



GENERAL ISSUES COMMITTEE REPORT 24-021

9:30 a.m.

December 4, 2024

Council Chambers (Hybrid), City Hall, 2nd Floor
71 Main Street West, Hamilton, Ontario

Present: Mayor A. Horwath (Virtually)
Deputy Mayor J. Beattie (Chair)
Councillors C. Cassar, B. Clark, J.P. Danko, M. Francis (Virtually),
T. Hwang, T. Jackson (Virtually), C. Kroetsch, T. McMeekin, E. Pauls,
M. Spadafora (Virtually), M. Tadeson (Virtually), A. Wilson and M. Wilson

Absent: Councillor N. Nann – City Business

THE GENERAL ISSUES COMMITTEE PRESENTS REPORT 24-021 AND RESPECTFULLY RECOMMENDS:

1. **2024 City-Led Projects Recommended for Climate Change Reserve Funding (PED24165) (City Wide) (Item 8.1)**
 - (a) That the allocation of funds in the total amount of \$2,501,000 million dollars in 2024 from the City's Climate Change Reserve (Account No 108062) in order to support 13 City-led climate action initiatives, as identified in Appendix "A" to General Issues Committee Report 24-021, be approved;
 - (b) That the update regarding the 2024 Climate Change Reserve funding allocations for Office of Climate Change Initiatives priority projects, attached as Appendix "B" to Report PED24165, be received; and,
 - (c) That the update regarding progress with City-led and community-led initiatives that received support from the City's Climate Change Reserve in 2023, attached as Appendix "C" to report PED24156, be received.

2. Light Rail Transit Sub-Committee Report 24-004 - November 15, 2024 (Item 9.1)

(1) Terms of Reference for a Change Tracking Framework for the Hamilton Light Rail Transit (PED24207) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item) (Item 8.2)

- (a) That the Terms of Reference attached as Appendix “A” to Light Rail Transit Sub-Committee Report 24-004 be received and utilized as the basis for developing a framework and associated set of indicators for tracking change in the Hamilton Light Rail Transit (LRT) corridor; and
- (b) That staff be directed to continue to refine the change tracking framework and report back to the Light Rail Transit (LRT) Sub-Committee on a final set of recommended indicators and reporting structure in 2025.

(2) Information on Potential Grant and Support programs related to Light Rail Transit Construction (PED24182) (Wards 1, 2, 3, 4, 5) (Item 9.1)

That Report PED24182, respecting Information on Potential Grant and Support programs related to Light Rail Transit Construction, be received.

3. Accessibility Committee for Persons with Disabilities Report 24-010 - November 12, 2024 (Item 9.2)

That the Accessibility Committee for Persons with Disabilities Report 24-010 - November 12, 2024, be received.

4. Municipal Incentives for the 90 Carling Street Rental Project – 10 Additional Affordable Units (HSC20009(a)) (Ward 1) (Item 10.1)

- (a) That the City enter into an Agreement amending the Municipal Housing Project Facilities Amending Agreement - 90 Carling Street entered into between the City and 1649626 Ontario Inc. dated November 25, 2021 consistent with the terms and conditions contained in Appendix “B” to General Issues Committee Report 24-021 – Term Sheet for Municipal Housing Project Facilities Amending Agreement – 90 Carling, with the source for the additional funding provided for in the Amending Agreement in the amount of \$104,150 be funded from the Parkland Reserve 10409;
- (b) That the General Manager of Healthy and Safe Communities be authorized to execute the amending agreement in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor; and,

- (c) That Municipal Housing Project Facilities By-law 21-247 be amended as provided for in the amending By-Law attached as Appendix “B” to Report HSC20009 (a) in order to provide for an additional 10 affordable housing units.

5. User Fee Framework – Project Overview (HSC24049) (City-Wide) (Item 10.2)

- (a) That Council endorse the project approach and timelines of the User Fee Framework project as detailed in Report HSC24049; and,
- (b) That up to \$250 K from the Tax Stabilization Reserve (110046) be allocated to fund the consultant and works required for the User Fee Framework project.

6. Airport Sub-Committee Report 24-002 - November 14, 2024 (Item 10.3)

(1) 2024-2025 John C. Munro Hamilton International Airport – City of Hamilton Joint Marketing Initiatives (PED24221) (City Wide) (Item 10.1)

That the General Manager of Planning and Economic Development Department or designate be authorized and directed to contribute up to \$650,000 from the Airport Capital Reserve No. 108043 toward the City’s contribution for joint City of Hamilton/Hamilton International Airport marketing initiatives.

7. Pilot Program, Partnership Between Hamilton Civic Museums and the Hamilton Public Library for Free Museum Admission (PED24223) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item) (Item 10.4)

- (a) That the program allowing Hamilton Public Library (HPL) cardholders free general admission to any of the City of Hamilton’s operated museums (Hamilton Civic Museums) be permanently adopted; and
- (b) That the related item be removed from the Outstanding Business List.

8. Downtown Hamilton Office and Storefront Commercial Sector Update and Action Report (PED24163) (Ward 2) (Item 10.5)

- (a) That the Economic Development Division staff be directed to develop a 10-Year Downtown Revitalization Strategy utilizing funding from the Economic Development Initiatives Capital Project (3621708900) up to an upset limit of \$100,000 for consultant related costs and that the draft Strategy be brought to a General Issues Committee for consideration before the end of 2025;

- (b) That staff be directed to incorporate future Downtown office and commercial sector updates into a new annual State of the Downtown Report, prepared by Economic Development Division staff and provided to the General Issues Committee annually, to provide a more comprehensive and wholistic review and update on the Downtown including annual reporting on key metrics to be identified as part of the 10-Year Downtown Revitalization Strategy;
- (c) That staff be directed to develop a pilot Downtown Office to Residential Conversion Financial Incentive Program, to be funded from existing annual budget allocations to the Economic Development Division, and that the draft Program be brought forward for consideration to a General Issues Committee meeting in the first quarter of 2025; and,
- (d) That existing Graffiti Removal Grants on private property under the Commercial District Revitalization Grant Program, introduced as a pilot in September 2023 and scheduled to end on March 31, 2025, be made permanent and funded on a go-forward basis from existing annual budget allocations to the Economic Development Division for the provision of non-tax increment based financial incentive programs.
- (e) That staff be directed to report back to the General Issues Committee in Q2 2025 with an interim report respecting the principles that will inform the actions of the strategy.

