

March 17, 2021
Business Owner [M Salon by MonStyleFile]

Dear City of Hamilton,

My name is Monica Le and I am a business owner of an independent salon at 804 King Street West in Westdale. I attended McMaster University from 2005-2009, I've lived in Hamilton for those years, I've patronized Westdale Village as a student and as a working adult, and I've returned to the city to build a business here because I believe in Hamilton.

After viewing the development plans of the site, I can see that it will be a project that will revitalize Westdale and the main artery that is King Street West.

Since becoming a local business that came in with a singular mission to serve the Westdale and McMaster community, I can wholeheartedly say that it is a wonderful place to work and the people in the community are what make the neighbourhood very special. My clients are a strong mix of McMaster students and residents in the neighbourhood.

What I can attest to from speaking with some of my clients who live in the area (renters & owners), is that they had little awareness of this King & Paradise site despite living here for years. Some described it as dull and ugly while some have said they've walked or commuted by so many times and never took notice at all. We have since painted the building an obnoxious turquoise blue to attract more attention.

Outside the window of my little salon, many things are changing in the area within a short amount of time. There are the long-standing business owners hanging up their hats making way for the next generation to take over, there are the untimely closures of beloved Westdale fixtures, there is the mass migration of Torontonians coming in to call Hamilton home, and there is the giant hole directly across the street that is the 7-storey condo to-be. The one thing that I can say for certain is that change is inevitable. We can either resist or we can make the most of it.

When I was in school, Westdale was not dense with bubble tea shops and coffee competitors, I could not have imagined that a vape store of all things would take up prime retail space in the heart of The Village, and I never could have dreamed that one day I would be here serving the community. That was only a decade ago. Since being here, I have been able to grow – and more recently, survive through COVID-19 - through the support of the community. I was given full transparency of the landlord's plans to redevelop this site when I signed on and I would hope that Westdale keeps growing and taking advantage of the densification that IS happening in the city. The businesses that invest in the community depend on continued interest and activity in the area. There are so many buildings in Hamilton, even a few blocks away, that have been neglected and abandoned. That is not the plan for this site. As bittersweet as it will be to relocate my business when the time comes, I am encouraged that this corner will not be passed by, it will not be forgotten, it will be neither dull nor ugly, and it will be a feature that stimulates economic growth into the community for years to come.

Sincerely,
Monica Le