



Vrancor GROUP

September 16, 2024

Re: Draft Tourism Strategy

To: Mayor and Members of Hamilton City Council

Vrancor Group Inc. (“Vrancor”) has had the privilege to review and evaluate the Draft Tourism Strategy for the City of Hamilton. Vrancor wishes to express our support for the draft strategy. It is sound, realistic, and has the potential to bring numerous benefits to the City of Hamilton, it’s residents, it’s local businesses and it’s taxpayer base.

These potential benefits include, but would not be limited to:

- Greater vibrancy, ambiance and animation throughout the City, and in particular in the downtown core of Hamilton;
- Greater numbers of services and activities in the City and in particular an expectation of increased restaurant and entertainment opportunities in the City;
- Higher levels of viability and sustainability for service businesses in the City, in particular the viability and sustainability of restaurants in the City;
- Higher levels of income opportunities and employment opportunities for Hamilton residents from the expected increase in service business activities;
- Higher municipal property tax opportunities for the City from the sustainable local businesses that would be created through the Tourism Strategy; and
- A further diversification of Hamilton’s economic base through the creation of new and sustained local businesses.

Within the optimism that we hold for the Tourism Strategy, as we read it, there is also a realism and practical business experience concern that we feel we need to express.

The Tourism Strategy as written cannot be successful without support and follow through by City Council. Key determinants of success for the strategy as it applies to downtown Hamilton in particular are:

- A sense of safety;
- Accessibility; and
- Inviting environment





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There is a wide perception that downtown is not safe. Calls by the business community and by many downtown residents for increased police presence to deal with violent crime, aggressive individual encounters, and open drug use are essential to address. The concerns about safety keep many away from downtown today and if left unremedied, will keep many away in the future. A tourism strategy that has a significant cornerstone as a major regional entertainment center cannot be successful without Council support to remedy underlying safety issues.

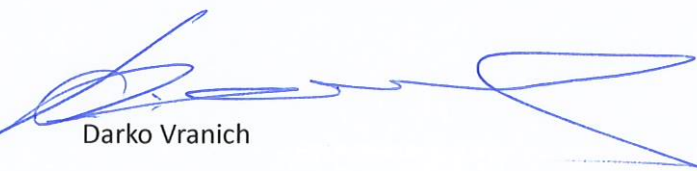
As mentioned, Hamilton has the opportunity to become a major regional entertainment center with the redevelopment of the Arena. As a major regional entertainment center, the flow of people to and from the core will be a major factor for success. The LRT will be a positive initiative to assist in human traffic flow and Vrancor is a big proponent of the LRT as a positive step in transit. However, as a regional entertainment center, the Arena will be a prime tourism draw and will attract many from distant communities who will bring significant economic benefits to Hamilton's economy. For them, they will likely and primarily arrive by car. Hamilton needs an effective system of arterial roads that moves traffic. If Council wishes to support the success of a regional entertainment hub for tourism, it must support better arterial road systems.

Vrancor is on the record supporting the conversion of many one-way streets to two-way streets. However, without the construction of a new expressway road system, the conversion of major arterial streets to two-way and the clogging of arterial roads is detrimental to the tourist experience. Failure to support access to downtown entertainment venues and services will undermine efforts to attract tourists to the downtown.

Finally, ambience is important to a tourism strategy. Preferably, ambience needs to be inviting and at a minimum it should not be a disincentive. Like virtually all cities around us, Hamilton has many of our citizens living unfortunate lives. We need options for the unfortunate and we need to find more appropriate places to help them. Vrancor has no silver bullet solutions and we do not expect that Council has an immediate solution, however we need to agree to collectively work to find solutions and we look to Council to take leadership to help the unfortunate.

We remain optimistic about the potential success and benefits that the Tourism Strategy can bring to Hamilton. We constructively express our opinions about key initiatives that Council needs to provide for leadership to support the Tourism Strategy.

Respectfully,



Darko Vranich

CEO, Vrancor Group Inc.