9. Public Bike Share Program Phased Procurement Process – Sustainable Operations Model and Funding (PED20109(f)) (City Wide) (Item 10.6)

That Report PED20109(f), respecting Public Bike Share Program Phased Procurement Process – Sustainable Operations Model and Funding be DEFERRED to a Q1 2025 General Issues Committee meeting when staff can provide an information report with additional information on the current and future operation of Hamilton Bike Share Program including ridership trends, costs associated with current and future growth plans including the detailed financial statements of Hamilton Bike Share.

10. 2024-2028 Tourism Strategy (PED24046(b)) (City Wide) (Item 10.7)

- (a) That the City of Hamilton “2024-2028 Tourism Strategy”, attached as Appendix “C” to Report General Issues Committee Report 24-021, be approved; and,
- (b) That staff be directed and authorized to implement the Strategic Actions contained within the 2024-2028 Tourism Strategy.

11. Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Grant Application (LGP-22-01) 60 Caledon Avenue, Hamilton (PED24160) (Ward 8) (Item 10.8)

- (a) That the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Grant Application LGP-22-01, submitted by Victoria Park Community Homes Inc., owner of the property 60 Caledon Avenue, Hamilton be approved for a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Grant not to exceed \$1,530,566 for estimated construction costs to be provided over a maximum of five years, in accordance with the terms and conditions of a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Grant Agreement;
- (b) That the General Manager of the Planning and Economic Development Department be authorized and directed to execute a Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Grant Agreement together with any ancillary documentation required, to give effect to the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Grant for Victoria Park Community Homes Inc., owner of the property 60 Caledon Avenue, Hamilton in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor;
- (c) That the General Manager of the Planning and Economic Development Department be authorized and directed to administer the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Grant Agreement including but not limited to: deciding on actions to take in respect of events of default and executing any Grant Amending Agreements, together with any ancillary amending documentation, if required, provided that the terms and conditions of the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design Grant, as approved by City Council, are maintained and that any applicable Grant Amending Agreements are undertaken in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

12. Revitalizing Hamilton Tax Increment Grant Program Application - 165 James Street South, Hamilton (PED24164) (Ward 2) (Item 10.9)

- (a) That the Revitalizing Hamilton Tax Increment Grant Program Application submitted by James Hughson Inc., as General Partner for, James Hughson Limited Partnership (Core Urban Inc.), for the property at 165 James Street South, Hamilton, estimated to total \$1,227,264 over a maximum of four years based on the incremental tax increase attributable to the redevelopment of 165 James Street South, Hamilton, be authorized and approved in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Revitalizing Hamilton Tax Increment Grant Program;
- (b) That the General Manager of the Planning and Economic Development Department be authorized and directed to execute a Grant Agreement together with any ancillary documentation required, to give effect to the Revitalizing Hamilton Tax Increment Grant for James Hughson Inc., as General Partner for, James Hughson Limited Partnership (Core Urban Inc.) for the property 165 James Street South, Hamilton, in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor;

- (c) That the General Manager of the Planning and Economic Development Department be authorized and directed to administer the Grant and Grant Agreement including, but not limited to, deciding on actions to take in respect of events of default and executing any Grant Amending Agreements, together with any ancillary amending documentation, if required, provided that the terms and conditions of the Revitalizing Hamilton Tax Increment Grant Program, as approved by City Council, are maintained and that any applicable Grant Amending Agreements are undertaken in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

13. Revitalizing Hamilton Tax Increment Grant Program Application – 18 Augusta Street (PED24216) (Ward 2) (Item 10.10)

- (a) That the Revitalizing Hamilton Tax Increment Grant Program Application submitted by 1814 Augusta GP Inc., as General Partner for, 1814 Augusta Limited Partnership (Core Urban Inc.), for the property at 18 Augusta Street, Hamilton, estimated to total \$281,827 over a maximum of four years based upon the incremental tax increase attributable to the redevelopment of 18 Augusta Street, Hamilton, be authorized and approved in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Revitalizing Hamilton Tax Increment Grant Program;
- (b) That the General Manager of the Planning and Economic Development Department be authorized and directed to execute a Grant Agreement together with any ancillary documentation required, to give effect to the Revitalizing Hamilton Tax Increment Grant for 1814 Augusta GP Inc., as General Partner for, 1814 Augusta Limited Partnership (Core Urban Inc.) for the property 18 Augusta Street, Hamilton, in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor;
- (c) That the General Manager of the Planning and Economic Development Department be authorized and directed to administer the Grant and Grant Agreement including, but not limited to, deciding on actions to take in respect of events of default and executing any Grant Amending Agreements, together with any ancillary amending documentation, if required, provided that the terms and conditions of the Revitalizing Hamilton Tax Increment Grant Program, as approved by City Council, are maintained and that any applicable Grant Amending Agreements are undertaken in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

