



Hamilton

# INFORMATION REPORT

<b>TO:</b>	Chair and Members Open for Business Sub-Committee
<b>COMMITTEE DATE:</b>	October 21, 2024
<b>SUBJECT/REPORT NO:</b>	Common House Cafe (PED24210) (City Wide)
<b>WARD(S) AFFECTED:</b>	City Wide
<b>PREPARED BY:</b>	Kristin Huigenbos (905) 546-2424 Ext. 4110
<b>SUBMITTED BY:</b>	Norm Schleeahn Director, Economic Development Planning and Economic Development Department
<b>SIGNATURE:</b>	

## COUNCIL DIRECTION

Not applicable.

## INFORMATION

### Background

The Hamilton Business Centre, under the management of the City of Hamilton Economic Development Division and Ministry of Economic Development, Jobs Creation and Trade, continues to provide comprehensive assistance and resources to small businesses throughout Hamilton. Common House Café is the newest program for the Hamilton Business Centre, creating a launchpad for turning culinary passion into a thriving business.

### Observations and Issues

The City of Hamilton continues to see a growing demand for information, resources, and incentives to support small businesses. Through collaboration and partnership with the Ministry of Economic Development, Jobs Creation and Trade, the Hamilton Business Centre continues to provide essential small business support to assist businesses as they start, grow, and navigate operations in Hamilton. With purposeful work in the

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heavily impacted culinary sector, supporting post-pandemic recovery, the Hamilton Business Centre developed the Food Forge to facilitate new culinary business start-ups and support those currently within the sector to thrive. Common House Café is the next evolution of this program, providing a collaborative, inclusive launchpad for turning culinary passion into thriving businesses.

Following March 2020 and the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the City Hall commercial café was vacant due to an expired lease. Led by Corporate Facilities and Corporate Real Estate, an extensive search ensued to secure a new tenant to no avail. Limitations on hours of operation and no cooking on-site, posed challenges for the extensive list of vendors touring the location. Paralleling the Economic Development Action Plan, to foster and grow small business initiatives the Hamilton Business Centre worked with Corporate Facilities and Corporate Real Estate to put forth a winning program model, Common House Café.

In the spring of 2024, Corporate Facilities put forth two options to fill the vacant commercial space on the first floor of City Hall to the Senior Leadership Team. One option was an external tenant, the other was the Hamilton Business Centre Common House Café Program. With both applications providing similar investment, the Hamilton Business Centre Common House Café was unanimously selected as the preferred model by Senior Leadership. Capital investment was comparable; however, the Hamilton Business Centre program leveraged a unique opportunity through a partnership with the Ministry of Economic Development Job Creation and Trade to expand programming within the food sector, expand community partnerships and achieve Economic Development action plan goals. This innovative space will provide a vibrant, inclusive, and community-focused program, while advancing economic development needs and support for Hamilton small businesses. Partnerships with local not-for-profit agencies will also see this model providing valuable hands-on training experience for those seeking employment.

Common House Café is a launchpad, turning culinary passion into thriving businesses in Hamilton. The Café features training sessions focussed on essential skills for both new and seasoned entrepreneurs. The program supports Hamilton's new and expanding food businesses with dynamic programming, mentorship, food sales, and commercialization opportunities. Common House Café provides licensed food entrepreneurs a space to start up and grow an existing business, while also providing Monday-to-Friday food service to City Hall and surrounding buildings to support financial stability. Upon graduation from the program, participants will receive wrap-around services to support site selection needs.

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**Outcome**

The opening of the Common House Café in Hamilton represents a significant economic opportunity for food sector businesses across the community. Operating as a vibrant community launchpad, supporting culinary passion, this winning model will support countless entrepreneurs in accessing a solid and sustainable start-up platform for business success. Overall, the Common House Café serves as a catalyst for growth, enhancing the entrepreneurial landscape in Hamilton.

**APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED**

Not applicable.