting economic drivers



Description: These sites, such as vacant lots, vacant and outdated commercial blocks, or publicly owned parcels, represent opportunities to showcase what revitalization looks like when public and private investments align. The initiative could identify a City role to intervene and would prioritize projects that blend residential, cultural, and employment uses, ensuring each redevelopment contributes to Downtown's vibrancy and identity. Through design excellence, visible construction activity, and integrated partnerships, it sends a clear message of confidence to residents and investors alike. Examples of locations include Jackson Square.

The impact of this initiative comes from strategic visibility and momentum. Redeveloping even a few key sites can change the way people perceive the trajectory of Downtown, setting off a cycle of reinvestment. By coupling and coordinating these projects with infrastructure improvements such as streetscape renewal, active transportation links, or nearby public space upgrades, the City ensures that redevelopment generates both economic and community returns. It provides a model for how catalytic redevelopment can unlock wider transformation, accelerating the shift from planning to implementation.

What it would look like: Redevelopment of Strategic Locations is about choosing a small number of highly visible sites that can change how people perceive Downtown's trajectory, places that currently signal stagnation, vacancy, or missed opportunity. When transformed, these sites become "proof points" that Downtown is moving again: mixed-use redevelopment that brings new housing, active ground floors, and a stronger public realm. The impact is not only the building itself; it is the message it sends. A single well-designed catalytic project can unlock confidence across surrounding blocks, encourage reinvestment, and become a new anchor for activity.

In Hamilton's context, this initiative should explicitly connect redevelopment to public benefit: better public spaces around key civic and cultural anchors, stronger main street environments, and new uses that increase daily life (homes, services, cultural/creative space). Done well, it produces construction momentum that people can see, and it sets a new standard for design quality, ground-floor activation, and civic pride.

How we get there: The first step is disciplined selection: identify 1–2 sites with maximum visibility, strong leverage potential, and feasible control or partnership conditions (ownership, land assembly, or the ability to influence outcomes). Next, run a "readiness sprint" rather than a long study: confirm constraints, test market interest, define preferred development options (2–3), and select the City's role as a facilitator, co-investor, land contributor, or procurement lead. The deliverable is a Council-ready business case with a clear procurement path (RFEOI/RFP), partnership model, and risk management approach.

Then move quickly to market. Issue a competitive process that is explicit about outcomes: active and transparent ground floors, mixed-income housing components where feasible, high-quality public realm edges, and commitments to maintenance and programming. Align municipal capital improvements around the site (lighting, sidewalks, plaza upgrades) so redevelopment feels like a coordinated lift, not an isolated project. In parallel, build a communications plan that treats the redevelopment as a public confidence project: frequent construction updates, visible milestones, and a clear story about how the project benefits the city.

Redevelopment of Strategic Locations

Location	Ownership	Relevant policy	Uses	Opportunities		Intensity		Potential
				Priorities	Transformational initiatives	Grade	Years	
Summer's Lane and Commonwealth Square	Public	Hamilton Parks Master Plan; Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan; Urban Hamilton Official Plan	Community	Retrofit Downtown	Undertaking the creation of public spaces	Revitalization	3- 5 years	Initiate comprehensive redesign of Summer's Lane and Commonwealth Square- daylighting all or a portion of Summer's Lane and revitalizing Commonwealth Square and Irving Zucker Sculpture Court. Revitalization could include new public art (sculptural) commission(s) or loans as well as programming to activate/animate
Jackson Square	Publicly owned land; Privately owned building	Housing for Hamilton CIP; Revitalizing Hamilton's Commercial Districts CIP; Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan; Urban Hamilton Official Plan	Residential- commercial- community	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Redevelopment of strategic locations	Revitalization	5 + years	Major redevelopment opportunity that could include residential (office conversion), commercial, and community elements (outdoor space connected to the investment in TD Coliseum's). Improved connectivity with other key elements of Downtown
John Rebecca Park (76 John St. N)	Public	Hamilton Parks Master Plan; Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan; Urban Hamilton Official Plan	Community	Retrofit Downtown	Undertaking the creation of public spaces	Activation	1-3 years	Recognizing the significant investment made to development John Rebecca Park, the City and BIA should develop a programming and activation strategy to animate the park on an interim basis while adjacent sites are developed/redeveloped.
Frank A. Cooke Terminal	Public	Revitalizing Hamilton's Commercial Districts CIP; Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan; Urban Hamilton Official Plan	Residential- commercial	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Incentivizing and supporting to accelerate transformation	Revitalization	3- 5 years	Opportunity to repurpose for a public asset that fills gap connection between City Hall, Confederation Square, Jackson Square and Gore Park
11 Ferguson Ave. N	Public	Hamilton Parks Master Plan; Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan; Urban Hamilton Official Plan	Commercial- community	Support the economic drivers	Main street lifts	Temporary use/ transitory use	1-3 years	Property can be strategically adapted to provide interim pedestrian access to businesses on King St. E during LRT construction
27 Hess St. S	Private	Hamilton Parks Master Plan; Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan; Urban Hamilton Official Plan	Commercial- community	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Incentivizing and supporting to accelerate transformation	Temporary use/ transitory use	1-3 years	Temporary use that fits with the district, e.g. Beer Garden
33 and 35 Hess St. S	Private	Hamilton Parks Master Plan; Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan; Urban Hamilton Official Plan	Commercial- community	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Incentivizing and supporting to accelerate transformation	Temporary use/ transitory use	1-3 years	Temporary use that fits with the district, e.g. Beer Garden
City Hall Municipal Parking Lot	Public	Housing for Hamilton CIP; Revitalizing Hamilton's Commercial Districts CIP; Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan; Urban Hamilton Official Plan	Residential- community	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Redevelopment of strategic locations	Revitalization	5 + years	Major redevelopment opportunity that could include residential (office conversion), commercial, and community elements. New Provincial legislation around HST exemptions and DC deferrals could support redevelopment.

Redevelopment of Strategic Locations

Location	Ownership	Relevant policy	Uses	Opportunities		Intensity		Potential
				Priorities	Transformational initiatives	Grade	Years	
77 James St. (City Centre)	Private	Housing for Hamilton CIP; Revitalizing Hamilton's Commercial Districts CIP; Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan; Urban Hamilton Official Plan;	Residential- commercial	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Strategic rent-to-own initiative	Revitalization	3- 5 years	Major redevelopment opportunity- through private and public collaboration. New Provincial legislation around HST exemptions and DC deferrals could support redevelopment.
155 King William St. (Hamilton Police Central Station)	Public	Housing for Hamilton CIP; Revitalizing Hamilton's Commercial Districts CIP; Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan; Urban Hamilton Official Plan	Residential- community	Enabling future opportunities	Redevelopment of strategic locations	Revitalization	5 + years	Adaptive reuse of building or new structure
Hamilton GO Station	Public	Housing for Hamilton CIP; Revitalizing Hamilton's Commercial Districts CIP; Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan; Urban Hamilton Official Plan	Residential- community	Enabling future opportunities	Redevelopment of strategic locations	Revitalization	5 + years	Adaptive reuse
134 Cannon St. E (Cannon Knitting Mills)	Private	Housing for Hamilton CIP; Revitalizing Hamilton's Commercial Districts CIP; Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan; Urban Hamilton Official Plan	Residential- commercial - community	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Incentivizing and supporting to accelerate transformation	Revitalization	5 + years	Major redevelopment opportunity
81 Bay St. N (former Sir John A. MacDonald High School)	Public	Ontario Regulation 374/23 (and Development Charges Act); Revitalizing Hamilton's Commercial Districts CIP; Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan; Urban Hamilton Official Plan	Community	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Redevelopment of strategic locations	Revitalization	3- 5 years	Potential community facility (future Salvation Army); Reg. 374/32 and the Development Charges Act are prescriptive in the range of uses/services that the City could use the site for if it were acquired under 4 (1) (a) of the Reg.; Recreation / Child Care and Early Years Programming / Public Health / Library / Policing / Long-term care
284 King St. E (Denninger's Foods of the World)	Private	Housing for Hamilton CIP; Revitalizing Hamilton's Commercial Districts CIP; Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan; Urban Hamilton Official Plan	Residential- commercial	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Incentivizing and supporting to accelerate transformation	Revitalization	3- 5 years	Significant redevelopment opportunity. Potenti into a mixed-use residential project that potentially re-incorporates Denninger's as a ground floor tenant
293 King St. E	Public	Housing for Hamilton CIP; Revitalizing Hamilton's Commercial Districts CIP; Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan; Urban Hamilton Official Plan	Residential- commercial - community	Enabling future opportunities	Main street lifts	Temporary use/ transitory use	1-3 years	Property can be strategically adapted to provide interim pedestrian access to businesses on King St. E during LRT construction. Provides mid-block through connection to Jarvis St. and rear lane access to buildings on the north side of King St. E

Redevelopment of Strategic Locations

Location	Ownership	Relevant policy	Uses	Opportunities		Intensity		Potential
				Priorities	Transformational initiatives	Grade	Years	
322 and 328 King St. E	Private	Housing for Hamilton CIP; Revitalizing Hamilton's Commercial Districts CIP; Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan; Urban Hamilton Official Plan	Residential- commercial	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Incentivizing and supporting to accelerate transformation	Revitalization	3- 5 years	Vacant lot on southside of King St. S. at Wellington St. S. Gateway potential to Downtown Hamilton
140 King William St. (Municipal Parking Car Park 5)	Public	Housing for Hamilton CIP; Revitalizing Hamilton's Commercial Districts CIP; Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan; Urban Hamilton Official Plan	Residential	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Redevelopment of strategic locations	Revitalization	3- 5 years	Mixed-Use Residential redevelopment opportunity. New Provincial legislation around HST exemptions and DC deferrals could support redevelopment.
Ferguson Station Park	Public	Hamilton Parks Master Plan; Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan; Urban Hamilton Official Plan	Community	Protect the main streets	Main street lifts	Temporary use/ transitory use	1-3 years	Property can be strategically adapted to provide interim pedestrian access to businesses on King St. E during LRT construction; Opportunity to implement design refinements and enhanced programming to activate and improve safety
171 Main St. E (Municipal Parking Car Park 7)	Public	Housing for Hamilton CIP; Revitalizing Hamilton's Commercial Districts CIP; Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan; Urban Hamilton Official Plan	Residential- commercial	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Incentivizing and supporting to accelerate transformation	Revitalization	5 + years	Mixed-Use Residential redevelopment opportunity
Southwest corner of Hess St. St. and King St. W (Municipal Parking Car Park 74)	Public	Revitalizing Hamilton's Commercial Districts CIP; Downtown Hamilton Secondary Plan; Urban Hamilton Official Plan	Residential- commercial - community	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Redevelopment of strategic locations	Revitalization	5 + years	Mixed-Use Residential redevelopment opportunity

Redevelopment of Strategic Locations

The map that follows identifies a set of strategic locations where targeted action can unlock the potential of Downtown Hamilton. These locations range from small-scale opportunities, such as activating a parkette, improving a key corner, or adding seating, lighting, and public art, to larger sites where redevelopment, adaptive reuse, or major public investment could reshape activity patterns and confidence in the core. Together, they illustrate how Downtown revitalization is built from both “everyday” places that improve comfort and neighbourhood life, and catalytic projects that signal long-term commitment and attract further investment.

Not every strategic location will move at the same pace. Some interventions can begin quickly through programming, temporary installations, and community-led activation, creating immediate reasons to visit and linger through art, events, and improved public spaces. Other sites require more time, coordination, and partnerships across the City, institutions, property owners, and the development community.
Both scales matter: small moves build trust and momentum, while larger transformative projects deliver the housing, services, jobs, and civic spaces that Hamiltonians need. The purpose of identifying these strategic locations is to focus effort where it can create the greatest cumulative impact, strengthening neighbourhood life today while preparing the ground for consequential change over the years ahead.

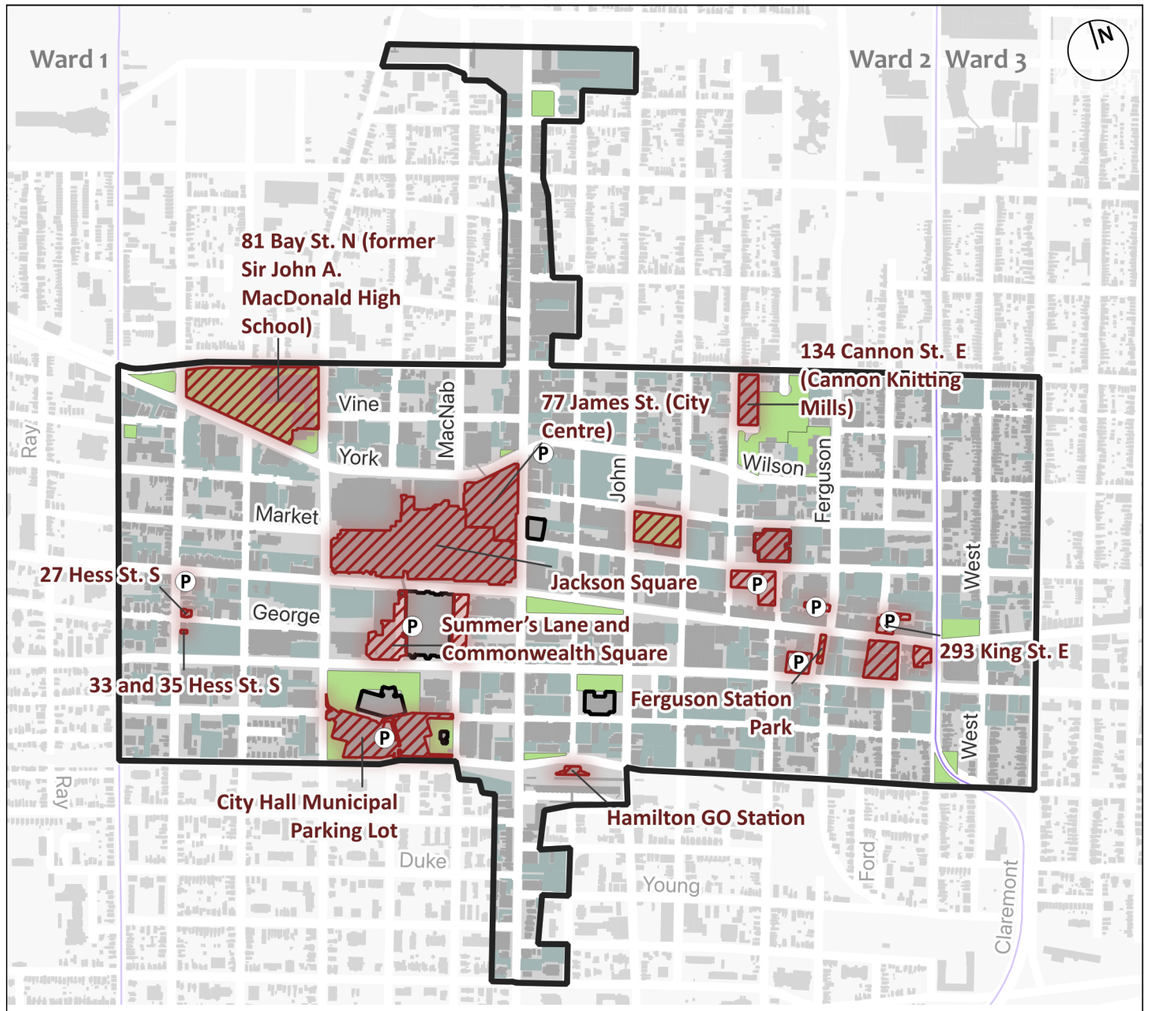


Figure 24- Map Showing Strategic Locations. Credit: Cultural Spaces.

Redevelopment of Strategic Locations

Two examples

Halifax, NS (Canada)— Cogswell District Redevelopment

Halifax's Cogswell project is a strong example of a strategic site being treated as city-making, not just redevelopment. It converts 16 acres of road infrastructure at the entrance to downtown into a pedestrian-friendly mixed-use neighbourhood by reinstating the urban street grid and creating development blocks that can support new residential and commercial uses—explicitly reframing a traffic-centric zone into a connected district where people can live, work, and play.

Mechanically, it's delivered as a packaged transformation: restored street grid, development blocks, dedicated cycling lanes and multi-use trails, new parks/open spaces, a reimagined transit hub, a significant central urban square. That combination matters: the project does not rely solely on a single building or a single developer. It creates the physical conditions and parcels that enable multiple investments to follow.