14. Barton/Kenilworth Tax Increment Grant Program Application - 588 Barton Street East (PED24218) (Ward 3) (Item 10.11)

- (a) That the Barton/Kenilworth Tax Increment Grant Program Application submitted by 1000193008 Ontario Inc. (Ken Bekendam), for the property at 588 Barton Street East, Hamilton, estimated at \$79,156 over a maximum of nine years based upon the incremental tax increase attributable to the redevelopment of 588 Barton Street East, Hamilton, be authorized and approved in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Barton/Kenilworth Tax Increment Grant Program;
- (b) That the General Manager of the Planning and Economic Development Department be authorized and directed to execute a Grant Agreement together with any ancillary documentation required, to give effect to the Barton/Kenilworth Tax Increment Grant for 1000193008 Ontario Inc. (Ken Bekendam) for the property 588 Barton Street East, Hamilton, in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor;
- (c) That the General Manager of the Planning and Economic Development Department be authorized and directed to administer the Grant and Grant Agreement including, but not limited to, deciding on actions to take in respect of events of default and executing any Grant Amending Agreements, together with any ancillary amending documentation, if required, provided that the terms and conditions of the Barton/Kenilworth Tax Increment Grant Program, as approved by City Council, are maintained and that any applicable Grant Amending Agreements are undertaken in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

15. Concession Street Business Improvement Area 2025 Budget and Schedule of Payments (PED24217) (Ward 7) (Item 10.12)

- (a) That the 2025 Operating Budget for the Concession Street Business Improvement Area, attached as Appendix "D" to General Issues Committee Report 24-021, in the amount of \$292,710 be approved;
- (b) That the levy portion of the Operating Budget for the Concession Street Business Improvement Area in the amount of \$217,710 be approved;
- (c) That the General Manager of Finance and Corporate Services be hereby authorized and directed to prepare the requisite By-law pursuant to Section 208, The *Municipal Act, 2001*, to levy the 2025 Budget as referenced in Recommendation of Report PED24217;

(d) That the following schedule of payments for 2025 be approved:

(i) January \$108,855;

(ii) June \$108,855;

Note: Assessment appeals may be deducted from the levy payments.

16. Elections Administration Audit – Management Responses (AUD23008(a)) (City Wide) – REVISED (Item 10.13)

(a) That the Management Action Plans, as detailed in Appendix “E” of General Issues Committee Report 24-021 be approved; and,

(b) That the City Clerk be requested to implement the Management Action Plans (attached as Appendix “E” to General Issues Committee Report 24-021 and report back to the Audit, Finance and Administration Committee by December 2025 on the nature and status of actions taken in response to the audit report.

17. Neighbourhood Protect Grant (Ward 9) (Item 11.1)

WHEREAS, there has been an increase in property crimes in Upper Stoney Creek;

WHEREAS, police have advised that awareness and individual property security does help deter criminals;

WHEREAS, local residents worked with their own funding to create a new Neighbourhood Protect serving Valley Park, Felker, Highland and Trinity-Upper Stoney Creek;

WHEREAS, local residents are walking door to door to deliver flyers promoting the new program; and,

WHEREAS, Neighbourhood Protect is the new Neighbourhood Watch program designed to create crime awareness in local neighbourhoods, (www.neighbourhoodprotect.ca);

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

That a grant be provided to Ward 9 Neighbourhood Protect in the amount of \$5,000 to be funded from the GFL Landfill Royalties Fund.

18. To Effect Grant Payment Under an Approved Hamilton Tax Increment Grant Program for 60 King William Street Hamilton as a Result of a Change in Corporate Control of the Approved Owner (Item 11.2)

WHEREAS, the Hamilton Tax Increment Grant Program (now known as the Revitalizing Hamilton Tax Increment Grant Program) (the Program) is intended to provide tax increment-based grants to incentivize property owners within strategic commercial districts to develop, redevelop or otherwise improve properties and/or buildings in a manner that will support the broader revitalization of the commercial district as well as generate new municipal property tax revenue through increased property assessments;

WHEREAS, a Hamilton Tax Increment Grant Program application was approved by City Council on May 26, 2021 respecting the redevelopment of 43-51 King Street East and 60 King William Street Hamilton (now wholly municipally known as 60 King William Street, Hamilton) (the Site);

WHEREAS, the application was approved such that grants were payable to the registered owner of the Site being King William Residences Inc (the Owner) which at the time comprised the following shareholders: LPF Conversion Fund Limited Partnership – LIUNA Conversion Trust (99.49%); Burrstone Management Inc. (0.50%); and Bryton Capital Corp. GP Ltd. (General Partner – 0.01%);

WHEREAS, the Owner of the Site remains unchanged but has been the subject of a change in share ownership such that the shareholder of the Owner is now 43-51 King William GP Inc. (100%);

WHEREAS, paragraph 13 of the applicable City Council approved Program terms state the following:

“Where the Applicant is a corporation, the Applicant covenants and agrees that in the event that:

- (a) the Applicant fails to supply the City, in a form satisfactory to the City such information relating to the ownership of its shares as the City may from time to time require or;
- (b) without the written consent of the City first had and obtained:
 - (i) the Applicant issues or redeems any of its shares or transfers any of its shares;
 - (ii) there is a sale or sales of the shares of the Applicant which result in the transfer of the legal or beneficial interest of any of the shares of the Applicant or;

- (iii) the Applicant amalgamates, merges or consolidates with any other corporation;

and, the result of any of the foregoing is a change in the effective control of the majority of the voting shares of the Applicant, or the requested information is not provided, then future Grant payments under the Program shall cease at the absolute discretion of the City.”

WHEREAS, City legal staff deem the change in share ownership to be a change in the effective control of the majority shareholders without the Owner having sought prior written consent by the City in accordance with paragraph 13, resulting in the cessation of any pending and future grant payments.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

That, notwithstanding paragraph 13 of the applicable Program terms, the General Manager of the Planning and Economic Development Department be authorized to approve and execute the required Grant Agreement to effect grant payment in a form reflecting the current share ownership of the property known as 60 King William St, being 43-51 King William GP Inc. (100%) provided all other terms and conditions of the Hamilton Tax Increment Grant Program, as approved by City Council, are maintained.

