




CITY OF HAMILTON
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
TOURISM AND CULTURE

TO:	Mayor and Members General Issues Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	September 18, 2024
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	2024-2028 Tourism Strategy (PED24046(a)) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
PREPARED BY:	Ryan McHugh (905) 546-2424 Ext. 4132 Hildegard Snelgrove (905) 546-2424 Ext. 5770
SUBMITTED BY:	Lisa Abbott Acting Director, Tourism and Culture Planning and Economic Development Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That the City of Hamilton “2024-2028 Draft Tourism Strategy”, attached as Appendix “A” to Report PED24077, be received;
- (b) That staff be directed to report back to General Issues Committee with a final “2024-2028 Tourism Strategy” in November 2024;
- (c) That this item be removed from the Outstanding Business List.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

After consulting with industry partners, conducting a comprehensive review of Tourism Hamilton’s operations, and analysing the state of Hamilton’s tourism sector, staff have completed the proposed 2024-2028 Draft Tourism Strategy, attached as Appendix “A” to Report PED24046(a).

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.

Hamilton's 2024-2028 Draft Tourism Strategy aims to establish the city as a leading Canadian destination renowned for its vibrant tourism districts, captivating nature-based activities, and authentic and sustainable experiences.

The strategy revolves around four strategic priorities:

1. Grow Hamilton's Reputation as a Leading Tourism Destination: This priority focuses on supporting industry partners, welcoming visitors, and supporting the creation of unique experiences in Hamilton's neighbourhoods and natural spaces. These actions will be achieved through collaboration with strategic partners, sustainable tourism practices, and a commitment to supporting Indigenous tourism experiences. A 'whole city' approach using a lens of Inclusion, Diversity Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) ensures alignment with broader city initiatives, fostering collaboration across departments and partner groups to drive tourism growth.

2. Cultivate Vibrant Tourism Districts: Vibrant tourism districts reflect and nurture a community's authentic identity. They entice visitors and offer high-quality experiences that are unique to the destination. This priority aims to foster a true 'sense of place' in Hamilton's neighbourhoods, for both residents and visitors. Initiatives such as placemaking, programming and business investment attraction enhance the overall vibrancy of key districts, in alignment with the City's efforts to revitalize neighborhoods and improve safety and cleanliness.

3. Promote and Support the Sustainability of Natural Assets: This priority recognizes Hamilton's abundant natural assets and emphasizes the importance of thoughtful planning and infrastructure improvements to enhance visitor experiences while preserving the environment. Initiatives include developing a Waterfall Destination Master Plan, facilitating recreational waterfront activities, and leveraging federal funding for trail enhancements. The strategy aligns with broader city plans focused on greenspace protection and waterfront access, ensuring a cohesive approach to stewarding Hamilton's natural assets.

4. Strengthen Hamilton's Major Events and Festival Sector: Hosting major events and festivals is crucial for attracting visitors and enhancing Hamilton's reputation as a destination. This priority focuses on securing investment in event infrastructure, leveraging new funding sources for event attraction, and implementing strategies to manage the impact of major events on local communities. There is an additional opportunity to actively seek out and support major festivals geared towards equity-deserving groups that expand the diversity of audiences. The strategy aligns with Council priorities for enhancing the city's reputation as a centre of culture, sport, and tourism and integrates with economic development goals to attract investment and stimulate year-round vibrancy.

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Through these strategic priorities, Tourism Hamilton aims to position the city as a dynamic and sustainable tourism destination that drives economic growth, fosters Hamilton's unique identity, and enriches the overall destination. The regenerative 'whole city' approach ensures alignment with broader city initiatives and leverages collaboration across departments and partners to achieve shared goals.

Alternatives for Consideration – Not Applicable

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: All recommended Strategic Actions identified in the proposed 2024-2028 Draft Tourism Strategy will either be managed within existing budget allocations or will be contingent upon securing the necessary financial resources. Wherever possible, tourism staff will look to leverage Municipal Accommodation Tax funds or other non-levy sources to achieve new initiatives identified within this strategy. Any requests for funding will continue to go through appropriate processes.

Staffing: All recommended Strategic Actions identified in the proposed 2024-2028 Draft Tourism Strategy will either be managed within the existing staff complement or will be contingent upon securing the required human resources.