Figure 25- Halifax's Cogswell project. Credit: A Disappearing Act

Transferable lesson for Hamilton: pick 1–2 highly symbolic sites and treat them as "proof points" by packaging streets, public realm, and development readiness together—so the site visibly signals confidence and unlocks surrounding reinvestment.

Birmingham (United Kingdom) — Big City Plan (City Centre Masterplan)

Birmingham's Big City Plan is a city-centre masterplan that shows how strategic sites land best when they're part of a coordinated multi-project program rather than isolated interventions. It sets clear, quantified objectives (e.g., new floorspace, new jobs, a more walkable city centre, new/improved public spaces, enhanced walking/cycling routes, new homes) and organizes delivery through five "areas of transformation."

Mechanically, the plan functions as a unifying frame that helps the city coordinate public realm projects, movement improvements, cultural positioning, and development across a long horizon—so that strategic projects reinforce each other. It explicitly includes priorities like giving streets back to pedestrians and valuing heritage and cultural assets as part of the transformation logic, which is the same kind of "identity + function" blend Hamilton is aiming for.



Figure 26- Redevelopment in Birmingham. Credit: Voice of Calm.

Transferable lesson for Hamilton: treat strategic redevelopments as part of a small set of defined Downtown "transformation areas," with measurable targets and sequenced delivery, so each site contributes to a cumulative Downtown lift rather than a stand-alone project.

Incentivizing and Supporting to Accelerate Transformation

This initiative focuses on creating or adapting incentive tools and coordinating the impact of multiple stakeholders that accelerate private and not-for-profit sector participation in Downtown renewal. It targets current business operators, developers, investors, social service delivery groups, entrepreneurs, and other shapers of the physical and economic fabric of Downtown. Whether through bylaws, programmes, grants, tax mechanisms, zoning changes, development charge relief, or coordination of delivery of key activities, the goals are to facilitate resource investments, support the core social services, and manage the concentration of services that deliver public value for Downtown and the City as a whole.

Levers: Economic Opportunities, Development Environment, and Public Safety



Priorities: Retrofit Downtown, Enable future opportunities, and Drive transformation through coordinated investment.



Description: Its impact stems from aligning incentives and roles with outcomes. By encouraging the kinds of investments that strengthen Downtown's economic base and social cohesion, the City can accelerate transformation without overextending public resources. The initiative also helps strengthen the presence of the services and infrastructure required to accompany the transformation of Downtown as well address the concentration of certain services that can become obstacles to that transformation. In doing so, it signals that Hamilton is prepared to partner meaningfully with the private and not-for-profit sector to turn potential into financial and social returns for both the partner and the city as a whole.

What it would look like: This initiative is the "acceleration engine" of the strategy: a clear set of incentives, supports, and process improvements that make it easier for property owners, businesses, developers, and non-profit partners to invest in Downtown. It would look like a simple, legible "Downtown Transformation Incentives Suite" with one front door—so proponents don't have to navigate multiple departments and unclear rules. It would also look like faster decisions, better coordination across approvals, and a transparent way to track what investments are happening and what outcomes they generate.

For the public, the impact would be visible in faster storefront improvements, reduced long-term vacancy, more building reinvestment, and more projects moving from intention to construction. For the City, it creates a practical way to align incentives with outcomes: not "subsidies," but targeted tools that unlock housing, improve main streets, and support the services and amenities needed for a complete Downtown neighbourhood.

How we get there: Start by consolidating and clarifying what already exists: produce a single "deal menu" of incentives and approvals, publish the eligibility criteria in plain language, and assign a Downtown deal desk or concierge function to guide proponents. Run a one-year pilot incentive cycle focused on a few priority geographies (key blocks and nodes) so the results are concentrated and visible. Pair incentives with performance expectations (e.g., façade transparency, maintenance commitments, ground-floor activation, accessibility improvements).

Next, build measurement into the program from the beginning: track application volumes, decision timelines, dollars leveraged, and the before/after impact on targeted streets. Use those results to refine the incentive suite for years 2–5, including any needed policy changes or program reviews. As the suite matures, align it with provincial and federal funding streams (e.g. housing, retrofit, climate) so the City's dollars are used primarily to unlock larger external investments.

Incentivizing and Supporting to Accelerate Transformation

Two examples

Calgary, AB (Canada) — Downtown Development Incentive Program

Calgary's Downtown Development Incentive Program is a clear example of using incentives to unlock adaptive reuse at scale—especially office-to-residential conversions. The City describes the program as funding conversions of underutilized office space into residential (and other uses such as hotels, schools, and performing arts) and reports that it supports 21 conversion projects, transforming 2.68 million square feet into 2,628 new homes (plus hotel/hostel uses).

Mechanically, Calgary runs the program through time-bounded intake windows (i.e., defined periods to apply rather than an always-open process), and multiple reports describe a simple incentive structure: up to $75 per square foot for office-to-residential conversion, capped at a maximum per project (commonly cited at $15M). The key operational point is that proponents can do the math: they know whether a conversion can work before they spend months in uncertainty.



Figure 27- Downtown Calgary. Credit: AceYYC

Transferable lesson for Hamilton: build a clear "deal math" incentive with defined eligibility, intakes, and public reporting (units created, square footage converted, leverage). Use it to create a pipeline rather than one-off exceptions.

Dublin (Ireland) — Living City Initiative (LCI)

Dublin's Living City Initiative is a tax incentive scheme designed to encourage people to live in historic inner-city areas and regenerate commercial districts. It's useful because it deliberately supports both residential refurbishment/conversion and commercial refurbishment, including tax relief options that apply to rented residences, which aligns closely with Hamilton's need to improve rental housing quality and stabilize Downtown life.

Mechanically, LCI provides tax relief for residential works either as income tax relief (owner-occupied) or as capital allowance (for rented residences), and it also enables accelerated capital allowance for commercial property refurbishment/conversion. Importantly, it applies within mapped Special Regeneration Areas, which concentrates impact geographically rather than diluting it across the entire city.



Figure 28- Downtown Dublin. Credit: Krochmal

Transferable lesson for Hamilton: treat incentives as a targeted package (housing + commercial), apply them to priority areas/blocks, and design them to upgrade the lived experience of renters while also improving ground-floor vitality.

Main Street Lifts

Designed to rejuvenate Downtown's commercial corridors, Main Street Lifts emphasize storefront improvements, cultural activation, and small business support. By combining streetscape upgrades, marketing initiatives, and targeted incentives, this effort strengthens Downtown's identity and restores confidence in its retail and hospitality economy.

Levers: Main Streets, Cultural Assets, Activities, and Entertainment, and Public and Green Spaces and Assets



Priorities: Protect the main streets, Increase safety and well-being, and Support economic drivers



Description: As construction of the LRT reshapes the urban landscape, this initiative focuses on supporting the hundreds of small businesses directly affected by disruption, helping them remain viable and visible through coordinated marketing, temporary improvements, and access programs. It also positions Downtown as a destination for Hamiltonians, a place where entertainment, food, retail, and services combine to create a vibrant, inclusive, and memorable experience.

Its impact comes from reinforcing the identity and resilience of Downtown's main streets. By combining façade renewal, storefront improvement programs, streetscape enhancements, and cultural activations, Main Street Lifts strengthens the unique character of each corridor while ensuring businesses can thrive during and after major infrastructure projects. A key component includes the temporary redesign of King Street during LRT construction by flipping the front to the back where possible, improving signage and pedestrian access, and maintaining continuous business visibility. Each project should be "climate-ready by design," integrating shade, stormwater management, and comfort measures as part of the core scope, not as optional extras. These actions not only preserve commercial activity but also test new public space configurations.

The initiative also presents an opportunity to redefine Main Street's role within the Downtown network by shifting it from a high-speed transportation corridor to a true urban street that prioritizes people, place, and experience. Through temporary and permanent design interventions, the corridor can be reimagined with wider sidewalks, improved crossings, new landscaping, and active frontages that invite people to linger rather than pass through. This transformation can also enhance connectivity between major civic and cultural landmarks such as City Hall, the Art Gallery of Hamilton, and the FirstOntario Concert Hall, improving the quality, comfort, and safety of public spaces while unlocking new opportunities for cultural programming, tourism, and private reinvestment. It will further strengthen Main Street's relationship with James Street, reinforcing it as a north–south cultural and commercial spine. Together, the two corridors can form a connected and complementary system of activity where Main Street becomes a space for movement, gathering, and commerce, and James Street remains a social and cultural destination that draws people deeper into the Downtown core.

This initiative can also serve as a model for how Hamilton supports local businesses during major city-building projects, demonstrating that economic growth and urban transformation can go hand in hand with community care and continuity.

What it would look like: Main Street Lifts is the initiative that makes Downtown feel alive again at street level. It would look like targeted corridors, especially along King, James, Main, and York, where storefronts are improved, sidewalks feel comfortable, lighting is reliable, and there is a steady rhythm of activity. The initiative is not only about beautification, it is about survival and confidence. Helping businesses remain visible and viable during disruption (including LRT construction) and positioning main streets as places people choose to linger, not just drive through, sends a message of resilience and public benefit.

In practice, Main Street Lifts would deliver a visible "corridor effect": a few blocks that change quickly enough that residents and visitors can feel the difference. Storefront upgrades, pop-up occupancy, patios and parkettes, better wayfinding, and regular programming would combine into a single experience. Over time, pilots become permanent street transformations: safer crossings, wider sidewalks, trees and shade, and a ground-floor environment that is lively day and night.

How we get there: Begin with focus: choose 2–3 priority blocks where conditions are ripe for quick improvement and where success will be highly visible. Deploy a packaged set of supports: micro-grants for storefront improvements, a fast permit pathway for patios and temporary installations, coordinated cleaning and graffiti response, and a consistent programming calendar. Work with BIAs and property owners to fill gaps with pop-ups and short-term activations. Make it easy for businesses to participate and make it obvious to the public that the street is changing.

Then use what works to inform permanent capital design. Collect data on foot traffic, vacancy, and merchant sentiment during pilots, and convert those lessons into a permanent streetscape plan aligned with major infrastructure sequencing. Treat the main streets as Downtown's living room: prioritize comfort, safety, and experience. By Year 3–5, aim to have at least one corridor segment moving from temporary interventions into permanent rebuild, signalling that Main Street Lifts is not only programming, it is city-building.

Main Street Lifts

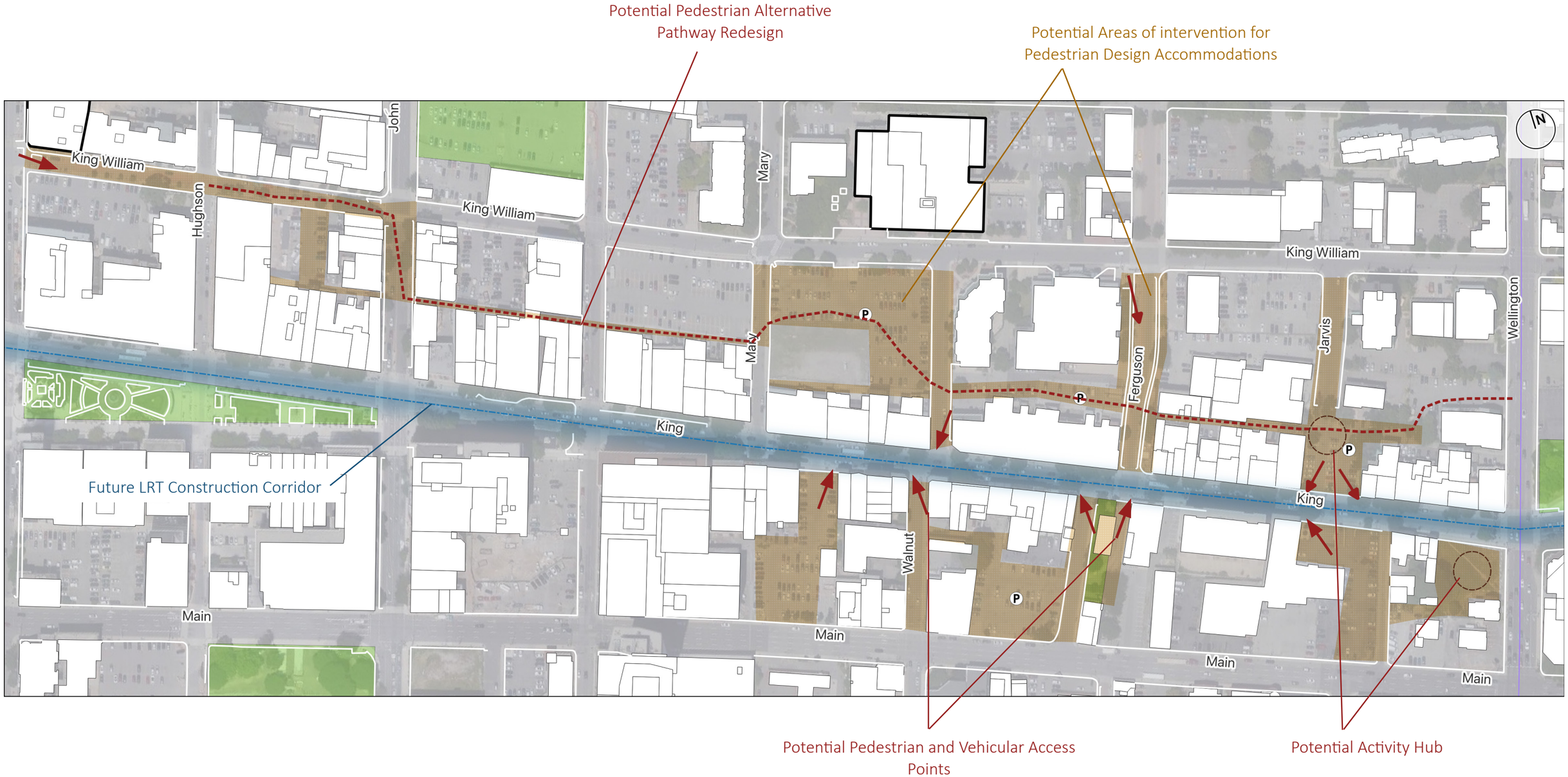


Figure 29- Illustration for the interim redesign potential along the proposed LRT on King Street during construction phase to maintain access and enjoyment of businesses. Credit: Cultural Spaces

Main Street Lifts

Two examples

Denver, CO (United States) — 16th Street Mall Reconstruction (Downtown "main street" rebuild)

Denver's 16th Street Mall reconstruction is a strong "Main Street Lifts" precedent because it treats a signature downtown corridor as a confidence and experience project, not just an infrastructure job. The City frames the work around improving the downtown experience with safer, more comfortable public space and "new spaces and places for people to enjoy," while keeping the corridor's role as a central spine for downtown activity front and centre.

Mechanically, Denver delivers the transformation block-by-block and phase-by-phase, with clear milestones and a strong emphasis on transparency during disruption. The City publishes dashboards and regular updates showing which blocks are under construction, which are complete, and what's coming next—creating steady "reopening moments" and maintaining trust with businesses and the public throughout a multi-year rebuild.

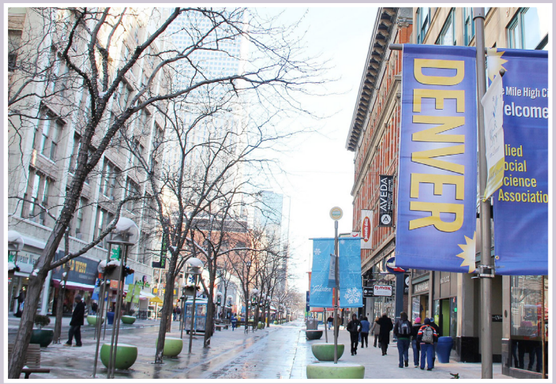


Figure 30- Denver. Credit: Erica Chang

Transferable lesson for Hamilton: treat Main Street Lifts as a corridor delivery program with phased, visible wins—pair capital work (or major disruption like LRT) with a public-facing progress rhythm, clear wayfinding and access, and ongoing activation. Use a simple dashboard and block-by-block completion to build momentum, demonstrate seriousness, and keep businesses and residents aligned even before the full corridor transformation is finished.

Oslo (Norway) — Car-Free Liveability Programme

Oslo's Car-Free Liveability Programme shows a programmatic approach to making a city-centre feel safer, more comfortable, and more active by systematically prioritizing people over cars. The programme's stated aim is to give streets back to people, more benches and free seating, more culture and activity, better cycling conditions, better public transport, and fewer cars in the city centre.