19. 2025 Temporary Outdoor Patio Program With Traffic Control Plans And Control Measures (Item 11.3)

WHEREAS, the City of Hamilton first launched the temporary On-Street Patio Pilot Program in 2016, which became the permanent Temporary Outdoor Patio Program in 2022;

WHEREAS, the Temporary Outdoor Patio Program provides an opportunity for restaurants and cafes to open temporary outdoor patios in on-street parking spaces, off-street parking lots, sidewalks, alleyways and boulevards;

WHEREAS, the Temporary Outdoor Patio Program provides an important opportunity for local restaurants and cafes to increase their capacity through outdoor dining, and also helps to animate local commercial areas;

WHEREAS, during COVID, the City waived all applicable City fees for the Temporary Outdoor Patio Program in order to support economic recovery;

WHEREAS, in 2022 the Ontario Traffic Council (OTC) issued guidelines for Restaurant Patios within the Right of Way which recommended enhanced traffic control measures and safety devices, which the City subsequently incorporated as a local practice for the patio program;

WHEREAS, in 2023 business owners again became responsible for some costs of the program including costs associated with the occupancy of metered parking spaces, patio set-up and installation of crash barriers, with Council approval to continue to waive other safety device installation costs (traffic control plans, signs and delineators) and the program application fees;

WHEREAS, local restaurants and cafes continue to be impacted by reduced business as a result of hybrid working and reduced foot traffic in some of our commercial areas; and

WHEREAS, at the General Issues Committee Budget meeting of January 30, 2024, staff were directed to investigate and report back on any potential savings that may exist in transferring the event coordination responsibilities to in-house from the current SEAT model, and identify the resources (staffing, material and vehicle costs) and processes required for a cross-departmental City of Hamilton Team to facilitate all processes, including development, approval, and implementation of Traffic Control Plans for temporary closures needed by Event Organizers as part of this review.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

- (a) That the General Managers of Public Works and Planning and Economic Development, be directed to include in their report back to the General Issues Committee respecting Internal Facilitation of Restaurant Patios within the Right of Way per the Ontario Traffic Council (OTC) Guidelines, per the following additional items:
 - (i) The resources (staffing, material and vehicle costs) and processes required for a cross-departmental City of Hamilton Team to facilitate the installation of Traffic Control Plans associated with the Temporary Outdoor Patio Program;
 - (ii) Identify any potential savings that may exist in transferring the responsibility for installing all Traffic Control Devices (safety devices including crash barriers) associated with the Temporary Outdoor Patio Program for set-up of patios on the City road allowance, from business owners to the City;
 - (iii) Provide a jurisdiction scan on the adoption of the 2022 Ontario Traffic Council (OTC) issued guidelines for Restaurant Patios within the Right of Way requirements by other municipalities;
 - (iii) Input from Legal & Risk Management Services Division respecting risks, liability and insurance costs; and
 - (iv) That local businesses be responsible for covering all other costs associated with the Temporary Outdoor Patio Program.

20. Encampment Litigation Update (LS20023(k)) (City Wide) (Added Item 14.2)

That Report LS20023(k), respecting Encampment Litigation Update, be received and remain confidential.

21. National Steel Car Litigation Update (LS23019(b)) (City Wide) (Added Item 14.3)

(a) That the directions provided to staff in Closed Session, respecting Report LS23019(b), National Steel Car Litigation Update, be approved and remain confidential; and,

(b) That Report LS23019(b) and Appendix "A" to Report LS23019(b), respecting National Steel Car Litigation Update, remain confidential.

22. General Litigation Update (LS23027(c)) (City Wide) (Added Item 14.4)

(a) That the directions provided to staff in Closed Session respecting Report LS23027(c), General Litigation Update, be approved and remain confidential; and,

(b) That Report LS23027(c), respecting General Litigation Update and all Appendices remain confidential.

23. Charges under the Ontario Water Resources Act (LS24024) (Ward 3) (Added Item 14.5)

That Report LS24024, respecting Charges under the Ontario Water Resources Act, be received and remain confidential.

FOR INFORMATION:

(a) APPROVAL OF AGENDA (Item 2)

The Committee Clerk advised of the following changes to the agenda:

5. COMMUNICATIONS

- 5.1 Correspondence from Shelley Rempel, on behalf of the Climate Change Advisory Committee respecting Item 8.1 - 2024 City-Led Projects Recommended for Climate Change Reserve Funding (PED24165) (City Wide)

Recommendation: Be received and referred to consideration of Item 8.1.

6. DELEGATION REQUESTS

- 6.2 Alex Sears, respecting things from the cyber attack (In-Person) (For a future meeting)
- 6.3 Greg Dunnett, Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, respecting Item 10.5 - Downtown Hamilton Office and Storefront Commercial Sector Update and Action Report (PED24163) (In-Person) (For today's meeting)

10. DISCUSSION ITEMS

- 10.13 Elections Administration Audit – Management Responses (AUD23008(a)) (City Wide) - REVISED

12. NOTICES OF MOTION

- 12.1 Support for Local Christian Faith Groups, Families and Individuals as they Celebrate Christian Heritage Month

13. GENERAL INFORMATION / OTHER BUSINESS

- 13.1 Amendments to the Outstanding Business List:

- (a) Items Considered Complete and Needing to be Removed:

City Parks with Active Construction Projects as it Relates to the Encampment Protocol

OBL Item: GIC-07/08/24-11.7

Completed: August 12, 2024 at GIC (Item 10.4 - Appendix B)

Agreement regarding Access to Hamilton/Burlington Piers (PED21064(a)/PW22075) (CW)

Added: September 21, 2022 at GIC

Completed: October 16, 2024 at GIC (Item 10.1)

Parkland Acquisition Strategy

Added: June 19, 2019

Completed: October 4, 2023 at GIC (Item 8.1)

- (b) Items Requiring a New Due Date:

Stairs at Grant Boulevard, Hamilton (Ward 13)

Added: April 5, 2023 at GIC

Current Due Date: June 30, 2024

Proposed New Due Date: February 2025

14. PRIVATE AND CONFIDENTIAL

- 14.2 Encampment Litigation Update (LS20023(k)) (City Wide)
- 14.3 National Steel Car Litigation Update (LS23019(b)) (City Wide)
- 14.4 General Litigation Update (LS23027(c)) (City Wide)
- 14.5 Charges under the Ontario Water Resources Act (LS24024) (Ward 3)

The agenda for the December 4, 2024 General Issues Committee meeting, was approved, as amended.

