




Hamilton

INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency & Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	December 5, 2019
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	City of Hamilton Youth Engagement (CES15056(c) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Al Fletcher (905) 546-2424 Ext. 4711 Jesse Williamson (905) 546-2424 Ext. 2599
SUBMITTED BY:	Grace Mater Director, Children's Services and Neighbourhood Development Division Healthy and Safe Communities Department
SIGNATURE:	

COUNCIL DIRECTION

On October 23, 2017, the Emergency & Community Services Committee provided the following direction on the Hamilton Youth Advisory Committee (HYAC) Report CES15056(b):

" That staff report back to City Council, detailing progress to date of the youth driven engagement collaboration including youth initiatives, accomplishments, opportunities and pertinent issues impacting youth in Hamilton by Q2 of 2018;"

INFORMATION

Following Council's direction, staff undertook a best practices review, reviewed other municipal Youth Strategies and undertook a robust consultative process throughout the City to determine how to best engage with youth. Staff consulted with 1,000 youth, through targeted engagements and surveys, 300 youth serving professionals, anchor institutions and government. Throughout this process, staff relied on input from a Youth Steering Committee made up of 40 unique youth to co-create engagement.

OUR Vision: To be the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

OUR Mission: To provide high quality cost conscious public services that contribute to a healthy, safe and prosperous community, in a sustainable manner.

OUR Culture: Collective Ownership, Steadfast Integrity, Courageous Change, Sensational Service, Engaged Empowered Employees.

From the engagement with youth and youth-serving community partners, the following were found to be the keys to successful youth engagement:

- Peer to peer engagement: youth feel more comfortable, allows for honest dialogue
- Proactively utilize youth to provide input in programs, services, and promotional materials in a youth friendly language

Youth identified five overarching priorities:

- Youth Mental Health Support
- Concentration of youth services in the downtown core
- Lack of co-ordinated promotion of youth in Hamilton
- Transportation from suburban communities to employment areas.
- Securing desired employment: sufficient finances to cover rent and expenses

Given the geography of the City, staff have concluded that there is no one specific method that best engages all youth. Youth get engaged on issues that matter to them and affect their daily lives. An opportunity exists to better connect and create awareness of the many youth opportunities across the City.

Existing Youth Engagement

Through a scan of youth programs and services within the City, staff found 967 youth programs from 122 organizations utilizing 26 youth councils/committees. Youth engagement has been occurring within the City in a substantive and purposeful way to ensure the youth voice is heard. Staff found many existing opportunities for youth to have their voice heard based both geographically (e.g. The Net at Ancaster Community Services, Healthy Community Healthy Youth Flamborough, McQuesten Youth Opportunity Creators) and by issue (e.g. transit, employment, mental health). Each initiative has used unique approaches based on the issue and audience.

Specifically, internal to the City, there has been engagement on youth issues that include:

- Children Services and Neighbourhood Development – Xperience Annex
- Hamilton Fire - Camp FFIT
- Hamilton Police – School Liaison Officer, Youth Officers
- Hamilton Street Railway - MyHSR: (RE)Envision
- LRT Community Connectors
- Public Health Services – Hamilton Drug Strategy, Hamilton Youth Sexual Health Strategy, Harm Reduction, Public Health Nurses in Schools, Unfiltered Facts

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- Recreation Division – Youth Leadership Development, Youth Programming Promotion resulting in 2016 National Community Partner of the Year – Canadian Tire Jumpstart, Platinum Level Youth Friendly Community designation

External to the City, staff found 114 service providers providing 885 programs and services, including youth councils and/or committees. These opportunities range from geography specific; Healthy Community - Healthy Youth Flamborough, McQuesten Youth Opportunity Creators, as well as issue specific: AGH Youth Council, Rainbow Youth Collaborative, Hamilton Health Sciences Youth Advisory Committee (YAC) of the Children's Developmental Rehabilitation Centre, YWCA Young Women's Advisory Council, Hamilton Youth Film Festival. The school boards also use student councils/senates to engage with students within each school.

Supporting Youth – Xperience Annex

Launched in 2016, the Xperience Annex creates a safe space for youth, aged 18-29, to engage and seek assistance in connections with programs and services within the City. The Annex has seen 1,000 youth and made 1,500 referrals to 100 community partners. Staff facilitated educational and job skills training partnerships focussed on youth. From the youth interactions, it became evident that there was a system gap especially as it related to mental health, housing, education and employment. Through the referrals to community partners and facilitating various youth focussed opportunities, the Annex has continued to be a place that creates awareness of opportunities for youth.

To expand a youth focussed support system, the Healthy and Safe Communities Department are making two significant changes under the leadership of the Neighbourhood Development Section:

- LEAP (Learning Earning and Parenting) staff will be joining the Annex team and taking on the full caseload of the participants in the program. The significance is that those youth with children will have a "one-stop" point of contact for their financial supports as well as being tied in closer to new opportunities facilitated through the Annex.
- Ontario Works Youth Case Workers will also join the Annex team. A more direct connection to Annex initiatives and community partners will increase the opportunities for referrals of youth to new opportunities.

The expected outcomes include the following:

- Increasing access and referrals to community partners
- Help focus services and programs

- Utilizing the knowledge and experience of staff as a team, they will be able to focus efforts on the youth priorities.

Youth Engagement Moving Forward

While there is significant youth engagement happening across the City, there is more that can be done. The ability to assist and support youth in providing input on geographically and issue-based initiatives can be improved recognizing that there is no single method that best engages youth.

Based on the peer to peer engagement success of Youth Engagers through the Xperience Annex, staff are proposing to expand the use of the Youth Engagers to not only be limited to promoters of the Xperience Annex but to be offered as youth engagement support to Council, internal departments and community partners to gather the youth voice. Housed within the Neighbourhood Development Section, staff are proposing that through youth engagement, a database of youth and specific interests be developed to better co-ordinate future engagement opportunities with those having specific interest and within specific geographies. Youth from the database can then be used to help support greater youth engagement.

Staff will continue to collaborate, support and bring awareness of youth engagement opportunities throughout the City and be a resource to support future youth engagement. Further, staff will continue to work with community partners to support and facilitate opportunities for youth within the City.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

None