Mechanically, Oslo advanced through pilot trials and progressive change. A widely cited operational move was removing on-street parking: one account describes six pilot trials beginning in 2017 and the removal of about 300 spaces initially, rising to 700 spaces removed for private cars by 2019, freeing space for pedestrian priority, city life, and a more connected pedestrian network.



Figure 31- Oslo. Credit: Richard Mortel

Transferable lesson for Hamilton: treat main streets as a livability program, not a one-off project, use pilots, remove friction in the curb lane, add comfort infrastructure, and steadily connect pedestrian-friendly segments so the "corridor effect" is continuous.

Creation of Public Spaces

The creation and renewal of public spaces aim to restore Downtown's role as Hamilton's shared civic realm, a place for gathering, creativity, and everyday life. Investments in plazas, green areas, and flexible public venues will improve livability, safety, and accessibility, while fostering a sense of belonging.

Levers: Public and Green Spaces and Assets, Aesthetics and Beautification, and Connectivity and Transportation



Priorities: Retrofit Downtown, Enable future opportunities, Residents, visitors, and workers, and Increasing the sense of safety and well-being.



Description: Downtown Hamilton's most pressing challenges include a lack of true, attractive public spaces that invite people to gather, linger, and connect. While Downtown hosts many civic institutions and key cultural assets, it has relatively few green and open spaces where residents, workers, and visitors can relax, enjoy art, or experience community life. This initiative envisions a renewed network of parks, plazas, and pedestrian spaces that not only provide daily amenity but also express Hamilton's identity, its creativity, inclusiveness, and resilience. Each project should be "climate-ready by design," integrating shade, cooling canopy, water features where appropriate, permeable surfaces, rain gardens as part of the core scope. These spaces are where public art, performance, markets, and festivals can flourish, turning Downtown into a stage for shared experiences and civic pride.

Its impact lies in creating a true heart for the city, a place that both Hamiltonians and visitors can claim as their own. By strategically investing in the design and programming of public spaces, the City can elevate the Downtown experience, ensuring that green areas, gathering places, and pedestrian corridors are beautiful, safe, and accessible. Examples of locations include the site of the current Frank A.Cooke terminal, the context of Gore Park, the areas surrounding the Art Gallery.

These spaces can also serve as tourism anchors, linking major attractions such as the Art Gallery, FirstOntario Concert Hall, and Gore Park, and drawing people from across the city and beyond. In doing so, this initiative transforms Downtown into a showcase for Hamilton's culture, creativity, and community spirit, a civic environment that embodies the city's past achievements and future ambitions, and that proudly presents Hamilton to the world.

The creation of public spaces amplifies the success of the other transformational initiatives. Great streets and plazas support Main Street Lifts by increasing pedestrian activity and inviting investment in storefronts; they enhance redevelopment projects by improving the context and value of nearby properties; and they provide the settings where arts, culture, and entrepreneurship can thrive. Together, these initiatives form a mutually reinforcing ecosystem where public investment in spaces and infrastructure unlocks private energy, strengthens social connections, and establishes Downtown as both the heart of Hamilton and the city's most powerful expression of shared purpose and pride.

What it would look like: This initiative restores Downtown's role as Hamilton's shared civic realm by creating and renewing public spaces where people can gather, linger, and feel proud of the city. It would look like a small network of upgraded plazas, parkettes, and streetside spaces, connected to cultural and civic anchors, where seating, shade, greenery, lighting, and programming make it comfortable to spend time throughout the day and across seasons. These spaces become the "stages" of Downtown life: markets, performances, winter lighting, public art, and everyday moments.

The most important shift is that public spaces become managed and programmed, not simply built. A successful public space is a combination of design and operations: maintenance, safety, activation, and clear responsibility. When this is done well, the spaces support everything else, main streets thrive, perceptions of safety improve, and Downtown becomes a destination for Hamiltonians and visitors alike.

How we get there: Start by identifying 2–3 priority public-space sites where modest interventions can quickly improve daily experience and where programming can begin immediately. Launch a tactical phase first: temporary seating, shade, lighting enhancements, small landscape improvements, and a consistent event rhythm. Use this phase to learn what draws people, what times and formats work, and what operations are required to keep spaces clean and comfortable.

With that evidence, move into permanent design and delivery. Develop a capital concept for at least one signature space and pair it with a clear management model (who maintains, who programmes, how issues are reported, and how the space remains welcoming). Align the public space upgrades with nearby private reinvestment and main street improvements so the impact is multiplied. By Year 3–5, the goal is to have at least one highly visible public space project under construction or delivered, with programming that demonstrates the space is not only new but truly used and loved.

Creation of Public Spaces

Two examples

Montréal, QC (Canada) — Quartier des Spectacles / Place des Festivals

Montréal's Quartier des Spectacles is a strong reference because it pairs public space design with a durable governance/operations model. The Partnership is described as hosting 50+ festivals and events per year (including many outdoor events) and providing cultural activity programming throughout the year while preserving and enriching cultural assets, positioning the district as Montréal's cultural heart and a tourism destination.

Mechanically, the model is not "build a plaza and hope it works." It's about infrastructure, coordination, stewardship. Public investment supports equipment and infrastructure that make outdoor programming feasible and reliable, and the Partnership functions as a coordinating entity that sustains a consistent rhythm of activity and helps manage the public realm as an event-ready district rather than an occasional venue.



Figure 32- Montreal's Place des Arts. Credit: art_inthecity

Transferable lesson for Hamilton: public spaces succeed when they are designed and operated as an ecosystem: physical upgrades, a year-round programming engine, clear stewardship responsibilities.

Barcelona (Spain) — Superblocks (Superilles)

Barcelona's Superblocks are a useful reference because they show how cities can create meaningful public space by changing how streets function. Superblocks are described as roughly 400m x 400m units where the objective is to prioritize people over cars and recover space for community use, supporting accessibility, biodiversity, sustainable mobility, and social cohesion.

Mechanically, implementation is tied to a broader mobility framework and uses an incremental approach. Early experimentation through tactical urbanism, temporary, lower-cost interventions are used to test transformations before making them permanent. This is important for Hamilton because it shows a realistic pathway: you don't need to wait for major land acquisition or full reconstruction to begin creating better public spaces.



Figure 33- Barcelona. Credit: R Hauschulz

Transferable lesson for Hamilton: start by reallocating street space tactically (seating, greenery, slow-street pilots), measure use and comfort, then build permanent public spaces where the pilots prove demand, especially along a connected Downtown "heart loop."

Creation of Public Spaces

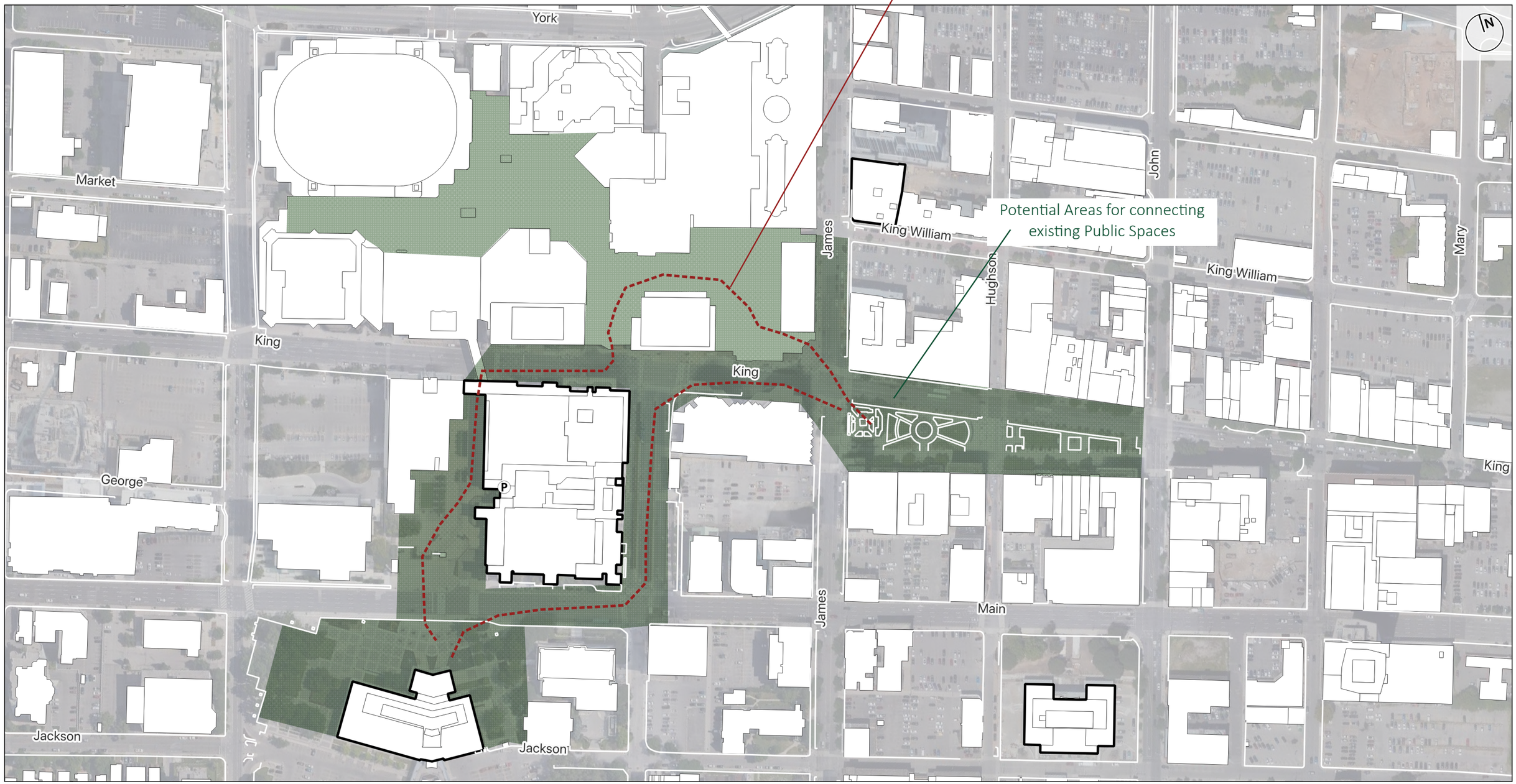


Figure 34- Illustration for the potential to strengthen public and green spaces Downtown. Credit: Cultural Spaces

7.2. Actions on the Priorities and Initiatives

The Actions represent the most direct and measurable expression of this Downtown Revitalization Strategy, the practical steps that turn priorities and transformational initiatives into reality. Each action is linked to one or more of the identified priorities and transformational initiatives, ensuring that efforts are coordinated, mutually reinforcing, and aimed at delivering tangible outcomes. While priorities define *what must be achieved*, and initiatives show *how change can be catalyzed*, actions define *what will be done*. They identify who leads, what partnerships are required, and what success looks like in the near term. Costing is assessed based on a tiering system and is indicative of effort. These are estimates that guide the reader in determining whether additional funds may be required and at what level. They also align with what might expect to be in an operational budget or require another approach.

Some actions identified are already underway within the City or with partners; the purpose of this plan is to connect them, strengthen coordination, and report results in a cohesive way so that individual efforts combine into a clear, cumulative impact Downtown.

The Strategy emphasizes a one- to five-year timeframe for implementation to generate early momentum, build public confidence, and demonstrate visible progress. Immediate action during this period, especially in the first year, is crucial to show that Downtown Hamilton can move decisively from planning to doing by advancing projects, improving the physical environment, and strengthening civic trust through consistent, transparent delivery. Within this window, actions are designed to be achievable, scalable, and adaptable, ensuring that early wins contribute to long-term transformation. With these priorities and immediate action, significant results can be achievable within that timeframe.

Beyond the five-year horizon, the Strategy recognizes that economic and social conditions will evolve, requiring a reassessment of priorities, resources, and partnerships. New challenges and opportunities, such as demographic shifts, technological change and investment cycles, will inevitably shape Downtown's trajectory. This plan commits to an adaptive approach, where success is continuously measured, lessons are incorporated, and the next phase of actions builds upon proven results. This ensures that Downtown revitalization remains dynamic, inclusive, and responsive to the needs and aspirations of Hamiltonians.

How to Implement the Actions

Implementation of the actions should be approached as a practical guide rather than a fixed blueprint. The first three years provide the clearest direction and should be treated as the priority delivery window for building trust, learning, and momentum; actions further into the future will be refined as conditions change and results are measured.

Many actions are already underway within the City; this Strategy provides the framework to align and connect that work through the shared **Principles** and **Priorities** so it delivers coordinated, cumulative impact Downtown.

In carrying out each action, the City and partners should apply the full set of Strategy **Principles** as a consistent lens, focus effort on the agreed **Priorities**, and deliberately use the **Levers** to align programs, investments, and partnerships so individual actions reinforce one another.

Legend

	Actions	Description and key elements	Objective	Outcome	Linked Transformational Initiative	Key Levers	Primary priority	Secondary priority	Lead	Partners	Cost Tier	Cost Type	Cost confidence	Years
#	Action to undertake	Description of intent and key elements to consider	What are we trying to achieve	What should we get out of the action	1 of 5 initiatives	1 of 9 levers being activated through the action	Which top priority to revitalize Downtown is being addressed	Which complementary priority is being addressed	Lead internal department	Internal and external partners	$ = operational budget/ under 100K $$ = minor additional funds/ 100K- 250K $$$ = effort level additional funds/ 250K - 500K Transformation = investment level additional funds/ 500K	Identifies the type of funds, from operational to capital	Determines whether cost is known through operational costing, estimated through experience, or new and unknown requiring study.	

	Actions	Description and key elements	Objective	Outcome	Linked Transformational Initiative	Key Levers	Primary priority	Secondary priority	Lead	Partners	Cost Tier	Cost Type	Cost confidence	Years
Preparatory Year (2026) initiated actions														
1	Setup a downtown clean and quick fix surge pilot programme and fund	Dedicate resources to keeping downtown clean with increased frequency; Target 3 priority micro-zones at Gore Park/AGH/City Hall axis, TD Coliseum, JamesSt section, KingSt section; Rapid response fix it and clean up teams; City cleans everything; graffiti removal, public furniture fix, litter; public infrastructure repairs	Assess the amount of effort and resources required to maintain Downtown clean and attractive day and night	Data that can help design a Downtown Service standard	Main street lifts	Aesthetics and Beautification	Protect the main streets	Set up a Downtown focused governance and administrative model	Economic development	Public works, bylaw, BIAs	$	Operational	Costed	2026-2029
2	Create a Downtown Service Hub and ambassador pilot programme	Maintain existing DT issue reporting portal under the leadership of Economic development and in partnership with key departments; concierge service for range of City services and response; establish an ambassador programme for wayfinding, issue reporting, guidance for help for range of visitors, residents, businesses; coordination with waterfront for greater cohesion; coordination between services and police for best response.	Coordinate City services for quick and efficient response	Understand the stress on specific departments; Build trust with residents and businesses; first hand data collection	Main street lifts	Residents, Visitors, and Workers	Protect the main streets	Set up a Downtown focused governance and administrative model	Economic development	Public works, Tourism and Culture Division, Hamilton Police Service, Public Health, outreach organizations	$	Operational	Costed	2026-2029