(b) DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (Item 3)

Councillor M. Spadafora declared a disqualifying interest to Item 10.2 – User Fee Framework – Project Overview (HSC24049) (City Wide), respecting User Group Ice Rates and winter programs, as he rents ice time.

(c) APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS (Item 4)

(i) November 20, 2024 (Item 4.1)

The minutes of the November 20, 2024 General Issues Committee, were approved, as presented.

(d) COMMUNICATIONS (Item 5)

(i) The following Communications Item, be approved, as presented:

- (1)** Correspondence from Shelley Rempel, on behalf of the Climate Change Advisory Committee respecting Item 8.1 - 2024 City-Led Projects Recommended for Climate Change Reserve Funding (PED24165) (City Wide) (Added Item 5.1)

Recommendation: Be received and referred to consideration of Item 8.1.

(e) DELEGATION REQUESTS (Item 6)

(i) The following Delegation Requests, were approved, as presented:

- (1)** Delegation requests respecting the report on potential alternative municipal revenue streams, for a future meeting, from the following individuals (Item 6.1):

- (a)** Eddie Sheppard, Abacus Data (In-Person) (Item 6.1(a))

(b) Julie Sergi, Cornerstone Association of Realtors (In-Person)
(Item 6.1(b))

(2) Alex Sears, respecting things from the cyber attack (In-Person) (For a future meeting) (Added Item 6.2)

(3) Greg Dunnett, Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, respecting Item 10.5 - Downtown Hamilton Office and Storefront Commercial Sector Update and Action Report (PED24163) (In-Person) (For today's meeting) (Added Item 6.3)

(f) DELEGATIONS (Item 7)

(i) Greg Dunnett, Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, respecting Item 10.5 - Downtown Hamilton Office and Storefront Commercial Sector Update and Action Report (PED24163) (In-Person) (For today's meeting) (Added Item 7.1)

Greg Dunnett, Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, addressed the Committee respecting Item 10.5 - Downtown Hamilton Office and Storefront Commercial Sector Update and Action Report (PED24163).

The delegation from Greg Dunnett, Hamilton Chamber of Commerce, respecting Item 10.5 - Downtown Hamilton Office and Storefront Commercial Sector Update and Action Report (PED24163), was received.

(g) STAFF PRESENTATIONS (Item 8)

(i) 2024 City-Led Projects Recommended for Climate Change Reserve Funding (PED24165) (City Wide) (Item 8.1)

Lynda Lukasik, Director, Climate Change Initiatives, provided Committee with the presentation on Report PED24165, respecting the 2024 City-Led Projects Recommended for Climate Change Reserve Funding.

The staff presentation respecting Report PED24165, the 2024 City-Led Projects Recommended for Climate Change Reserve Funding, was received.

For disposition of this matter, refer to Item 1.

(h) **DISCUSSION ITEMS (Item 8)**

(i) **User Fee Framework – Project Overview (HSC24049) (City-Wide) (Item 10.2)**

The Report was put on the floor as follows:

- (1) (a) That Council endorse the project approach and timelines of the User Fee Framework project as detailed in Report HSC24049; and,
- (b) That up to \$250 K from the Tax Stabilization Reserve (110046) be allocated to fund the consultant and works required for the User Fee Framework project.

The following REFERRAL motion was defeated:

- (2) (a) That Report HSC24049, respecting User Fee Framework – Project Overview be **REFERRED** back to staff for options to develop a plan for the work to be done internally and report back to the General Issues Committee; and,
- (b) That the report back extend the scope to include all financial fees/relationships with citizens that are charged by the City that are not prescribed by legislation.

For disposition of this matter, refer to Item 5.

(ii) **Recess**

The General Issues Committee recessed for 33 minutes until 1:20 p.m.

The General Issues Committee Meeting reconvened at 1:22 p.m.

(iii) **Downtown Hamilton Office and Storefront Commercial Sector Update and Action Report (PED24163) (Ward 2) (Item 10.5)**

The Report was put on the floor as follows:

- (1) (a) That the Economic Development Division staff be directed to develop a 10-Year Downtown Revitalization Strategy utilizing funding from the Economic Development Initiatives Capital Project (3621708900) for consultant related costs and that the draft Strategy be brought to a General Issues Committee for consideration before the end of 2025;

- (b) That staff be directed to incorporate future Downtown office and commercial sector updates into a new annual State of the Downtown Report, prepared by Economic Development Division staff and provided to the General Issues Committee annually, to provide a more comprehensive and wholistic review and update on the Downtown including annual reporting on key metrics to be identified as part of the 10-Year Downtown Revitalization Strategy;
 - (c) That staff be directed to develop a pilot Downtown Office to Residential Conversion Financial Incentive Program, to be funded from existing annual budget allocations to the Economic Development Division, and that the draft Program be brought forward for consideration to a General Issues Committee meeting in the first quarter of 2025; and,
 - (d) That existing Graffiti Removal Grants on private property under the Commercial District Revitalization Grant Program, introduced as a pilot in September 2023 and scheduled to end on March 31, 2025, be made permanent and funded on a go-forward basis from existing annual budget allocations to the Economic Development Division for the provision of non-tax increment based financial incentive programs.
- (2) That sub-section (a) to Report PED24163, respecting Downtown Hamilton Office and Storefront Commercial Sector Update and Action Report, **be amended**, as follows:
- (a) That the Economic Development Division staff be directed to develop a 10-Year Downtown Revitalization Strategy utilizing funding from the Economic Development Initiatives Capital Project (3621708900) **up to an upset limit of \$100,000** for consultant related costs and that the draft Strategy be brought to a General Issues Committee for consideration before the end of 2025;
- (3) That Report PED24163, respecting Downtown Hamilton Office and Storefront Commercial Sector Update and Action Report, **be amended**, by adding sub-section (e), as follows:
- (e) ***That staff be directed to report back to the General Issues Committee in Q2 2025 with an interim report respecting the principles that will inform the actions of the strategy.***

For disposition of this matter, refer to Item 8.

