



INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Mayor and Members General Issues Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	June 15, 2016
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Exit Survey of Hamilton Based Companies (PED16131) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Neil Everson (905) 546-2424 Ext. 2359
SUBMITTED BY:	Jason Thorne General Manager Planning and Economic Development Department
SIGNATURE:	

Council Direction:

On February 24, 2016, Economic Development staff received direction from Council regarding whether a new practice should be added and targeted at businesses leaving Hamilton or alternatively, whether the current processes are sufficient.

Information:

One of the main mandates of the City's Economic Development Division is to be connecting and engaging with businesses at all stages of their lifecycle in Hamilton. The purpose of these engagement efforts is to facilitate mutually beneficial conversations so that we can understand the various needs of businesses in our communities and provide products and services to attract, support, enable, assist, and retain those businesses in Hamilton, while increasing our ability to advise other City Divisions / Departments in their efforts to complement these efforts.

There are thousands of businesses and organizations that operate in various capacities and intensities in Hamilton, and the Economic Development Division focuses its efforts on four main areas to maximize the effectiveness of the engagement activities of available staff as it relates to the ability to obtain useful information and to provide value to businesses:

1. Conduct business visits and surveys with hundreds of willing businesses a year through the "Hamilton Calling" Corporate Calling Program to obtain detailed insights on business operations, activities, industry and future outlook;

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2. Respond to requests for assistance from a business to provide information, guidance or assistance to a business with a current or future issue;
3. Host, sponsor, support and attend community business events to interact with a diverse range of businesses and understand their needs; and,
4. Supporting an annual City Wide Business Survey conducted by the Planning and Economic Development to understand annual employment and building occupancy trends.

The staff of the Economic Development Division is very aware of both the demands on the time of the owners and senior management of businesses, and the sensitivity of various types of information that a business could possibly provide. Staff strive to find the correct balance between the amount and type of information being requested from businesses, the methodology of how that information is being collected, and the use of that information (given much of what is obtained is confidential), to demonstrate that we value a business' time and willingness to provide feedback.

When staff become aware of a potential or announced business closure, the following procedure is currently followed where possible:

- Staff search for and review the company's file in our internal and confidential Contact Resource Management (CRM) tool, where all pertinent information from prior engagements is kept, to understand the known history of the most recent contact between the company and the City;
- A quick scan of external resources (media, social media, company website, industry contacts, etc.) is commenced to obtain information and context on the potential or announced closure;
- The company is contacted by one or more staff from the Economic Development Division (contact person(s) are determined by management based on assigned portfolio, history dealing with company, or position scope as appropriate); and,
- The company is engaged in a verbal exit interview, where staff look to engage the company in an open-ended conversation to obtain the following as it relates to the potential or announced closure (if the company is willing to provide this information) to:
 1. Obtain insights or confirm the scope and date of the closure;
 2. Obtain insights or confirm the primary reasons behind the closure;

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3. Obtain additional details on any “primary reasons” provided that relate to City services, procedures or regulations;
 4. Identify or confirm the current number of employees at the company; and,
 5. Obtain insights in to the projected impact on the City of Hamilton (on the employees who reside in Hamilton, the business’s suppliers, etc.).
- Staff complete the exercise by inputting any information that was obtained from the engagement into the company’s file in the CRM, take relevant actions based on information that was received and then close the file.

Based on the existing processes already in place and being executed by the Economic Development Division, staff recommends that this item be removed from the General Issues Committee Outstanding Business List.

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