	Actions	Description and key elements	Objective	Outcome	Linked Transformational Initiative	Key Levers	Primary priority	Secondary priority	Lead	Partners	Cost Tier	Cost Type	Cost confidence	Years
3	Roll out a store-front and visi-bility grants and design options for main streets affected by the LRT	Focus on the main streets and preparing them for the LRT changes; establish the design options to be applied during construction that will allow access through parallel streets/ back alleys on King St; support an effort to make the area attractive before and during. Climate change resilience should be a core requirement in the options.	Protect the main streets in antici-pation of the LRT project, during construction, and for a quick recovery.	During construc-tion design op-tions are ready for implementation	Main street lifts	Main Streets	Protect the main streets	Enabling future opportunities	Economic devel-opment	LRT Office, BIAs, Planning, Trans-portation Plan-ning, cultural and entertainment groups	$	Incentive/ Grant	Costed	2026-2027
4	Design a finan-cial model for a rent-to-own pilot programme	The financial model options should consider the parameters included in the 10 year strategy, scope out the current market, and take into consideration City budget realities. This will help anchor an artist and entrepre-neur population Downtown that can actively contribute to its vibrancy and economic activity.	Identify the pre-ferred financial models to put in place a rent-to-own pilot	Financial model options are ready for a pilot to be developed	Strategic rent-to-own initiative	Residents, Visitors, and Workers	Enabling future opportunities	Support the economic drivers	Economic devel-opment	Corporate Corpo-rate Real Estate Office Office and assets, Entrepre-neurship groups, cultural and entertainment groups,	$	Policy	Costed	2026-2027
5	Pilot “Animate the Downtown” micro-grants and improve-ments, especial-ly on York Bou-levard, James Street, and John Rebecca Park	Work with partners to deliver on ongoing activation pro-grammes within targeted areas, including by considering bylaw exemptions (e.g. sound, licens-es, assembly, event spaces) and accelerated review process-es, align with the Night Time Economy project, enhance the connections with the water-front and waterfalls. Physical improvements need to incorpo-rate climate change resilience strategies.	Establish the foundation for Downtown as a destination day and night	Investments in space animation and permanent essential improve-ments	Main street lifts	Main Streets	Protect the main streets	Enabling future opportunities	Economic devel-opment	BIAs, Public Works, commu-nity groups	$	Incentive/ Grant	Costed	2026-2029
6	Create and maintain a Downtown dashboard and report	The dashboard will report on actions, priorities, impacts, and challenges.	Build trust and establish partner-ships	Assess progress on key indicators	All	Residents, Visitors, and Workers	Set up a Down-town focused governance and administra-tive model	Driving trans-formation through shared and coordinat-ed investments	Economic devel-opment	City IT, BIAs	$	Operational	Costed	2026-2036
7	Review the governance and programme delivery for Downtown	The effort aims to identify the key departments involved in shaping downtown, the types of activities and programmes they deliver downtown, and how much of their resources are invested specifically downtown.	Identify the key players, needs, and opportuni-ties	Foundation to identify options	All	Residents, Visitors, and Workers	Set up a Down-town focused governance and administra-tive model	Driving trans-formation through shared and coordinat-ed investments	City Manager’s Office	Economic devel-opment	$	Policy	Costed	2026-2027

	Actions	Description and key elements	Objective	Outcome	Linked Transformational Initiative	Key Levers	Primary priority	Secondary priority	Lead	Partners	Cost Tier	Cost Type	Cost confidence	Years
8	Establish an interim city and partners table	The table would have the mandate to create the mechanism for operating a Downtown agency and for establishing a relationship with partners.	Develop the terms of operations and governance of a Downtown Office	Foundation to create a dedicated Downtown Office	All	Residents, Visitors, and Workers	Set up a Downtown focused governance and administrative model	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Economic development	City Manager's Office, BIAs, Chamber of Commerce, community groups	$	Operational	Costed	2026-2027
9	Identify revitalization opportunities in strategic locations	Building on the locations identified in the 10-year strategy (revitalization, activation, redevelopment), develop a financial, Corporate Corporate Real Estate Office Office, and Facilities understanding of the short term opportunities. Opportunities need to incorporate climate change resilience benefits for the Downtown as a whole.	Set the course for long term strategies that meet the city's needs and leverage private sector investments	Strategic recommendations for uplift investments	Redevelopment of strategic locations	Development Environment	Retrofit Downtown	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Economic development	Corporate Real Estate Office and Facilities, Placemaking and Public Art	$	Policy	Costed	2026-2027
10	Launch a review of bylaws and Official Plan policies that apply Downtown, including to support new uses, facilitate a more nimble process, help pilot initiatives and permit meanwhile uses	Identify the types of bylaws and policies that apply, their enforcement, their relevance, and the modifications required to support the revitalization of Downtown through new, temporary, and transition uses. Apply a night time lens. Guided by the principles and priorities of the 10-year strategy.	Strengthen and adapt the regulatory tools to Downtown's reality.	List of bylaws and Official Plan policies to strengthen and adapt.	Incentivizing to accelerate transformation	Residents, Visitors, and Workers	Set up a Downtown focused governance and administrative model	Increase the sense of safety and well-being for all	Bylaw services	Economic development, Planning and Procurement	$	Policy	Costed	2026-2027
11	Review incentive programmes to target the right projects for the times	Incentive programmes should support the types of projects that align with the residential and commercial projects required to revitalize Downtown, including dealing with vacant properties/ lots, adaptive reuse, climate change resilience, heritage conservation, and attracting residents/ visitors/ businesses	Stimulate the right projects to revitalize Downtown	Align financial incentives with priorities	Redevelopment of strategic locations	Development Environment	Enabling future opportunities	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Economic development	Planning	$	Policy	Costed	2026-2027

	Actions	Description and key elements	Objective	Outcome	Linked Transformational Initiative	Key Levers	Primary priority	Secondary priority	Lead	Partners	Cost Tier	Cost Type	Cost confidence	Years
12	Build the internal capacity to undertake major site rehabilitation and development projects	The revitalization of Downtown depends in part on addressing the rehabilitation, development, retrofit, of major sites where a City involvement will be required. These include John A. MacDonald School, the Police Headquarters, Jackson Square, City Centre, Commonwealth Square and other large sized locations such as parking and vacant lots. The internal capacity to interact with developers and address the complexities of large scale projects is essential.	Stimulate the right projects to revitalize Downtown	Internal capacity to coordinate large transformative projects	Redevelopment of strategic locations	Development Environment	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Enabling future opportunities	Corporate Real Estate Office	Economic development	$	Operational	Costed	2026-2027
Year 1 (2027) initiated actions														
13	Operate a storefront and visibility grants for main streets affected by the LRT	Focus on the main streets and preparing them for the LRT changes; support an effort to make the area attractive before, during and after, day and night	Protect the main streets in anticipation of the LRT project, during construction, and for a quick recovery.	Businesses are supported to continue to operate despite disruption	Main street lifts	Main Streets	Protect the main streets	Enabling future opportunities	Economic development	LRT Office, BIAs, cultural and entertainment groups	$	Incentive/ Grant	Costed	2027-2036
14	Implement the preferred design option to ensure access and enjoyment of main streets affected by the LRT	Based on the preferred design option, implement the plan in anticipation of the LRT project. The design option for the area will support the ability for businesses to operate and thrive, will have considered road design, streetscape design, congestion mitigation mitigation, “rear door access”, and other elements that affect the aesthetics, wayfinding, visitor and business owner access, delivery access, parking, and overall viability of businesses. Build on direction from the Downtown Streets Plan, the Vision-Zero Action Plan and Complete Livable Better Streets Policy and Framework.	Protect the main streets in anticipation of the LRT project, during construction, and for a quick recovery.	Businesses are supported to continue to operate despite the disruption	Main street lifts	Main Streets	Increase the sense of safety and well-being for all	Increase the sense of safety and well-being for all	Economic development	LRT Office, Planning, Transportation Planning, Public Works, BIAs	$$	Capital	Unknown	2027-2036

	Actions	Description and key elements	Objective	Outcome	Linked Transformational Initiative	Key Levers	Primary priority	Secondary priority	Lead	Partners	Cost Tier	Cost Type	Cost confidence	Years
15	Design a “rent-to-own” pilot programme	Based on the financial model options, scope out the current market, and take into consideration City budget realities. Identify pilot sites. This will help anchor an artist and entrepreneur population Downtown that can actively contribute to its vibrancy and economic activity.	Develop the funding and management mechanics of a “rent-to-own” programme	Terms and strategy for a City led “rent-to-own” programme	Strategic rent-to-own initiative	Residents, Visitors, and Workers	Enabling future opportunities	Support the economic drivers	Economic development	Corporate Corporate Real Estate Office Office and Facilities, Housing Secretariat, Entrepreneurship groups, cultural and entertainment groups,	$$	Policy	Unknown	2027-2028
16	Map out activation spaces and profiles	Complete a map of public spaces (parks, streets, parking lots, parkettes) and profiles to align with needs from arts, culture, entertainment sectors and BIAs. Includes day and night time uses.	Have a complete picture of all public spaces and their potential in activating Downtown	Map of public spaces and their activation profile	Main street lifts	Cultural Assets, Activities, and Entertainment	Support the economic drivers	Increase the sense of safety and well-being for all	Economic development	GIS, Placemaking	$	Policy	Costed	2027-2028
17	Map out the public realm that is critical to “quality of life lifting” and its profile	With a large population of renters, shared amenities in the public realm are important. Identifying those locations, the needs they serve, and the population that uses them, helps align improvements with positive impact for those using them. Includes placemaking infrastructure. Build on direction from the Downtown Streets Plan.	Improve the public realm.	Improvements to the public realm are aligned with the needs of residents.	Undertaking the creation of public spaces	Public and Green Spaces and Assets	Retrofit Downtown	Increase the sense of safety and well-being for all	Planning	Economic development	$	Policy	Costed	2027-2028

	Actions	Description and key elements	Objective	Outcome	Linked Transformational Initiative	Key Levers	Primary priority	Secondary priority	Lead	Partners	Cost Tier	Cost Type	Cost confidence	Years
18	Implement a cyclist and pedestrian safety first design for key Downtown streets	Downtown as an active neighbourhood and a destination for entertainment and culture is particularly sensitive to traffic conflicts. Redesigning traffic patterns to ensure the safety of pedestrian and cyclists first makes it safer for residents and visitors alike to live, stay and enjoy Downtown amenities. Build on direction from the Downtown Streets Plan, Hamilton's Cycling Master Plan, the Vision-Zero Action Plan and Complete Livable Better Streets Policy and Framework. These should prioritize aligning with other initiatives to make Downtown livable and attractive, such as cultural and arts projects, activation of key locations, and main street	People come more frequently and spend more time Downtown	People feel safer walking and cycling	Incentivizing to accelerate transformation	Connectivity and Transportation	Increase the sense of safety and well-being for all	Enabling future opportunities	Transportation Planning,	Planning, Tourism and Culture Division	$	Operational	Costed	2027-2036
19	Explore parking options with the private sector, in new development, and in strategic locations	Parking needs to be provided for residents, workers, and visitors alike. The loss of parking lots to development is an opportunity to redesign the approach to parking Downtown. This considers a range of options including partnerships with the private sector to operate public parking, the inclusion of public parking in development projects, and transitioning/ interim parking structures.	Manage transition from individual vehicles to other modes of transportation	Parking continues to be provided in strategic locations	Incentivizing to accelerate transformation	Connectivity and Transportation	Retrofit Downtown	Enabling future opportunities	Transportation Planning,	Planning, Corporate Real Estate Office	$	Operational	Costed	2027-2028
20	Identify the needs and opportunities to stabilize and incentivize everyday retail and services	Residents need to have access to essentials and to a range of services for a diverse population, including groceries, pharmacies, clinics, childcare, sports and community facilities, and expanded hours of operations..	Maintain resident population	Tools can be developed to stabilize and incentivize	Incentivizing to accelerate transformation	Residents, Visitors, and Workers	Protect the main streets	Increase the sense of safety and well-being for all	Economic development	BIAs	$	Policy	Costed	2027-2028
21	Explore the feasibility of a Downtown Office	Develop options and mechanisms to meet the objective, including if relevant terms of reference, key policies, agreement frameworks and budget.	Focus the City's attention to Downtown issues	Best option to deliver on the 10 year strategy	All	Residents, Visitors, and Workers	Set up a Downtown focused governance and administrative model	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	City Manager's Office	Economic development	$	Operational	Costed	2027-2028

	Actions	Description and key elements	Objective	Outcome	Linked Transformational Initiative	Key Levers	Primary priority	Secondary priority	Lead	Partners	Cost Tier	Cost Type	Cost confidence	Years
22	Expand coordinated Downtown outreach teams	Strengthen the capacity for the joint police and outreach teams, including the MCCRT, COAST, SIT, and RIST resources, to operate more frequently and for longer hours. This includes increasing the number of team members and their budget.	Provide the right services and intervention	A well-resourced team to address safety, security, mental health and homelessness issues	Main street lifts	Public Safety	Increase the sense of safety and well-being for all	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Economic development	Corporate Corporate Real Estate Office Office and Facilities	$$	Operational	Costed	2027-2028
23	Audit lighting and safety conditions in priority areas to determine scope of improvements, including temporary / construction hoarding lighting	Identify priority areas Downtown in relation to entertainment, transportation, and main streets and ensuring the systematic use of temporary lighting when necessary. Consider functional improvements (e.g.architectural and seasonal improvements, light based public art)	Determine where and how to improve safety and placemaking through lighting.	Improved lighting in priority areas	Main street lifts	Public Safety	Increase the sense of safety and well-being for all	Protect the main streets	Public Works	BIAs, Community Safety and Well-Being, Tourism and Culture Division, Placemaking,	$	Operational	Costed	2027-2028
24	Launch a “Downtown is Ours” programming initiative that promotes the inclusive use of spaces for arts, culture, sports and entertainment	This programme is aimed at promoting Downtown as an attraction by offering a hub of information on all cultural, artistic, and sports related and entertainment activities, a cohesive brand, and facilitating the animation of public spaces. Align with the City’s Tourism Strategy. Coordination with waterfront and peripheral areas with shared interests.	Promote Downtown as an arts, culture, and entertainment destination day and night	Activation of Downtown through arts, culture and entertainment	Main street lifts	Cultural Assets, Activities, and Entertainment	Support the economic drivers	Protect the main streets	Economic development	Tourism and Culture Division, Placemaking, Corporate Communications	$	Partnership/ Leverage	Estimated	2027-2028
25	Develop partnership frameworks for catalytic projects	Policy, programme, and terms of reference for City partnerships to develop strategic locations, pending Governance review.	Facilitate strategic investments	Framework for partnerships in unlocking the potential of strategic locations	Redevelopment of strategic locations	Development Environment	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Enabling future opportunities	Corporate Real Estate Office	Economic development	$	Policy	Costed	2027-2028

	Actions	Description and key elements	Objective	Outcome	Linked Transformational Initiative	Key Levers	Primary priority	Secondary priority	Lead	Partners	Cost Tier	Cost Type	Cost confidence	Years
26	Convene a summit of emerging industries representatives to identify needs and incentives	The summit aims to convene representatives and leaders to understand the needs that a City can provide for, including space, infrastructure, services, and incentives. The ultimate purpose is for Downtown Hamilton to play a role in making Hamilton attractive for these industries so that they grow and remain.	Understand the potential for emerging industries to set up Downtown	Data on real property and employee support needs for emerging industries	Incentivizing to accelerate transformation	Economic Opportunities	Support the economic drivers	Enabling future opportunities	Economic development	BIAs, Chamber of Commerce	$	Operational	Costed	2027-2028
27	Create a Downtown opportunity site inventory, including redevelopment readiness studies for municipal and strategic private locations	The inventory would refine the data collected in the 10-year strategy, provide detailed profiles for each location, and describe the conditions to facilitate redevelopment. It can lead to an invitation for ideas from developers.	Accelerate appropriate priority development	Locations and conditions for redevelopment are identified.	Redevelopment of strategic locations	Development Environment	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Retrofit Downtown	Corporate Real Estate Office	Economic development	$	Operational	Costed	2027-2028
28	Identify priorities for reinvestments and uses for major Downtown infrastructure and public assets, including Commonwealth Square, Main Street, the Frank A. Cooke Terminal, the Hamilton GO Centre	Significant investments are required for water treatment, energy transportation, communication, and urban design changes. Identifying the priorities within the broader context of planned projects, needs, and forecasted growth, can help streamline investments and support long term revitalization projects. Design and management options should be part of that exercise. Links to CityHousing Hamilton and Art Gallery of Hamilton.	Focus on critical infrastructure to support revitalization	Alignment of investments	Redevelopment of strategic locations	Public and Green Spaces and Assets	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Retrofit Downtown	Economic development	Planning, Public Works, CHH, AGH	$	Operational	Costed	2027-2028
29	Demonstrate a late-night downtown Hamilton myRide zone in collaboration with major events; if successful, pilot an overnight downtown myRide zone	Support overnight travel needs for shift workers in hospitality, tourism, and healthcare sectors and gather insights for any future HSR overnight service. Support a vibrant late-night and overnight downtown with enhanced public transit service	Bolster the attractiveness of downtown's late-night and overnight activities by providing safe and direct transit connections within the area.	Residents, visitors and workers have an affordable and direct late-night / overnight transit service to travel between downtown amenities.	All	Residents, Visitors, and Workers	Increase the sense of safety and well-being for all	Enabling future opportunities	HSR	Community Safety and Well-Being	$$$	Operational	Costed	2027-2036