(iv) **Public Bike Share Program Phased Procurement Process – Sustainable Operations Model and Funding (PED20109(f)) (City Wide) (Item 10.6)**

The Report was put on the floor as follows:

- (1) (a) That the Hamilton Bike Share system and City of Hamilton Partnership Model approach which includes a City contribution toward operating and asset management costs to increase financial sustainability, maintain and improve service delivery and build in asset management considerations be extended until December 31, 2027;
- (b) That the annual budget be increased by \$258,000 for a total of \$744,000 to support the operating costs of the Hamilton Bike Share system be approved, endorsed and referred to the 2026 and 2027 Operating Budgets;
- (c) That upon approval by Council of the budget enhancement identified in Recommendation (b) that Council authorizes, directs and delegates authority to the General Manager, Planning and Economic Development Department to execute, on behalf of the City of Hamilton, the necessary agreements to amend and extend the existing contract with the current not-for-profit operator, Hamilton Bike Share Inc., to include the following:
 - (i) extended term of the agreement from December 31, 2025 to December 31, 2027;
 - (ii) requirement for annual reporting by Hamilton Bike Share Inc. to the City, including an annual operating and financial report.

Deputy Mayor Beattie relinquished the Chair to Councillor Clark to introduce the following motion:

- (2) Deputy Mayor Beattie WITHDREW the following motion:

That Report PED20109(f), respecting Public Bike Share Program Phased Procurement Process – Sustainable Operations Model and Funding be **REFERRED** back to staff for report back to the General Issues Committee by Q2 2025 on the current and future operation of Hamilton Bike Share including ridership trends, costs associated with current and future growth plans, as well as detailed financial statements.

For disposition of this matter, refer to Item 9.

Councillor Beattie assumed the Chair.

(i) NOTICES OF MOTION (Item 12)

Councillor Pauls introduced the following Notice of Motion for the December 11, 2024 Council meeting:

(i) Support for Local Christian Faith Groups, Families and Individuals as they Celebrate Christian Heritage Month (Added Item 11.4)

WHEREAS, it is the stated objective of Hamilton faith groups to promote love, diversity, and inclusion;

WHEREAS, Hamilton wishes to celebrate its role in creating and maintaining an open dialogue among people from different faiths, beliefs, and creeds;

WHEREAS, December is associated with the tradition of gift giving and the gathering of family, friends, and people of all faiths;

WHEREAS, Christian organizations and places of worship in Hamilton offer religious services, unique events, and initiatives that highlight a strong Christian heritage during December;

WHEREAS, Christian faith groups in Hamilton embody the beautiful and diverse threads that mirror the Canadian social fabric;

WHEREAS, throughout Canada, in each year, the month of December is to be known as “Christian Heritage Month” when Christians around the world prepare for their annual celebrations commemorating the birth of Jesus Christ; also known as Christmas. During this time, Christian faith groups utilize literature, art, music, gastronomy, and architecture to tell the stories of Jesus and his compassion, love, acceptance and the Good News of the Gospel he brought;

WHEREAS, Christianity is the most followed religion in our country, with more than half of the Canadian population identifying as members of the Christian faith. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms even mentions God in its very first sentence; and

WHEREAS, there are at least 35 Municipalities across Canada who have endorsed December as Christian Heritage Month including adjacent municipalities like Toronto, Burlington, Brantford and Niagara Falls.

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

That the City of Hamilton supports local Christian faith groups, families and individuals as they celebrate Christian Heritage Month.

Councillor Danko introduced the following Notice of Motion:

(ii) Adherence to the Encampment Protocol as Revised and Approved By Council June 2024

WHEREAS the City of Hamilton Encampment Protocol was Revised and Approved by Council in June 2024;

WHEREAS the Encampment Protocol contains specific definitions for prohibited areas for erecting encampments, temporary shelters, or tents, which includes prohibited distances to various public amenities and prohibitions for areas with any heritage designation.

WHEREAS the Encampment Protocol contains specific provisions that prohibit campfire, barbecue use and open air burning.

WHEREAS the Encampment Protocol contains specific provisions for the City's Encampment response process that includes defined procedures and timelines for enforcement when an encampment, temporary shelter, or tent is located on public property, within a prohibited area, as defined by the Protocol.

WHEREAS the Encampment Protocol is a public document and residents trust the City of Hamilton to adhere to the approved provisions as written and intended.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED:

That City of Hamilton staff adhere to the defined provisions of the Encampment Protocol as revised and approved by Hamilton City Council in June 2024, including section D) Prohibited Areas for Erecting Encampments, Temporary Shelters, or Tents, section E) Campfire and Barbecue Use and section G) II Encampment Response Processes, when an encampment, temporary shelter, or tent is located on public property, within a prohibited area, as defined by this Protocol.

