

Good morning,

Thank you Members of council and committee for having us here today. My name is Dale Mugford, I am chair of the board of directors for 80 King William St. (the Filmworks Lofts), I am a local business owner on King William St., father and husband.

I am joined here today with Linda Milner, and Jackie Attard.

[photo 1]

On the early morning of May 13th, many lives changed as one life was lost. Vincent Lofaro was shot and killed in the street outside his work, Club 77.

Our neighbourhood was taped off. Residents couldn't leave for work in their vehicles. Everyone was terrified.

Today I wish to contrast two timelines for you.

The following crimes were reported by police and press.

[photo 2]

In the fall of 2006, Ryan Milner was killed outside Club 77. What started as a brawl turned into murder after he was stabbed three times, twice in the heart. A friend was also seriously injured.

[photo 3]

In 2010 the head injuries three Club 77 bouncers inflicted on McMaster engineering student Chuck Ezech outside the club were so severe his neurosurgeon initially rejected surgery because he felt Chuck was dying. "He is permanently disabled as a result of this" he said.

In 2015 Hamilton police and ambulance found a 24-year-old man with a stab wound to his chest lying on the ground on the corner of Catherine and King William. The victim was taken to Hamilton General Hospital with life-threatening injuries.

[photo 4]

Vincent Lazaro was shot and killed outside Club 77 after a concert which included a fight inside that took place an hour before the shooting according to Hamilton Police Detective Dave Oleniuk. A woman was also injured and taken to hospital with a gunshot wound to her arm.

[photo 5]

After his death, our residents organized and exchanged stories of the many years of dealing with violence, property damage and intoxicated patrons loitering on our property. They brought a petition to our Condominium board, and asked that we submit it to Councillor Farr, which we did. They requested the City finally address the long history of violence at Club 77 with concrete action.

[photo 6]

And now, let's look at a different timeline. In 2008, planning began for John Rebecca Park, a park which would reside on the land currently a parking lot and where Club 77 is located.

The area is zoned for a park. Throughout the years of 2008 - 2012 thorough planning was finalized for the building of the park. The 2012 Beasley Neighbourhood Newsletter stated: "Beasley is getting an all new park! The City of Hamilton is currently moving forward with this project to help revitalize Hamilton's Downtown Area."

Then nothing happened. The project has been stalled with no clear commitment to complete the project. Councillor Farr has said that the current "plans" call for the park to be built by 2022, 14 years after it's original planning began.

The City so heavily advertises slogans to lure people here. They include "it's happening here" "Hamilton is changing", that it's "a great place to raise a family."

In our building we have 100 residents, a combined \$300,000 a year in taxes paid to the City, who were sold on the promise of a changing downtown. There are doctors, teachers, students, entrepreneurs, firefighters, families with children— all living here sold on a vision for the city and neighbourhood 6 years ago that was never delivered. Instead, it's been a decade of violent crime, steps from Police.

So what's clear to us is this: one of these timelines is going to continue: which one is up to you.

We want the park to be built. We want clear communication that the City will do so. And we want the park built sooner. A commitment to put a shovel in the ground in 2019. No later.

Three weeks after the murder of Mr. Lofaro there was a brawl outside the club witnessed and filmed by a resident. It shows club staff punching a patron in the street, and throwing a woman to the ground on the sidewalk.

[video]

The club has been given opportunities to collaborate with the Community and work to make us safer. At the community meeting held on June 21st, at which over 100 concerned community members attended, the club was invited to attend and speak. They initially requested to speak, then declined when we sent over the program for the evening. Though they did attend, sit silently, and take notes. During Q&A they were asked by Councillor Farr to answer a question.

[video]

Expecting violence around this venue to cease on it own is wishful thinking. Without real change, it is our belief the violence will continue. On behalf of the Milner family, the Lofaro family, and members of our community, we request that we do not have to stand here again, with a new family joining us. Build John Rebecca Park and choose a safer Hamilton. Thank you.