	Actions	Description and key elements	Objective	Outcome	Linked Transformational Initiative	Key Levers	Primary priority	Secondary priority	Lead	Partners	Cost Tier	Cost Type	Cost confidence	Years
30	Update and implement the direction from the Economic Development Action Plan that supports Downtown revitalization	The EDAP already includes pillars that are aligned with the revitalization of Downtown. A review of actions, especially as they relate to entrepreneurship and arts and culture, to ensure relevance may be required.	Coordinate the implementation of various plans	Alignment and leveraging of actions	Incentivizing to accelerate transformation	Economic Opportunities	Support the economic drivers	Enabling future opportunities	Economic development	Tourism and Culture Division, Planning	$	Policy	Costed	2027-2028
31	Explore the City's approach to urban design and the public realm	With the number of physical changes required in Downtown, and to accompany the eventual retrofit of significant components, an internal discussion on the City's approach to defining and coordinating action on aspects of the urban environment that affect the public realm, would help articulate a vision for all aspects of the public realm, including open spaces, heritage structures, parkades, streets, façades. Build on direction from the Downtown Streets Plan.	Articulate the City's role and expectations in a cohesive design	Awareness and recommendations	Redevelopment of strategic locations	Development Environment	Retrofit Downtown	Increase the sense of safety and well-being for all	Economic development	Planning, Transportation, Tourism and Culture Division	$	Policy	Costed	2027-2028

Actions initiated between year 2 and 4 (2028 - 2031)

32	Design a Downtown Service Standard	Based on the data collected over 3 years of piloting, identify the issues and opportunities, recommend next steps.	Cleaner and attractive Downtown	Have a Service Standard adapted to Downtown's needs	Main street lifts	Aesthetics and Beautification	Protect the main streets	Set up a Downtown focused governance and administrative model	Public Works	Economic development, Public works, bylaw, BIAs	$	Policy	Costed	2028-2029
33	Implement a Downtown Service Standard	Apply the standard adapted to Downtown.	Cleaner and attractive Downtown	Operations and resources are appropriate	Main street lifts	Aesthetics and Beautification	Protect the main streets	Set up a Downtown focused governance and administrative model	Public Works	Economic development, Public works, bylaw, BIAs	$$	Operational	Estimated	2029-2036
34	Assess the results of the one-stop shop and ambassador pilot programme	Based on the data collected over 3 years of piloting, identify the issues and opportunities, recommend next steps.	Understand the impact of the pilot	Determine continuation	Main street lifts	Residents, Visitors, and Workers	Protect the main streets	Set up a Downtown focused governance and administrative model	Economic development	Public works, Tourism and Culture Division, Hamilton Police Service, Public Health, outreach organizations	$	Policy	Costed	2028-2029

	Actions	Description and key elements	Objective	Outcome	Linked Transformational Initiative	Key Levers	Primary priority	Secondary priority	Lead	Partners	Cost Tier	Cost Type	Cost confidence	Years
35	Consolidate the functions of the one-stop shop and ambassador programme under the dedicated coordination unit	Based on the programme review, assign the functions to the dedicated coordination unit / potential Downtown Office with the required resources	Focus on Downtown needs and issues	Maintain a single point of contact	Main street lifts	Residents, Visitors, and Workers	Set up a Downtown focused governance and administrative model	Protect the main streets	Dedicated coordination unit	Economic development, Public works, Tourism and Culture Division, Hamilton Police Service, Public Health, outreach organizations	$$	Operational	Estimated	2029-2036
36	Implement a “rent-to-own” pilot programme	Based on the terms of the programme and the properties identified for the pilot, implement the recommendations.	Have a “rent-to-own” pilot programme that people can apply for.	An operational “rent-to-own” pilot programme	Strategic rent-to-own initiative	Residents, Visitors, and Workers	Enabling future opportunities	Support the economic drivers	Economic development	Corporate Corporate Real Estate Office Office and assets, Entrepreneurship groups, cultural and entertainment groups,	$$	Policy	Unknown	2029-2036
37	Assess the results of the “Animate the Downtown” pilot programme	Based on the data collected over 3 years of piloting, identify the issues and opportunities, recommend next steps.	Understand the impact of the pilot	Determine continuation	Main street lifts	Main Streets	Protect the main streets	Enabling future opportunities	Economic development	BIAs, Public Works, community groups	$	Policy	Costed	2028-2029
38	Consolidate the functions of the “Animate the Downtown” programme under the coordination unit	Based on the programme review, assign the functions to the coordination unit with the required resources. The activation spaces and public realm maps serve to guide the programme review and expansion if required.	Focus on a nimble and targeted funding programme to address the needs and opportunities of Downtown	Seize opportunities for animation and permanent micro-improvements	Main street lifts	Cultural Assets, Activities, and Entertainment	Protect the main streets	Support the economic drivers	Downtown Office	BIAs, Public Works, community groups	$$	Operational	Estimated	2029-2036
39	Provide and promote a catalogue of activation spaces and their profiles to the arts, culture, sports, and entertainment sector	Complete a map of public spaces (parks, streets, parking lots, parkettes) and profiles to align with needs from arts, culture, entertainment sectors and BIAs. This includes details on permitted uses, time of use, and engagement of Special Events Advisory Team.	Engage the community in activating spaces day and night	Animated Downtown	Main street lifts	Cultural Assets, Activities, and Entertainment	Support the economic drivers	Increase the sense of safety and well-being for all	Economic development	Planning, SEAT, Tourism and Culture Division	$	Policy	Costed	2028-2036
40	Enhance/ improve 3 priority locations in the public realm that are critical to “quality of life lifting”	With a large population of renters, shared amenities in the public realm are important. Identifying those locations, the needs they serve, and the population that uses them, helps align improvements with positive impact for those using them.	Improve the public realm.	Improvements to the public realm are aligned with the needs of residents.	Undertaking the creation of public spaces	Public and Green Spaces and Assets	Retrofit Downtown	Increase the sense of safety and well-being for all	Planning	Economic development	$$	Policy	Estimated	2028-2031

	Actions	Description and key elements	Objective	Outcome	Linked Transformational Initiative	Key Levers	Primary priority	Secondary priority	Lead	Partners	Cost Tier	Cost Type	Cost confidence	Years
41	Explore and develop targeted funding programmes to stabilize and incentivize everyday retail and services	Residents need to have access to essentials and to a range of services for a diverse population, including groceries, pharmacies, clinics, childcare, sports and community facilities.	Maintain resident population	Tools can be developed to stabilize and incentivize	Incentivizing to accelerate transformation	Residents, Visitors, and Workers	Protect the main streets	Increase the sense of safety and well-being for all	Economic development	BIAs	$$	Incentive/ Grant	Estimated	2028-2036
42	Prepare the launch of the coordination unit/ potential Downtown Office	Based on the options explored, allocate the resources and identify authorities to implement the preferred option.	Establish a coordination unit	A coordination unit	All	Residents, Visitors, and Workers	Set up a Downtown focused governance and administrative model	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	City Manager's Office	Economic development	$	Operational	Costed	2028-2029
43	Launch the coordination unit/ potential Downtown Office	Based on the options explored, allocate the resources and identify authorities to implement the preferred option.	Establish a coordination unit	A coordination unit	All	Residents, Visitors, and Workers	Set up a Downtown focused governance and administrative model	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	City Manager's Office	Economic development	$	Operational	Costed	2029-2036
44	Support coordinated Downtown outreach teams	Strengthen the capacity for the joint police and outreach teams, including the MCCRT, COAST, SIT, and RIST resources, to operate more frequently and for longer hours. This includes increasing the number of team members and their budget.	Provide the right services and intervention	A well-resourced team to address safety, security, mental health and homelessness issues	Main street lifts	Public Safety	Increase the sense of safety and well-being for all	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Economic development	Corporate Corporate Real Estate Office Office and Facilities	$$	Operational	Costed	2028-2036
45	Implement the recommendations of the audit on lighting and safety conditions in priority areas	Following the audit, implement the recommendations	Improve safety through lighting.	Improved lighting in priority areas	Main street lifts	Public Safety	Increase the sense of safety and well-being for all	Protect the main streets	Public Works	BIAs	$	Operational	Costed	2028-2036
46	Enhance a "Downtown is Ours" programming initiative that promotes the inclusive use of spaces for arts, culture and entertainment	This programme is aimed at promoting Downtown as an attraction by offering a hub of information on all cultural and entertainment activities, a cohesive brand, and facilitating the animation of public spaces. Enhance it by expanding on the partnerships.	Promote Downtown as an arts, culture, and entertainment destination	Activation of Downtown through arts, culture and entertainment	Main street lifts	Cultural Assets, Activities, and Entertainment	Support the economic drivers	Protect the main streets	Economic development	Tourism and Culture Division	$	Partnership/ Leverage	Estimated	2028-2031

	Actions	Description and key elements	Objective	Outcome	Linked Transformational Initiative	Key Levers	Primary priority	Secondary priority	Lead	Partners	Cost Tier	Cost Type	Cost confidence	Years
47	Establish a major initiatives unit to manage the opportunity site inventory, the redevelopment readiness studies, and the frameworks	Consolidate under one roof the capacity to implement the results of the inventories and studies to lead to major projects being unlocked.	Redevelop strategic locations	Ability for the City to actively unlock the potential of strategic locations	Redevelopment of strategic locations	Development Environment	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Enabling future opportunities	Corporate Real Estate Office		$	Operational	Costed	2028-2029
48	Explore establishing an innovation hub	As a result of the recommendations of the summit, consider the relevance of consolidating Downtown the services and assets tied to emerging industries.	Supporting emerging industries in choosing to set up Downtown	Report on alignment of interests between emerging industries and the opportunities Downtown	Incentivizing to accelerate transformation	Economic Opportunities	Support the economic drivers	Enabling future opportunities	Economic development	BIAs, Chamber of Commerce	$$	Partnership/ Leverage	Unknown	2028-2029
49	Explore the creation of a arts, culture, and entertainment district	Downtown is concentrating many of the City's cultural and entertainment assets. Exploring the creation of a district would strengthen a brand for Downtown and also better focus the City's planning and design tools to maximize the benefits from a district. Align with the Tourism Strategy and direction on districts and precincts. This includes strategies to develop and protect live venues and nightlife.	Downtown is a destination for arts, culture, sports, and entertainment day and night	Recommendations on a district	Incentivizing to accelerate transformation	Cultural Assets, Activities, and Entertainment	Support the economic drivers	Enabling future opportunities	Economic development	Tourism and Culture Division, Planning	$	Policy	Costed	2028-2029
50	Implement priority projects for reinvestments for major Downtown infrastructure and public assets, including Main Street, the Frank A. Cooke Terminal, the Hamilton GO Centre	Significant investments are required for water treatment, energy transportation, communication, and urban design changes. Identifying the priorities within the broader context of planned projects, needs, and forecasted growth, can help streamline investments and support long term revitalization projects.	Focus on critical infrastructure to support revitalization	Alignment of investments	Redevelopment of strategic locations	Public and Green Spaces and Assets	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Retrofit Downtown	Economic development	Planning, Public Works, Tourism and Culture Division	$	Operational	Costed	2028-2036
51	Pilot bylaws and policies that apply to Downtown	Identify the types of bylaws and policies that apply, their enforcement, their relevance, and the modifications required to support the revitalization of Downtown. Guided by the principles and priorities of the 10-year strategy.	Strengthen and adapt the regulatory tools to Downtown's reality.	List of bylaws and policies to strengthen and adapt.	Incentivizing to accelerate transformation	Residents, Visitors, and Workers	Set up a Downtown focused governance and administrative model	Increase the sense of safety and well-being for all	Bylaw services	Economic development, Tourism and Culture Division	$	Policy	Costed	2028-2031

	Actions	Description and key elements	Objective	Outcome	Linked Transformational Initiative	Key Levers	Primary priority	Secondary priority	Lead	Partners	Cost Tier	Cost Type	Cost confidence	Years
52	Design incentive programmes to target the right projects for the times	Incentive programmes should support the types of projects that align with the residential and commercial projects required to revitalize Downtown, conserve heritage assets that define the City, maintain the Downtown's character, and attract quality buildings. This includes dealing with vacant properties/ lots, conversion projects, adaptive reuse, and attracting residents/ visitors/ businesses.	Stimulate the right projects to revitalize Downtown	Align financial incentives with priorities	Incentivizing to accelerate transformation	Development Environment	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Enabling future opportunities	Economic development	Planning	$	Policy	Costed	2028-2029
53	Pilot incentive programmes to target the right projects for the times	Based on the design of programmes, pilot on specific types of projects to demonstrate the viability of the strategy	Stimulate the right projects to revitalize Downtown	Align financial incentives with priorities	Incentivizing to accelerate transformation	Development Environment	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Enabling future opportunities	Economic development	Planning	$$$	Incentive/ Grant	Estimated	2029-2036
54	Develop a Downtown Quality Urban Environment Framework	By consolidating the information from the opportunity sites inventory, the transportation priorities, the priority reinvestment projects, priority public realm enhancements, design guidelines, parking options, and other aspects of the urban fabric, a plan that addresses how the public realm can tie all of this together would help give cohesion and quality to Downtown. Build on direction from the Downtown Streets Plan.	Enhance the quality of the public realm	Guidance on design that affects the public realm	All	Aesthetics and Beautification	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Increase the sense of safety and well-being for all	Economic development	Transportation, Planning	$	Operational	Costed	2028-2031

	Actions	Description and key elements	Objective	Outcome	Linked Transformational Initiative	Key Levers	Primary priority	Secondary priority	Lead	Partners	Cost Tier	Cost Type	Cost confidence	Years
Actions initiated after year 5 (2032)														
55	Enhance/ improve another 3 priority locations in the public realm that are critical to "quality of life lifting"	With a large population of renters, shared amenities in the public realm are important. Identifying those locations, the needs they serve, and the population that uses them, helps align improvements with positive impact for those using them.	Improve the public realm.	Improvements to the public realm are aligned with the needs of residents.	Undertaking the creation of public spaces	Public and Green Spaces and Assets	Retrofit Downtown	Increase the sense of safety and well-being for all	Planning	Economic development	$$	Policy	Estimated	2032-2036
56	Enhance a "Downtown is Ours" programming initiative that promotes the inclusive use of spaces for arts, culture and entertainment, including the creation of additional Downtown festivals	This programme is aimed at promoting Downtown as an attraction by offering a hub of information on all cultural and entertainment activities, a cohesive brand, and facilitating the animation of public spaces. Enhance it by expanding on the partnerships.	Promote Downtown as an arts, culture, and entertainment destination	Activation of Downtown through arts, culture and entertainment	Main street lifts	Cultural Assets, Activities, and Entertainment	Support the economic drivers	Protect the main streets	Economic development	Tourism and Culture Division	$	Partnership/ Leverage	Estimated	2032-2036
57	Pilot 5 top recommendations from the innovation hub report	As a result of the recommendations of the report, consider the relevance of consolidating Downtown the services and assets tied to emerging industries.	Supporting emerging industries in choosing to set up Downtown	Tangible evidence of support for an innovation hub	Incentivizing to accelerate transformation	Economic Opportunities	Support the economic drivers	Enabling future opportunities	Economic development	BIAs, Chamber of Commerce	$	Operational	Costed	2032-2036
58	Pilot 5 top recommendations from the creation of an arts, culture, and entertainment district	Downtown is concentrating many of the City's cultural and entertainment assets. Exploring the creation of a district would strengthen a brand for Downtown and also better focus the City's planning and design tools to maximize the benefits from a district.	Downtown is a destination for arts, culture, sports, and entertainment	Outline of a district	Incentivizing to accelerate transformation	Cultural Assets, Activities, and Entertainment	Support the economic drivers	Enabling future opportunities	Economic development	Tourism and Culture Division	$	Policy	Costed	2032-2036