(j) GENERAL INFORMATION / OTHER BUSINESS (Item 13)

(i) Amendments to the Outstanding Business List (Added Item 13.1):

The Amendments to the Outstanding Business List, were approved, as follows:

(a) Items Considered Complete and Needing to be Removed (Added Item 13.1(a)):

City Parks with Active Construction Projects as it Relates to the Encampment Protocol

OBL Item: GIC-07/08/24-11.7

Completed: August 12, 2024 at GIC (Item 10.4 - Appendix B)

Agreement regarding Access to Hamilton/Burlington Piers (PED21064(a)/PW22075) (CW)

Added: September 21, 2022 at GIC

Completed: October 16, 2024 at GIC (Item 10.1)

Parkland Acquisition Strategy

Added: June 19, 2019

Completed: October 4, 2023 at GIC (Item 8.1)

(b) Items Requiring a New Due Date (Added Item 13.1(b)):

Stairs at Grant Boulevard, Hamilton (Ward 13)

Added: April 5, 2023 at GIC

Current Due Date: June 30, 2024

Proposed New Due Date: February 2025

(k) PRIVATE & CONFIDENTIAL (Item 14)

Committee determined that discussion of Item 14.1 was not required in Closed Session; therefore, the matter was addressed in Open Session, as follows:

(i) Closed Session Minutes – November 20, 2024 (Item 14.1)

The Closed Session minutes of the November 20, 2024 General Issues Committee meeting, were approved and remain confidential.

- (ii) Committee moved into Closed Session for Items 14.2, 14.3, 14.4 and 14.5, pursuant to Section 9.3, Sub-Sections (b), (e), (f) and (k) of the City's Procedural By-law 21-021, as amended, and Section 239(2), Sub-sections (b), (e), (f) and (k) of the *Ontario Municipal Act, 2001*, as amended, as the subject matter pertains to personal matters about an identifiable individual, including City or local board employees; litigation or potential litigation, including matters before administrative tribunals, affecting the City or a local board; advice that is subject to solicitor-client privilege, including communications necessary for that purpose; and a position, plan, procedure, criteria or instruction to be applied to any negotiations carried on or to be carried on by or on behalf of the municipality or local board.

The General Issues Committee meeting reconvened in Open Session at 6:51 p.m.

- (iii) **Encampment Litigation Update (LS20023(k)) (City Wide) (Added Item 14.2)**

For disposition of this matter, refer to Item 20.

- (iv) **National Steel Car Litigation Update (LS23019(b)) (City Wide) (Added Item 14.3)**

For disposition of this matter, refer to Item 21.

- (v) **General Litigation Update (LS23027(c)) (City Wide) (Added Item 14.4)**

For disposition of this matter, refer to Item 22.

- (vi) **Charges under the Ontario Water Resources Act (LS24024) (Ward 3) (Added Item 14.5)**

For disposition of this matter, refer to Item 23.

(I) ADJOURNMENT (Item 15)

There being no further business, the General Issues Committee adjourned at 6:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Deputy Mayor Jeff Beattie
Chair, General Issues Committee

Angela McRae
Legislative Coordinator
Office of the City Clerk

APPENDIX “A” City-Led Projects Recommended to Receive 2024 Climate Change Reserve Funding

Project Title /Applicant	Summary Description	Funding
<p>Macassa Lodge B Wing Expansion – Climate Resilience Measures</p> <p>Office of Energy Initiatives, Public Works</p>	<p>CLIMATE MITIGATION INITIATIVE</p> <p>This 65,000 square foot expansion to the existing Macassa Lodge Long Term Care Facility (236,000 square feet) will accommodate 20 existing residents and an additional 44 residents. Reserve funding will contribute to a larger pot of funding to enable the incorporation of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air Source Heat Pump Technology for building space heating and domestic hot water generation. • Enthalpy wheel heat recovery to reduce ventilation energy consumption. • High performance building envelope including high performance windows and increased wall and roof insulation. • Variable speed hydronic pumping systems, to reduce energy consumption by reducing speed of the pump in response to reduce volume demand. • Variable speed fan systems, to reduce energy consumption by reducing speed of the fan in response to reduced air volume demand. <p>Continue to investigate emerging technology opportunities to include in the design as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Solar Photovoltaic panels • Solar Wall technology • Low intensity development stormwater management • Light Harvesting <p>Full project implementation will result in a 74% reduction in natural gas consumption resulting in an annual greenhouse gas emission reduction of 157.2 tCO₂e.</p> <p>Relevant Climate Action Strategy Actions Climate Mitigation Plan: Supports actions found under the ‘Transforming Our Buildings’ transformation category. The Plan’s Low Carbon Scenario calls for: -Reducing energy intensity in all municipal buildings by 60% by 2050. -By 2050 all new municipal buildings achieve net zero emissions.</p>	<p>\$200,000</p>

Project Title /Applicant	Summary Description	Funding
	<p>-By 2050, 50% of municipal buildings will add rooftop solar PV, covering 30% of the building’s electrical load.</p>	
<p>Recreation Centre Pool Heat Reclamation</p> <p>Office of Energy Initiatives, Public Works</p>	<p>CLIMATE MITIGATION INITIATIVE</p> <p>This project is a piloting of technology new to the municipality and will see installation of a heat reclamation system in Riverdale & Huntington Park indoor pools. Waste heat will be captured from the required draining of heated water to run through a heat exchanger and transfer the heat to the incoming make-up water. This process will decrease the amount of natural gas needed to heat the make-up water, thereby reducing natural gas consumption and associated greenhouse gas emissions.</p> <p>Implementation of a heat reclamation system for the Riverdale and Huntington Park municipal indoor pools will result in an estimated 22 tCO_{2e} annual reduction in greenhouse gas emissions through reduced natural gas consumption.</p> <p>Relevant Climate Action Strategy Actions Climate Mitigation Plan: Supports actions found under the ‘Transforming Our Buildings’ transformation category. The Plan’s Low Carbon Scenario calls for: -reducing energy intensity in all municipal buildings by 60% by 2050.</p>	<p>\$225,000</p>
<p>EcoDiesel Fuel Replacement Program</p> <p>Fleet Services, Public Works</p>	<p>CLIMATE MITIGATION INITIATIVE</p> <p>This request is for funds to purchase Petro-Canada EcoDiesel™ to replace the current biodiesel used to operate City vehicles and equipment. Petro-Canada EcoDiesel™ is a newly developed product made with hydrotreated renewable diesel. Hydrotreated renewable diesel is an alternative fuel produced from renewable materials like virgin seed oils, tallow, and used cooking oil. The final product is a high-quality, low-carbon intensity, renewable diesel. It can reduce GHG emissions by up to 60% compared to conventional biodiesel. This is a new, innovative product that expands on the City’s use of biodiesel to dramatically reduce</p>	<p>\$185,000</p>