Legal: There are no known material legal issues relating to the recommended Strategic Actions identified in the proposed 2024-2028 Draft Tourism Strategy.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Hamilton's first Tourism Strategy (2015 – 2020) focused on three priority areas with many actions that were achieved or exceeded since its implementation. The global pandemic was devastating to the industry and there is a very different landscape today than when the original strategy was drafted. The strategy was drafted to reflect the current state of tourism locally and globally, growing trends and initiatives.

In 2023, the new term of Council established their Term of Council Priorities, which serve as a guiding framework for municipal decision-making and resource allocation. These priorities reflect the Council's commitment to addressing the community's most pressing issues and advancing key initiatives over their term. As such, the Draft Tourism Strategy aligns closely with these priorities by contributing to the economic prosperity of Hamilton, enhancing its reputation as a desirable destination, and fostering community vibrancy. By supporting and complementing the Term of Council Priorities, the Draft Tourism Strategy ensures that tourism development remains a central focus of

municipal efforts and reinforces Council's commitment to driving positive change and growth in the city.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

This strategy supports and is supported by numerous City plans, policies, and strategies as well as those from the tourism industry, including but not limited to:

- Council Priorities, Outcomes and Measures of Success (2023);
- Economic Development Action Plan, Action 21 2021-2025 (2021);
- Downtown Office Report (PED2301, 2023);
- Workforce Strategy (2023);
- Hamilton Civic Museum Strategy (2022-2030);
- Hamilton Urban Indigenous Strategy and Implementation Plan (2019);
- Hamilton Climate Action Strategy (2022);
- Hamilton Parks Master Plan (2022);
- Hamilton Recreation Master Plan (2022);
- West Harbour Recreation Master Plan (2010);
- Hamilton's Cycling Master Plan (2019); and,
- Accelerated Active Transportation Implementation Plan (2023).

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

During the creation of the 2021-2026 Economic Development Action Plan and the 2024-2028 Draft Tourism Strategy, Economic Development and Tourism and Culture staff engaged with numerous partners to understand their experiences and incorporate their input into this strategic document. The engagement process involved a significant effort to capture the voices and thoughts of business partners and the public.

Understanding the vital role industry partners play in creating a thriving tourism destination, staff sought input from tourism partners through quarterly Team Hamilton Tourism meetings, one-on-one meetings, roundtable-style discussions prior to drafting the strategy.

Once the strategy was drafted, staff presented it to the Open for Business Subcommittee and held multiple virtual feedback sessions with Industry Partners on the Draft Strategy, gathering feedback from over 60 industry partners. Further consultation efforts include feedback from Council and the community.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION

Nationally, the tourism industry is an economic driver and job-creator as one of Canada's top service exports, as well as a tool for fostering social cohesion. As of Q3 2023, tourism contributed \$43.6 billion to Canada's GDP, generated \$105 billion in revenue, and supported one in every ten jobs in the country. In 2023, visitors spent almost \$650 million in Hamilton.

After being severely crippled by the global pandemic, the tourism industry is strong but uneven. A resilient travel sentiment and pent-up travel demand aided a quick rebound in domestic travel, but full recovery has been dampened by surging inflationary pressures, travel disruptions, labour shortages, the uncertainty of a recession on the horizon, and global political unrest. Visitation and spending from US and international visitors continues to lag, but tourism in Canada is expected to recover fully by 2026.

Destination demand in Canada is typically seasonal, with leisure demand—those travelling for pleasure or to visit friends and relatives—mirroring the most common times to travel and take vacation. As such, travel typically peaks in summer months and is lowest in winter months. Demand in the spring and fall shoulder seasons is typically driven by individual corporate business travel, major events, and meetings and conferences.

In addition to monthly seasonality, travel demand is also affected by day-of-week trends. For most destinations—including Hamilton—weekend stays are from leisure guests, and weekday stays are driven by individual corporate business travel and meeting and event business.

Therefore, a healthy balance between leisure, individual corporate business, major events, and meetings and conferences is vital to support year-round vibrancy in a destination. The 2024-2028 Draft Tourism Strategy aims to support each of these tourism segments and to enhance the city's reputation as a centre of culture, sport, and tourism.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

Not Applicable.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix "A" to Report PED24046(a) – 2024-2028 Tourism Strategy