	Actions	Description and key elements	Objective	Outcome	Linked Transformational Initiative	Key Levers	Primary priority	Secondary priority	Lead	Partners	Cost Tier	Cost Type	Cost confidence	Years
59	Phase the implementation of priority projects for reinvestments for major Downtown infrastructure and public assets, including Main Street, the Frank A. Cooke Terminal, the Hamilton GO Centre	Significant investments are required for water treatment, energy transportation, communication, and urban design changes. Identifying the priorities within the broader context of planned projects, needs, and forecasted growth, can help streamline investments and support long term revitalization projects.	Focus on critical infrastructure to support revitalization	Alignment of investments	Redevelopment of strategic locations	Public and Green Spaces and Assets	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Retrofit Downtown	Economic development	Planning, Public Works	$	Operational	Costed	2032-2036
60	Implement bylaws that apply to Downtown	Identify the types of bylaws that apply, their enforcement, their relevance, and the modifications required to support the revitalization of Downtown. Guided by the principles and priorities of the 10-year strategy.	Strengthen and adapt the regulatory tools to Downtown's reality.	List of bylaws to strengthen and adapt.	Incentivizing to accelerate transformation	Residents, Visitors, and Workers	Set up a Downtown focused governance and administrative model	Increase the sense of safety and well-being for all	Bylaw services	Economic development	$	Policy	Costed	2032-2036
61	Implement incentive programmes to target the right projects for the times	Incentive programmes should support the types of projects that align with the residential and commercial projects required to revitalize Downtown, conserve heritage assets that define the City, maintain the Downtown's character, and attract quality buildings. This includes dealing with vacant properties/ lots, conversion projects, adaptive reuse, and attracting residents/ visitors/ businesses.	Stimulate the right projects to revitalize Downtown	Align financial incentives with priorities	Main street lifts	Development Environment	Enabling future opportunities	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Economic development	Planning	Transformational	Policy	Costed	2032-2036
62	Implement a Downtown Public Realm guidance	By consolidating the information from the opportunity sites inventory, the transportation priorities, the priority reinvestment projects, priority public realm enhancements, the parking options, and other urban fabric aspects, a plan that addresses how the public realm can tie all of this together would help give cohesion and quality to Downtown. This includes attention paid to gateway entry points to Downtown, their identification and enhancement.	Enhance the quality of the public realm	Guidance on design that affects the public realm	All	Aesthetics and Beautification	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Increase the sense of safety and well-being for all	Economic development	Urban Design, Public Works, Planning, Transportation,	$	Operational	Costed	2032-2036

	Actions	Description and key elements	Objective	Outcome	Linked Transformational Initiative	Key Levers	Primary priority	Secondary priority	Lead	Partners	Cost Tier	Cost Type	Cost confidence	Years
63	Explore a multi-year Downtown Capital Programme	Setting up a bundled set of streets/parks/facilities delivered as one coherent package, not scattered projects	Maintain the quality of Downtown assets	Predictable funding	All	Aesthetics and Beautification	Retrofit Downtown	Increase the sense of safety and well-being for all	Economic development	Planning, Public Works, Urban Design	$$$	Operational	Costed	2032-2033
64	Invest in scaling up conversion projects	Office to housing conversions are an important factor in offering housing options. Additionally, certain types of large buildings can be converted to other needed uses in a shorter time than building new.	More housing and commercial opportunities	Incentive for a priority	Incentivizing to accelerate transformation	Residents, Visitors, and Workers	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Increase the sense of safety and well-being for all	Economic development	Planning	Transformational	Incentive/ Grant	Unknown	2032-2036
65	Invest in public asset retrofit projects	Investing in public asset projects is a show of civic pride, provides residents with needed quality infrastructure, and can also stimulate private sector development	City pride	Public assets are cared for	Redevelopment of strategic locations	Public and Green Spaces and Assets	Retrofit Downtown	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Economic development	Planning, Public Works	Transformational	Capital	Unknown	2032-2036
66	Invest in creating a new invigorated public space	Through an understanding of reinvestments in priority projects, there is an opportunity to imagine a new invigorated public space that builds on existing assets (e.g. Gore Park, City Hall) and expands the offer of green spaces, public assets, and needed “quality of life lifting” assets.	City pride	New public asset	Undertaking the creation of public spaces	Public and Green Spaces and Assets	Retrofit Downtown	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Economic development	Planning, Public Works	Transformational	Capital	Unknown	2032-2036
67	Launch a “Main Street First” investment programme to prioritize Main Street, King Street, James Street, York Boulevard	The programme would prioritize projects to densify and improve the streets, strengthening their role as Main Streets and providing residents and visitors with services, amenities, and housing.	Affirm the role of Main Streets in defining the social and economic identity of Downtown	Incentives to develop and rehabilitate.	Main street lifts	Main Streets	Protect the main streets	Driving transformation through shared and coordinated investments	Economic development	BIAs	Transformational	Incentive/ Grant	Unknown	2032-2036



8 Moving Forward

8.1. Leadership

Delivering on the Downtown Hamilton Strategy requires bold, sustained leadership that is civic in scope, collaborative in spirit, and focused on results. The City must take a driving role in coordinating efforts, aligning policies, and investing strategically to demonstrate confidence in the Downtown's future. But true transformation will only be achieved through partnerships that bring together the strengths of the private sector, the not-for-profit community, and the academic and cultural institutions that shape Hamilton's identity. Support and investment from the provincial and federal governments are also essential to realize large-scale projects in housing, infrastructure, and public space renewal. This shared approach to leadership ensures that revitalization is not only well-managed, but also deeply inclusive. It should be built on cooperation, trust, and a shared belief in Downtown Hamilton as the civic heart of the city's next chapter.

Effective leadership in this context means moving from management to direction, where the City serves as the orchestrator of coordinated action rather than a passive administrator of projects. It requires clear decision-making authority, alignment of departmental mandates, and an ability to act quickly and flexibly in partnership with others. Leadership also demands accountability through the transparent measurement of outcomes, continuous communication with the public, and a commitment to learning from both successes and setbacks. By institutionalizing collaboration and maintaining a consistent focus on outcomes, Hamilton can turn vision into action and establish Downtown revitalization as a model for how cities lead systemic, long-term change.

Moving the Strategy forward also requires a culture change within the City itself, one that recognizes Downtown's distinct needs and complexities and adapts to meet them. Revitalizing the core is not business as usual: it demands integrated thinking across departments, openness to experimentation, and a willingness to take calculated risks. City staff and leadership must share an understanding of Downtown as a complex ecosystem, where social, economic, and physical factors intersect and where timing, collaboration, and coordination are everything. Building this internal culture that is proactive, responsive, and empowered, is essential to sustaining momentum and achieving the full promise of a revitalized Downtown Hamilton.

The Role of the Province

The Province of Ontario has a critical role to play in the revitalization of Downtown Hamilton, both as a partner in investment and as a steward of the legislative and policy frameworks that shape how cities grow, house people, and create opportunity. The transformation of Hamilton's core aligns directly with provincial objectives for economic development, housing delivery, infrastructure optimization, and community well-being. A strong, prosperous Downtown contributes to regional competitiveness, attracts talent, supports innovation, and reduces infrastructure costs by maximizing existing urban assets.

To move the Strategy forward, the City should work with the Province on shared priorities and measurable outcomes. Key opportunities for collaboration include:

- Housing and adaptive reuse: partnering on funding tools and regulatory flexibility to enable the conversion of underused commercial spaces into new homes, particularly through the *Strategic Rent-to-Own Initiative* and the *Retrofit Downtown* program.
- Infrastructure and transit alignment: ensuring that *Main Street Lifts* and public realm improvements are coordinated with LRT construction and provincial transit investments to minimize disruption and maximize long-term benefits.
- Economic development and innovation: leveraging the Province's programs in entrepreneurship, post-secondary collaboration, and health innovation to strengthen Downtown's role as a centre for research, culture, and business growth.
- Public safety and community well-being: partnering on integrated responses to homelessness, mental health, and addiction, ensuring provincial health and housing systems work in concert with municipal service delivery and strengthening the funding sources for the integrated units.
- Cultural and tourism investment: supporting arts, heritage, and public space renewal projects that position Downtown Hamilton as a cultural destination for Ontario and beyond.

The Role of the Federal Government

The Government of Canada is a crucial partner in the revitalization of Downtown Hamilton, particularly in advancing the national priorities of housing affordability, climate action, inclusive economic growth, and infrastructure renewal. Federal policies and programs can directly enable the City's objectives by providing the financial tools, regulatory flexibility, and long-term support necessary to implement complex, integrated urban transformations.

Downtown Hamilton embodies the challenges and opportunities faced by many Canadian cities including aging infrastructure, housing pressures, economic transition, and the need to build resilience in the face of climate and social change. Investing here is therefore both a local and national opportunity: a demonstration of how federal urban policy can help reimagine the heart of a mid-sized city.

The City could seek the support of the federal government that builds on existing programs while advocating for tailored solutions. Priority areas for partnership include:

- Housing and affordability: leveraging programs under the *National Housing Strategy* and *Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation* (CMHC) to accelerate housing delivery through adaptive reuse, affordable rent-to-own models, and mixed-income developments.
- Infrastructure and public realm renewal: securing federal funding for sustainable transportation, energy efficiency, green stormwater systems, and climate-resilient infrastructure through programs such as the *Green and Inclusive Community Buildings Fund* and *Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program*.
- Cultural and heritage investments: aligning with federal priorities for cultural tourism, and creative sector development to strengthen Downtown Hamilton as a cultural and economic hub.
- Inclusive economic growth: partnering with federal economic agencies and innovation programs to attract investment in clean technology, creative industries, and health innovation sectors anchored in the Downtown core.
- Social and community resilience: coordinating with federal agencies to support community safety, mental health, and newcomer integration programs that foster inclusion and well-being in the urban core.

The Role of the Private and Not-for-Profit Sectors

The private and not-for-profit sectors are indispensable partners in achieving the revitalization of Downtown Hamilton. While the City provides leadership, coordination, and vision, it is the creativity, capital, and commitment of these sectors that turn plans into tangible outcomes. Downtown renewal depends on shared ownership of the city's future where businesses, developers, community organizations, and institutions act not only in their own interests, but as contributors to a collective urban transformation. These sectors bring agility, innovation, and the ability to test new approaches that complement the City's long-term planning and investment.

For the private sector, the opportunity lies in strategic co-investment and place-based innovation. Developers, property owners, and investors can align with City priorities by focusing on projects that deliver multiple benefits, such as housing, employment, and public realm improvements, while advancing environmental and social outcomes. BIAs, small enterprises, and major employers can help animate Downtown streets, provide essential services, and shape a vibrant local economy. Collaboration can take many forms: public-private partnerships for redevelopment and infrastructure, participation in the *Main Street Lifts* initiative to strengthen business resilience, or private sponsorships that enhance public spaces and cultural programming. The City's role is to create a stable, predictable, and responsive environment that gives the private sector confidence to invest, innovate, and stay committed to Downtown Hamilton's long-term success.

For the not-for-profit sector, leadership means championing community, culture, and inclusion. Hamilton's social service organizations, housing providers, arts institutions, and community groups are already embedded in the fabric of the Downtown. Their knowledge and networks are vital for addressing complex issues, from homelessness and mental health to cultural participation and social equity. The City can strengthen collaboration by supporting long-term operating partnerships, shared facilities, and co-designed programs that leverage local expertise. The *Strategic Rent-to-Own Initiative*, for example, offers opportunities for community-based organizations to provide affordable, creative live-work solutions; similarly, cultural and social organizations can activate public spaces through inclusive programming that builds pride and connection.

Together, the private and not-for-profit sectors bring balance and sustainability to Downtown renewal. Private capital accelerates growth and redevelopment, while the not-for-profit community ensures that revitalization remains equitable and grounded in local needs. By fostering ongoing dialogue through structures such as a *Downtown Partnership Council* and creating mechanisms for co-investment and shared outcomes, Hamilton can harness the strengths of both sectors. In doing so, the City will build not only new buildings and businesses, but also trust, collaboration, and a resilient civic ecosystem.

Partner	Primary Role	Key Responsibilities	Strategic Opportunities
City of Hamilton	Lead and coordinate the overall Downtown Strategy	• Drive implementation through a dedicated Downtown Office and governance framework • Align departmental mandates, budgets, and policies • Foster a culture of collaboration, flexibility, and responsiveness • Measure progress and communicate results transparently	• Establish cross-departmental project teams • Integrate Downtown outcomes into corporate performance plans such as a state of Downtown report • Act as catalyst for partnerships and funding alignment
Provincial government	Policy and investment partner enabling transformation	• Align provincial infrastructure, housing, and economic programs with Downtown objectives • Co-invest in major projects that deliver regional benefits	• Partner on housing conversions, LRT coordination, and infrastructure upgrades • Collaborate on economic development and workforce initiatives
Federal government	National partner advancing housing, climate, and inclusive growth	• Provide capital and funding for housing, green infrastructure, and cultural projects • Align federal economic and social programs with local priorities	• Access National Housing Strategy and Green and Inclusive Buildings Fund • Co-invest in cultural and public realm renewal
Private sector	Co-investor and driver of economic vitality	• Deliver development, investment, and business activity aligned with Strategy priorities • Participate in coordinated infrastructure, housing, and streetscape projects • Support Downtown vitality through business innovation and property reinvestment	• Collaborate through public–private partnerships and BIAs • Contribute to Main Street Lifts and Redevelopment Initiatives • Sponsor cultural and public space improvements
Not-for-profit sector	Champion of community, culture, and social equity	• Provide social, cultural, and housing services that strengthen Downtown's livability • Engage marginalized and creative communities in co-designing spaces and programs • Support inclusion, well-being, and civic participation	• Partner in the Strategic Rent-to-Own Initiative and public space activations • Operate shared community or cultural facilities • Participate in a Downtown Partnership Council to inform implementation

8.2. Measuring Outcomes

Revitalizing Downtown Hamilton requires not just action, but accountability and learning. Measuring outcomes ensures that investments, financial, human, and political, translate into real improvements in how people experience the Downtown. Tracking outcomes builds trust, guides course correction, and demonstrates progress toward the shared vision of a vibrant, inclusive, and resilient core. To be effective, measurement must go beyond counting projects or dollars spent; it must assess changes in conditions, such as safety, vitality, economic resilience, and civic pride. Outcome measurement is therefore not a final step but an integral part of implementation.

The City should adopt a results-based framework that links each priority to a set of quantifiable and qualitative indicators, tracked regularly and reported publicly. These indicators should combine data from multiple sources, including municipal records, business and community surveys, social statistics, and spatial analysis, to reflect both performance and perception. Progress can then be summarized annually through a Downtown Dashboard or State of the Downtown Report, allowing decision-makers and partners to see what's working, where challenges remain, and how resources should be adjusted.

The following Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) provide an initial set of tools to guide the monitoring of impact. The first table is a general set of indicators that can be wholistically applied. Frequency of data collection is assessed based on the need to demonstrate regular and quick improvements which sets momentum. Progress can be measured through a reliable baseline data set for each indicator.

Overarching Key Performance Indicators

Measurement	Indicators	Frequency
Place condition	• Cleanliness score in priority zones (audit) • Graffiti removal time (median days) • Lighting uptime (% of lights functioning) + median repair time	Quarterly
Downtown vitality	• Ground-floor vacancy rate (priority blocks) • Foot traffic index (3–5 counters / manual counts) • Event/activation days (#) and attendance	Quarterly
Safety & well-being	• Perception of safety (resident/visitor pulse survey, day vs night) • Calls for service / incidents in priority zones (trend, not raw counts only)	Quarterly
Investment & delivery	• of projects in pipeline (conversion, redevelopment, incentives) • Private-public money leverage ratio (where applicable) • Average time-to-decision for permits/incentives in Downtown	Quarterly

The following economic and demographic KPIs track whether Downtown is becoming more active, investable, and livable over time. Together, they measure both value creation (investment, jobs, assessment growth) and neighbourhood success (population, housing stability, and affordability) to support transparent reporting and course correction as the Strategy is implemented.

Measurement	Indicators	Frequency
Economic	• Assessed value: amounts, YoY, amounts/ha • Building permit value: amounts by type • Ground-floor vacancy rate (main streets and priority corridors) • Net new businesses (and mix) • Job numbers and in office presence % • Conversion progress: number of projects; sq ft converted	Annually
Demographic/ Housing	• Population level, profile, growth • Net new housing units (completions) • Renter share (%) and rental stock change • Residential turnover • % renters spending >30% income on shelter • Household mix: 1-person / families	Annually

The following sets of KPIs can be adjusted as further analysis into departmental programmes, initiatives, and implementation plans identify the exact indicators and the data available.

Multi-year Operating Pilots Key Performance Indicators

Action	Indicators	Frequency
Action 1 — Downtown clean & quick-fix surge pilot (2026–2029)	• **Cleanliness audit score** (by micro-zone; target: upward trend) • **Median response time** for "fix-it" requests • **Number of fixes completed** (benches, sidewalk hazards, street furniture) per month • **Graffiti: median removal time** (days) in pilot zones • **Cost per cleaned block / per fix completed** (unit cost to design the future service standard) • Heat comfort on key blocks (shade availability at noon; simple audit on priority blocks) • Flooding nuisance reports in pilot zones / downtown hotspots (trend; seasonal comparison) • Number of at-risk buildings stabilized in pilot zones (secured / orders complied / brought to code)	Quarterly
Action 2 — One-stop shop + ambassadors pilot (2026–2029)	• **Number of contacts handled** (business/resident/visitor) + top request types • **Issue closure rate** • **Median time from report to resolution** • **Perception of helpful presence** • **Repeat issue hotspots** (should shrink over time) • **Heritage/adaptive reuse inquiries** and **public realm/climate comfort issues** (e.g., shade/shelter, drainage, cooling places) • Number of referrals / escalations to partner departments for: • building standards / at-risk properties • shade/shelter at stops or public realm comfort fixes • temporary use permits / activations	Quarterly
Action 5 — "Animate the Downtown" micro-grants + improvements (2026–2029)	• **Number of activations delivered** (by location/season) • **Attendance** (counts) + **dwell time** (observational or counter-based) • **Business sentiment** on activation days (% reporting positive impact) • **Foot traffic uplift** on activation days vs baseline • **% of activations recurring** (repeatability is the point) • % of activations delivered in "high-comfort" locations (shade/shelter available or provided; seating present) • Heat comfort at top activation sites (shade availability at noon on summer dates)	Quarterly
Action 6 — Downtown dashboard & report (2026–2036)	• **Dashboard published on schedule** • **Number of KPIs updated with current data** (data completeness) • **Number of departments contributing data** (institutionalization) • **Evidence of use:** number of decisions/council items referencing dashboard • Heritage KPI coverage included for: • at-risk buildings stabilized • adaptive reuse pipeline/output • façade/repair permit value • Climate-adaptation KPI coverage included for: • canopy/shade route baseline • shade and shelter transit stop upgrades • green stormwater features added • flooding nuisance hotspots trend	Quarterly

Short-duration pilots / design work Key Performance Indicators

Action	Indicators	Frequency
Action 3 / 13 — Storefront & visibility grants (design 2026–2027; operate 2027–2036)	• **Number of grants issued + amounts deployed** + average time from application to approval • **Number of storefronts improved** • **Vacancy changes on target blocks** • **Business survival / retention rate** among grant recipients (annual) • Private match leveraged • **$ value of façade/repair permits** on target blocks • **Share of storefront improvements that are heritage-compatible** (e.g., repairs/restoration vs replacement) • **Number of storefront improvements with comfort upgrades** (shade elements, weather protection, seating, greening planters where permitted)	Quarterly
Action 4 — Rent-to-own: model	• Financial models completed, Council/leadership endorsement • **Number of potential sites screened** and shortlist produced • **Number of candidate sites assessed for retrofit viability** (including resilience factors like overheating risk / flood exposure where relevant) • **Number of sites within priority corridors/nodes** (to reinforce Downtown vitality and "eyes on the street" goals)	Quarterly
Action 15 — Rent-to-own: program design	• Partner(s) secured and governance/eligibility rules approved • **Funding stack identified** • Program safeguards finalized **anti-windfall resale rules, affordability protections, participant supports/coaching**	Quarterly
Action 36 — Rent-to-own: implementation	• **Number of units enrolled / delivered** • Participant retention rate • Participant profile targets met (artists/entrepreneurs/STEM if used) • **Cost per unit supported** and leverage ratio • **Resident satisfaction** and **neighbourhood participation** (e.g., % reporting they use downtown businesses/services weekly) • **Number of units delivered through adaptive reuse** of older buildings	Quarterly
Action 7 / 21 / 42–43 — Governance / Downtown Office feasibility to launch	• **Governance review delivered** on schedule (Action 7) • Interim partners table established + meeting cadence (Action 8) • **Decision milestone:** preferred model selected (Action 21/42) • **Downtown Office launched** with resourcing (Action 43) • Post-launch: number of **cross-department issues resolved** and **cycle time reduction**	Completeness

Short-duration pilots / design work Key Performance Indicators

Action	Indicators	Frequency
Action 9 / 27 — Opportunity site inventory and readiness studies (2026–2028)	• **Number of sites profiled** with standardized data fields • **Number of sites with readiness study completed** (zoning, constraints, economics) • **Number of market soundings / developer conversations** • **Number of sites moved to procurement stage** (RFEOI/RFP readiness) • Site inventory includes fields for: • **heritage status / heritage potential** and adaptive reuse viability • **flood/overland flow exposure** and heat-risk considerations (where relevant) • ability to integrate **green stormwater** and shade/greening in the public realm edge • **Number of sites prioritized for adaptive reuse** (not only redevelopment)	Completeness
Action 10 / 51 / 60 — Bylaw review to pilot to implement (2026–2027; 2028–2031; 2032–2036)	• **Number of bylaws identified** for modification (Action 10) • **Number of pilot exemptions/process changes launched** (Action 51) • **Permit / approval cycle time** for meanwhile uses (median days) • **Compliance outcomes** (e.g., fewer repeat nuisance complaints) without simply increasing enforcement volume • By 2032+: **full implementation adopted** (Action 60) + measured changes in permitting time • **Approval timeline for adaptive reuse / heritage-related permits** (median days) • Number of “temporary use” approvals enabled for: • **vacant lots / gap sites** (markets, patios, beer gardens, pop-ups) • **building reuse pilots** (short-term occupancy, pop-ups in vacant storefronts) • **m² of green stormwater features enabled** through standards/pilots (e.g., allowance for planters, permeable treatments, rain gardens in pilots)	Completeness/ quarterly

Medium-term “build the system” actions (2027–2031) Key Performance Indicators

Action	Indicators	Frequency
Action 22 / 44 — Expand / support coordinated outreach teams (2027–2028; 2028–2036)	• **Hours of coverage** • **Number of engagements and referrals** to services/housing • **Number of repeat high-acuity calls** in priority zones • **Perception of safety** in surveyed locations	Quarterly
Action 23 / 45 — Lighting audit to implement improvements	• Audit completed and priority list produced (Action 23) • **Number of fixtures upgraded / added** in priority zones (Action 45) • **Lighting uptime** (%) and median outage repair time • **Perception of nighttime safety** at target nodes	Completeness/ quarterly
Action 16 / 39 — Map activation spaces & publish catalogue (2027–2028; 2028–2036)	• **Map/catalogue delivered** and updated annually • **Number of bookings/uses** of catalogued spaces • **Number of partners using spaces** (arts/orgs/BIAs) • **% of activations happening in priority spaces** • % of catalogued spaces with **comfort attributes** identified (shade, shelter, seating, washrooms, access to power/water) • Number of “cooling places” included in the catalogue network (libraries/ community spaces/shaded plazas) mapped and signed	Completeness/ Annually
Action 17 / 40 / 55 — Identify “quality of life lifting” public realm + improve sites	• Priority public realm nodes identified with user profiles (Action 17) • **Number of sites improved** (3 sites in 2028–2031; another 3 in 2032–2036) • **User counts** and dwell time • **Resident satisfaction** with those spaces • **Maintenance burden** (work orders) • Tree canopy / shade coverage change at improved sites • m² of permeable/green stormwater features added at improved sites (rain gardens, planters, permeable paving) • Heat comfort proxy improvement at improved sites • Flooding nuisance reports in/near improved sites	Completeness/ Annually
Action 18 — Pedestrian/ cyclist safety-first design (2027–2036)	• **Number of corridors redesigned** / treatments implemented • **Collision rates** involving pedestrians/cyclists in Downtown • **Mode share proxy**: bike counts / walking counts • **Perception of safety while walking/cycling**	Annually
Action 20 / 41 — Everyday retail & services stabilization (2027–2028; 2028–2036)	• **Gaps analysis completed** (grocery/pharmacy/clinic/childcare) • **Number of businesses recruited/retained** in target categories • **Resident access metric:** % within 10-minute walk of essentials • **Commercial churn rate** on priority blocks • Storefront vacancy change on corridors with high heritage fabric • $ value of façade/repair permits on heritage main-street stock	Completeness/ Annually

Long-horizon capital / transformational actions (2032–2036) Key Performance Indicators		
Action	**Indicators**	**Frequency**
Action 63 — Multi-year Downtown Capital Programme (2032–2033)	• Capital programme approved (yes/no) • **$ committed** and n**umber of projects bundled** • **% delivered on schedule** and on budget • **Resident-facing outcomes**: condition ratings, public realm satisfaction	Annually
Action 64 — Scale conversion projects (2032–2036)	• **Number of conversions initiated / completed** • **Number of net new housing units** from conversion • **Office vacancy trend** • **Cost per unit enabled** and leverage ratio	Annually
Actions 65–66 — Public asset retrofits + new invigorated public space (2032–2036)	• Project milestones: concept, funding, procurement, construction start, opening • **Annual visitors/users** of upgraded assets • **Event/program days hosted** • **Perception of pride / place quality** • Number of “cooling places” delivered or designated through upgraded assets + mapped/signed status • Heat comfort improvement at flagship public spaces • m² of permeable/green stormwater features delivered at these sites • number of public assets retrofitted that are heritage/historic buildings • $ invested in heritage-sensitive retrofit components	Annually
Action 67 — “Main Street First” investment programme (2032–2036)	• amounts **deployed** into priority streets and n**umber of** projects supported • **Vacancy rate** on those corridors • **Foot traffic trend** • **Private leverage ratio** • $ value of façade/repair permits on main-street heritage building stock • Storefront vacancy change on corridors with high heritage fabric • Tree canopy / shade coverage change on priority main street blocks *(corridor-level)* • % of priority transit stops along main street corridors upgraded with shade and shelter • Heat comfort proxy on priority blocks	Complete-ness/ Annu-ally



9 Recommendations

The following recommendations are offered to support Council and City leadership in adopting this Strategy as an actionable roadmap. They emphasize starting immediately with visible, trust-building steps, committing to a learning-by-doing approach, and putting in place the leadership, coordination, and funding discipline required to sustain momentum over the next three to five years.

To that end, we recommend:

1) Adopting the Strategy as an iterative framework to guide change

Council should adopt the Strategy with the explicit understanding that Downtown revitalization requires experimentation, iteration, and course correction. Implementation should be structured around “test–learn–scale” cycles: launch pilots, measure outcomes, adjust quickly, and expand what works. This approach reduces risk by avoiding over-commitment to unproven interventions, while creating a disciplined way to learn in public, improve performance, and build credibility through evidence rather than promises.

2) Starting immediately with visible “small steps” that rebuild trust and momentum

Early implementation should prioritize actions that residents and businesses can see and feel within weeks and months, cleanliness, quick repairs, lighting reliability, and a visible, helpful presence on the street. These early wins are not cosmetic; they are foundational signals that the City is present, responsive, and serious about care. Delivering consistent, place-based improvements in targeted priority zones will build public trust, strengthen partnerships, and create the conditions needed for more complex interventions.

3) Beginning now to prepare the 3–5 year pipeline of consequential actions

While delivering near-term wins, the City should simultaneously initiate the planning, governance, and partnership work required to unlock larger outcomes within three to five years, such as catalytic redevelopment, conversion and retrofit projects, permanent main street transformations, and signature public spaces. The Strategy should be operationalized through a sequenced implementation roadmap that clearly identifies what must be ready by the end of Year 1 and Year 3 to enable the next wave of capital projects and policy shifts, ensuring momentum is sustained beyond the initial phase.

4) Committing to a blended funding approach: reallocation, programme review, prioritization, and partnerships

Implementation should proceed on the basis that funding will come from a combination of (a) reallocating existing resources toward Downtown priority zones, initiatives, programmes, and operations, (b) reviewing and refining programmes to improve performance and reduce duplication, (c) prioritizing capital sequencing so planned investments deliver visible cumulative impact downtown, and (d) leveraging partnerships with BIAs, institutions, the private sector, and provincial/federal programs to multiply municipal investment. This funding strategy should be transparent and tracked, including how dollars shift, what leverage is achieved, and what outcomes improve as a result.

5) Making revitalization a City leadership commitment, from Council direction to City Hall execution, owned by every department

Council should adopt the Strategy as a clear call for City leadership: not only a policy direction, but an organizational commitment that must be carried through by City Hall’s senior leaders and delivered by staff across departments. It should adopt the Principles in this report as the foundational tool to achieve expected results. Downtown revitalization will only become real if it is treated as a shared corporate priority, embedded into departmental work plans, day-to-day decision-making, and performance expectations. This requires senior management to align teams, remove internal barriers, and actively coordinate delivery across every function. Every staff member who touches the Downtown, through maintenance, approvals, enforcement, programming, customer service, or capital projects, should understand their role in restoring care, confidence, and pride in the city’s heart. Consistent leadership, clear accountability, and a culture of responsiveness are the conditions that turn a strategy into visible change.

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Figure 3. The intersection of King Street West and James Street, summer 1971.Phil Aggus. Source: Rockwell, Margaret T. "The Facelift and the Wrecking Ball: Urban Renewal and Hamilton's King Street West, 1957–1971." Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine, volume 37, number 2, spring 2009, p. 53–61. https://doi.org/10.7202/029577ar

Figure 4. Invitation to "Our Future Downtown" public consultation portal. Credit: City of Hamilton.

Figure 5. Beyond My Ken (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Isaiah_Zagar_mural_1016_South_Street_Philadelphia.jpg), https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/legalcode

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Figure 12. 3121 N. Broadway, Chicago. Credit: Google Street View, 2025

Figure 13. Map of the BIAs in Downtown Hamilton. Credit: Cultural Spaces.

Figure 14. Lupin (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Downtown-kitchener.jpg), https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0/

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Figure 22. MarkinBoston (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:JP_double_three_decker.jpg)

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Figure 29. Illustration redesign potential along the proposed LRT on King Street. Credit: Cultural Spaces

Figure 30. The Erica Chang (https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:16th_Street_Mall,_Denver_USA_-_panoramio.jpg), „16th Street Mall, Denver USA - panoramio", https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/legalcode

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Cultural Spaces
People and Places

CVLNS | Hamilton

CITY OF HAMILTON

MOTION

General Issues Committee: April 15, 2026

MOVED BY COUNCILLOR M. TADESON…….....……

SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR C. KROETSCH..……...

Strategic Workforce Capacity and Consultant Utilization Review

WHEREAS, the City of Hamilton has initiated a review of consultant utilization to identify opportunities for operational efficiencies and cost containment;

WHEREAS, strengthening internal workforce capacity supports long-term fiscal sustainability, organizational resilience, and service delivery continuity; and,

WHEREAS, Council requires defined timelines and measurable reporting to ensure progress toward optimizing internal capabilities and capacity, and reducing reliance on external consultants where feasible.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

(a) That staff BE DIRECTED to provide an update on the Recruitment and Retention Strategy presented to Council in 2023 including any progress made to attract and retain talent and report back to the General Issues Committee no later than Q3 2026;

(b) That staff BE DIRECTED to prepare a Report that provides an outline of the time, resources and methodology that will be required to conduct a comprehensive Skills Gap Analysis which may inform strategies related to competency and or capacity as it's related to the dependency of external consultants , in collaboration with Human Resources, Finance and operating departments, with the objective of assessing current workforce competencies against current and projected service delivery needs, and report back to the General Issues Committee no later than Q4 2026 with an outline.

(c) That staff BE DIRECTED to provide a consolidated report no later than Q4 2026 outlining:

(i) current consultant utilization trends and associated expenditures;

(ii) areas of sustained external consultant reliance;

(d) That Staff BE DIRECTED to include Senior Leadership Team (SLT) management action plans as presented in the 2017 Calendar year, for addressing the implementation of the Audit report recommendations #1 – 12, to Appendix “A” of Report AUD17008, respecting the Use of External Consultants Performance Audit, on a future General Issues Committee agenda as an Item for Information by June 2026; and,

(e) That staff provide an update on the current status and future plans of the implementation of recommendations #1 – 12, as attached in Report AUD17008 Appendix A to the General Issues Committee by Q4 2026.

CITY OF HAMILTON
MOTION

General Issues Committee - April 15, 2026

MOVED BY COUNCILLOR C. KROETSCH……...

SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR M. TADESON……..

Review of Contract Work

WHEREAS, contracting work to third parties has the potential to increase costs and lengthen delivery time due to procurement processes, internal review, and market competition;

WHEREAS, Council, through the Public Works Committee, starting in 2015, began to contract out some Public Works services with the intention of reporting back with more information on whether or not the program achieves the goals it set, including things like costs and benefits, but also on whether or not it would ultimately erode front line unionized work; and,

WHEREAS, there is work done, routinely, by the City that could be performed internally if there was an exploration of the advantages and disadvantages of this work and a cost-benefit analysis for the Public Works Committee to consider.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

That staff BE DIRECTED to conduct a corporation-wide analysis of contract work undertaken since amalgamation, and report back to the General Issues Committee by Q3 2026, with the following:

(a) An overview of how contractors are engaged, the service areas in which contract staff are utilized, and the circumstances under which contractors are retained;

(b) A cost-benefit analysis to determine whether the use of contractors is more advantageous than utilizing City staff; and,

(c) A time-efficiency analysis, including the time required to procure and engage contractors, compared to the time required to recruit and onboard City staff.

CITY OF HAMILTON
MOTION

General Issues Committee - March 25, 2026

MOVED BY COUNCILLOR C. KROETSCH……...

SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR A. WILSON……

Winter Response for People Living Unsheltered in the City of Hamilton

WHEREAS, as of December 2025, the number of unhoused people living in the City of Hamilton is approximately 1980;

WHEREAS, of those 1980, approximately 338 are unsheltered, meaning they are not staying in emergency shelters or other temporary accommodations;

WHEREAS, the City of Hamilton provides, operates, and partners with community agencies to offer several drop-in, shelter, and warming spaces for individuals who are unsheltered, with expanded services during winter months;

WHEREAS, drop-ins offer temporary accommodation, access to basic necessities, as well as supports both onsite and in the community to meet immediate and longer-term needs related to overall health, wellbeing, and the ability to acquire housing;

WHEREAS, the current homeless serving system, including winter response overnight drop in and warming spaces, are not sufficient to meet the needs of all people living unsheltered; and,

WHEREAS, people with pets and couples are not accommodated in the current drop-ins.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED -

(a) That staff be directed to bring forward a report to General Issues Committee in Q2 2026 outlining a winter response strategy for the 2026/27 winter season that addresses any service gaps in the current system, and details the funding required to operationalize the enhanced service; and

(b) That the report include, but not be limited to:

(i) An assessment of service quality and capacity to meet the City’s evolving needs;

(ii) Best practices and models from other municipalities; and,

(iii) A cost analysis of funding required to operationalize a comprehensive winter response strategy.

CITY OF HAMILTON
MOTION

General Issues Committee - March 25, 2026

MOVED BY COUNCILLOR C. KROETSCH……...

SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR C. CASSAR……

Municipal Price Index

WHEREAS, a Municipal Price Index provides a tool for measuring the effects of inflation on the cost of providing municipal services;

WHEREAS, a Municipal Price Index differs from the Consumer Price Index (CPI) because it measures the cost increases to a representative basket of expenditures such as asphalt, steel and cement, that a municipality makes compared with that of the CPI which measures the prices that consumers face when buying a basket of goods for their household;

WHEREAS, municipalities such as Ottawa and Milton have utilized MPI as one tool that helps inform the City's budgetary process of external economic conditions that the City will face;

WHEREAS, the development of municipal price indexes can assist in creating an understanding of how the patterns of local government spending can be different than those of the average household;

WHEREAS, a Municipal Price Index can be used to explain increases in annual budget expenditures attributable to inflation; and

WHEREAS, a Municipal Price Index can aid in the more accurate development of current and multi-year City budgeting forecasts.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

(a) That staff BE DIRECTED to determine the feasibility of developing a Municipal Price Index for the City of Hamilton for incorporation into the Annual Budget Process and report back to the General Issues Committee no later than Q3 2026.

CITY OF HAMILTON
MOTION

General Issues Committee: April 15, 2026

MOVED BY COUNCILLOR T. HWANG……..……

SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR …….…….……....

Supporting the Role of Trustees in Maintaining an Accountable and Transparent Education System

WHEREAS, School trustees have existed in Ontario since 1816 and play an essential role in delivering accountability, reflecting local priorities, and ensuring students receive necessary resources;

WHEREAS, the democratic representation provided by trustees has been a central principle of Ontario's public education system since before Confederation;

WHEREAS, in the Summer of 2025, the Government of Ontario appointed supervisors to various school boards, supplanting the role of elected trustees and creating concerns regarding lost transparency, accountability, and local representation;

WHEREAS, trustees serve as essential points of contact for City Councillors to discuss pressing local issues relating to education and school sites, and provincially appointed supervisors are not a replacement for this local knowledge;

WHEREAS, Bill 33, which received Royal Assent in November 2025, grants the Province overriding authority which may be used to eliminate the role of trustees in part or in whole; and,

WHEREAS, it is crucial for City Council to join other municipalities in reaffirming the importance of trustees to maintaining local representation for parents and students.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

(a) That Hamilton City Council SUPPORTS the role of locally-elected trustees in ensuring accountability, representing local priorities, and advocating for the needs of students;

(b) That Hamilton City Council REQUESTS that the Province of Ontario initiate a robust, province-wide consultation on school board governance models before considering any decision that would alter the governance role of trustees; and

(c) That this Motion BE CIRCULATED to the Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA), Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA), Rural Ontario Municipal Association (ROMA), the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), the Members of Provincial Parliament representing ridings in the City of Hamilton, the Minister of Education, and the Premier of Ontario.

CITY OF HAMILTON
MOTION

General Issues Committee: April 15, 2026

MOVED BY COUNCILLOR T. MCMEEKIN……..……

SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR ……..……..…....

Food Security

WHEREAS; there is a substantial growth to the need for food caused by financial insecurity related to food costs, high housing costs and inadequate Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Supports;

WHEREAS; the Flamborough Food Bank (Carlisle) and Food with Grace (Waterdown) continue to struggle to meet the food security needs of the local community; and,

WHEREAS; the Tastebuds nutritious lunch program at Waterdown District High School has had a dramatic increase in students participating in the program.

THERFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

(a) That a grant be provided to the Flamborough Food Bank and funded from the Ward 15 Non Property Tax Revenue Account (3301609615) at an upset limit, including contingency, not to exceed $12,000;

(b) That a grant be provided to Food with Grace and funded from the Ward 15 Non Property Tax Revenue Account (3301609615) at an upset limit, including contingency, not to exceed $12,000;

(c) That a grant be provided to the Waterdown District High School Tastebuds Student Lunch Program and funded from the Ward 15 Non Property Tax Revenue Account (3301609615) at an upset limit, including contingency, not to exceed $5000; and,

(d) That the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized and directed to approve and execute all required agreements and ancillary documents, with such terms and conditions in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

CITY OF HAMILTON
MOTION

General Issues Committee: April 15, 2026

MOVED BY COUNCILLOR T. MCMEEKIN……..……

SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR ……..……....

Flamborough Connects

WHEREAS, Flamborough Connects is a registered charity proudly providing free and low-cost Seniors Service and Community Service to residents of Flamborough. We serve residents who may be geographically isolated, socially isolated, vulnerable, physically challenged, financially disadvantaged or new to Flamborough, encouraging them to be engaged, active and empowered;

WHEREAS, the Flamborough Connects' free Income Tax Program supports low income Flamborough residents by providing no-cost tax preparation and filing for individuals earning under $40,000 and couples under $55,000 with simple tax situations;

WHEREAS; many of the people served rely solely on Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and Old Age Security (OAS), often living on less hen $20,000 annually – some on under $10,000 – making the cost and complexity of filing a significant barrier;

WHEREAS, by partnering with the Canada Revenue Agency's Community Volunteer Income Tax Program, we help residents remain compliant while ensuring they can access critical benefits such as GST and Trillium rebates, the Guaranteed Income Supplement, the Canadian Dental Care Plan, and maintain eligibility for subsidized housing;

WHEREAS, with the average Canadian appending $130 annually to file taxes, this program removes a financial and technological barrier for vulnerable residents, many of whom do not have internet access or the ability to file independently;

WHEREAS, the program is entirely offered by trained volunteers;

WHEREAS, the program value to low-income Flamborough residents is estimated at 200 returns costing an average of $130 saving the residents $26,000 and the total benefits claimed by clients are estimated at $688,595.75; and,

WHEREAS, the Ward 15 Community Council has reviewed and unanimously supported grant funding for this project.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

(a) That a grant be provided to Flamborough Connects for their Income tax Program and funded from the Ward 15 Non Property Tax Revenue Account (3301609615) at an upset limit, including contingency, not to exceed $11,500 to support this clinic; and,

(b) That the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized and directed to approve and execute all required agreements and ancillary documents, with such terms and conditions in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

CITY OF HAMILTON
MOTION

General Issues Committee: April 15, 2026

MOVED BY COUNCILLOR T. MCMEEKIN……..……

SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR …….…….……....

HEART - Healthy Youth Network

WHEREAS, the Healthy Education About Relationship project at Waterdown District High School continues to attract a lot of students' attention;

WHEREAS, the Program has continued to focus on value-based engagement to promote healthy nongender violence and awareness of youth dating violence and WHEREAS: engaging young males has historically been a challenge;

WHEREAS, McMaster Social Psychology department students have evaluated male engagement in the HEART program determining the need for a targeted Pilot entitled GUYS WITH HEART;

WHERESAS, this pilot will sponsor monthly Lunch and Learn sessions featuring key influencers identified by W.D.H.S. students;

WHEREAS, the curriculum will move beyond gender-based violence talks to include a focus on Healthy Masculinity, Mental Health and a Business Base for healthy relationships (while building strong connections and enhance success); and,

WHEREAS, the overall objective is to create a safe male space to explore and discuss the root causes of gender-based violence.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

(a) That a grant be provided to Healthy Youth Network (HEART) in support of Guys with Heart and funded from the Ward 15 Non-Property Tax Revenue Account (3301609615) at an upset limit, including contingency, not to exceed $10,000; and,

(b) That the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized and directed to approve and execute all required agreements and ancillary documents, with such terms and conditions in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

CITY OF HAMILTON
MOTION

General Issues Committee: April 15, 2026

MOVED BY COUNCILLOR T. MCMEEKIN……..……

SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR ……..……..…...

Souharissen Trail

WHEREAS, the Waterdown District High School (W.D.H.S.) continues to collaborate with Indigenous partners through Ontario's only high school Treaty Study Program,

WHEREAS, this partnership finds expression in two major led projects, namely; the Museum of Hope and the Souharissen Natural Area, a nationally recognized 55-acre space established in Waterdown by the Mississauga's of the Credit Nation and students from W.D,H.S.,

WHEREAS, the natural was originally dedicated by Chief Byran Laforme and Lieutenant Governor David C. Onkey on August 21st, 2014 and has once been visited by many dignitaries, including Chiefs and Lieutenant Governors,

WHEREAS, the previous "Ponds Program" enhanced the historical significance of the Trail and was re-dedicated by Chief Sult and Ontario's Lieutenant Governor the Honourable Edith Dumont,

WHEREAS, the W.D.H.S. students are continuing to work collaboratively through the Treaties Studies Program, Rick Hill Sr. (aabbwad) 6 Nations and the Mississauga's of the New Credit, desire to create a sit down gathering please for reflection and ongoing dialogue,

WHEREAS, this Gathering Space will be facilitated by the placement of four directional benches; and,

WHEREAS, the Ward 15 Community Council continues to endorse the importance of this historic and sacred spaces.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

(a) That a grant be provided to support the installation of four (4) benches through the City of Hamilton Bench Program funded from the Ward 15 Non-Property Tax

Revenue Account (3301609615) at an upset limit of $12,000, including contingency; and,

(b) That the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized and directed to approve and execute all required agreements and ancillary documents, with such terms and conditions in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

CITY OF HAMILTON
MOTION

General Issues Committee: April 15, 2026

MOVED BY COUNCILLOR T. MCMEEKIN……..……

SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR ……..……....

The Waterdown-East Flamborough Heritage Society – Flamborough Archives

WHEREAS, the Flamborough Archives, a voluntary group, continues to provide a valuable service to the people of Ward 15 and beyond;

WHEREAS: the Archives is managed by a full-time volunteer professional archivist;

WHEREAS: the Community is wanting to continue the existing partnership relationship with the Waterdown District High School student sponsors of the award-winning Museum of Hope (a veteran's memorial);

WHEREAS, it is of continuing importance to affirm the ongoing and developing interests in local history in both the student and broader community;

WHEREAS, the reduction in the provision of Federal grants is placing additional challenges to the ongoing work of the Archives making the provision of important and necessary archival work with student support even more important;

WHEREAS, infrastructure changes are impacting the phone and computer services previously available causing unanticipated fiscal pressures on both Flamborough Connects and Flamborough Archives;

WHEREAS, that acquisition of two new computers to replace the two units and monitors owned by the library and to provide for the installation of new Bell Canada services as well as an upgrade to the Windows 11 Pro system is necessary to enable the ongoing work of the Archives; and,

WHEREAS, the hiring of the traditional student summer employee is pivotal to the catch-up archival work of Flamborough Archives.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

(a) That a grant be provided to The Waterdown-East Flamborough Heritage Society for the Flamborough Archives and funded from the Ward 15 Non-Property Tax Revenue Account (3301609615) at an upset limit, including contingency, not to exceed $15,000 and,

(b) That the Mayor and City Clerk be authorized and directed to approve and execute all agreement and ancillary documents, with such terms and conditions in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

CITY OF HAMILTON
MOTION

General Issues Committee: April 15, 2026

MOVED BY COUNCILLOR M. FRANCIS..……..……

SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR …….…….……....

Jurisdictional Scan on Emergency Shelter Access and Inter-Municipal Coordination

WHEREAS, municipalities across Ontario, including the Municipality of Chatham-Kent, the Region of Peel, Halton Region, Niagara Region, Haldimand County, and Wellington County have implemented practices that prioritize access to emergency shelter services for local residents or those with demonstrated community connections;

WHEREAS, these approaches often include diversion supports and coordination to connect individuals to services in their municipality of origin where appropriate supports may exist;

WHEREAS, the City of Hamilton does not currently have a clearly defined or consistently applied approach respecting residency, community connection, or coordinated diversion; and,

WHEREAS, any approach must remain compassionate and include protections for vulnerable individuals, including those fleeing unsafe situations.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

(a) That staff BE DIRECTED to report back to the General Issues Committee by the end of Q2 2026 with a jurisdictional scan of emergency shelter access policies across Ontario municipalities, including eligibility criteria, residency or community connection requirements, intake practices, diversion or return-to-origin supports, funding implications, and available service outcome data;

(b) That staff BE DIRECTED to report back on current City of Hamilton practices, including how residency or origin is tracked, system pressures related to non-resident access, and analysis of residency data collected through HIFIS, including current proportions of non-resident shelter users and any available historical trends, and how these compare to other municipalities where data is available; and,

(c) That staff BE DIRECTED to report back with policy recommendations on emergency shelter access, including residency, community connection, and inter-municipal coordination and diversion practices, based on the findings of the jurisdictional scan, with clear exemptions for individuals fleeing intimate partner violence or human trafficking.

CITY OF HAMILTON

MOTION

General Issues Committee: April 15, 2026

MOVED BY COUNCILLOR M. TADESON…….....……

SECONDED BY COUNCILLOR……..……...

Breakfast on the Farm Sponsorship

WHEREAS, Breakfast on the Farm is a long-running agricultural outreach event organized by Farm & Food Care Ontario that provides residents with an opportunity to learn about modern farming practices and connect with local agricultural producers;

WHEREAS, the event scheduled for June 13, 2026 is expected to attract significant family attendance and highlight the importance of agriculture within Hamilton and surrounding rural communities;

WHEREAS, Hamilton's rural economy and agri-food sector are key contributors to the local economy and align with the City's tourism and agri-tourism strategies;

WHEREAS, the event provides an opportunity to promote local agricultural destinations and educate residents about the role of farming in Hamilton;

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

(a) That staff BE DIRECTED to report back to General Issues Committee on opportunities for the City of Hamilton to support the Breakfast on the Farm event, including potential sponsorship and on-site City participation, with the following information:

    (i) Potential funding sources for the event, including tourism or economic development programs, that would allow the City to participate as a sponsor; and,

    (ii) Opportunities for a City of Hamilton information booth at the event to promote Hamilton's rural economy and agri-tourism destinations.