Project Title /Applicant	Summary Description	Funding
	<p>GHG emissions in the short term.</p> <p>Funding is for the purchase of 3 million litres of EcoDiesel fuel, enabling a greenhouse gas emission reduction of approximately 6,593 tCO₂e when used to replace conventional biodiesel. Fuel switching is a quick way to realize greenhouse gas emission reductions.</p> <p>Relevant Climate Action Strategy Actions Climate Mitigation Plan: Action 10 - Establish then implement a city-wide EV Strategy (residential, commercial, and municipal) (City's Green Fleet Strategy includes transitional steps via low carbon fuels to get the fleet to EV status over time)</p>	
<p>Solar Powered Ambulance Fleet</p> <p>Hamilton Paramedic Services</p>	<p>CLIMATE MITIGATION INITIATIVE</p> <p>This project will enable the piloting of an innovative solar panel system designed for ambulances. Since ambulances draw continual power to ensure the pharmaceuticals and medical diagnostic equipment within the vehicle are in a temperature-controlled environment, and that patients are comfortable, the vehicle must be plugged in or running to maintain battery capacity. When inside a designated station, shore power plugs are provided for this purpose. When outside shore power is not available. Installing solar panels on vehicles will enable the auxiliary batteries to continue to run on solar power rather than on fuel thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions generated from constantly idling vehicles. By retrofitting the fleet of 59 ambulances with solar panels, this directly advances renewable energy use within the City's corporate fleet and reduces fuel consumption from vehicle idling. The initiative also brings the co-benefit of reducing air emissions at hospital emergency areas.</p> <p>It is anticipated that a reduction of more than 160 tCO₂e will be realized annually with the implementation of these specialized solar panels on all 57 ambulances in the fleet.</p>	<p>\$240,000</p>

Project Title /Applicant	Summary Description	Funding
	<p>Relevant Climate Action Strategy Actions Climate Mitigation Plan: Action 10 – Establish then implement a city-wide EV Strategy (residential, commercial, and municipal)</p>	
<p>Electric Street Sweeper Transportation Division, Public Works</p>	<p>CLIMATE MITIGATION INITIATIVE The all-electric Bucher CityCat VR50e street sweeper has a custom-designed Bucher Battery Pack tailored to the sweeper. This proven technology will reduce the City’s environmental footprint while achieving low noise emissions and meeting Council approved initiatives, climate goals and downtown cleanliness. There are no greenhouse gas emissions with this vehicle versus a conventional sweeper which contributes ~89 tCO2e/year. Climate Reserve funding will cover the cost difference between a regular sweeper and the all-electric model.</p> <p>Relevant Climate Action Strategy Actions Climate Mitigation Plan: Action 10 - Establish then implement a city-wide Electric Vehicle Strategy (residential, commercial, and municipal)</p>	<p>\$120,000</p>
<p>Electric Maintenance Vehicles Transportation Division, Public Works</p>	<p>CLIMATE MITIGATION INITIATIVE Funding will enable the purchase of one electric bike lane sweeping vehicle and one electric bike lane inspection vehicle and the associated charging infrastructure for these vehicles. The City currently does not have cycling lane sweepers or inspection vehicles and so does not have comparative greenhouse gas emissions data; however, our sidewalk sweepers generate approximately 486 tonnes/year (via consumption of 180,000L of diesel). These emissions could be entirely avoided by the purchase and use of electric alternatives.</p> <p>Relevant Climate Action Strategy Actions Climate Mitigation Plan: Action 10 – Establish then implement a city-wide EV Strategy (residential, commercial, and</p>	<p>\$403,000</p>

Project Title /Applicant	Summary Description	Funding
	municipal)	
<p>Making NFP Housing Climate Resilient</p> <p>Housing Secretariat, Healthy & Safe Communities</p>	<p>CLIMATE MITIGATION/ADAPTATION INITIATIVE</p> <p>This project will support up to six social housing pilot projects with additional funding secured through the Climate Change Reserve to implement additional measures to enhance climate mitigation and adaptation features. These are projects that are emerging as part of the Housing Accelerator Fund work that is being administered by the City's Housing Secretariat.</p> <p>Any realized greenhouse gas emissions cannot be determined until the funding is allocated to up to six social housing projects.</p> <p>Relevant Climate Action Strategy Actions Climate Mitigation: Action 6c: Finance and deliver mass deep energy retrofit program for the residential sector, scaling up to city-wide program considering development of a commercial retrofit program Climate Change Impact Adaptation Plan: Action 3.4 - Align ongoing efforts within the City to continue expanding affordable housing to protect vulnerable populations to reduce climate-related impacts from extreme weather and temperatures</p>	<p>\$250,000</p>
<p>Development Incentive Program for Bayfront Industrial Area</p> <p>Economic Development Division, Planning & Economic Development</p>	<p>CLIMATE MITIGATION/ADAPTATION INITIATIVE</p> <p>The Bayfront Industrial Area Retrofit Grant is intended to assist building owners that cannot financially justify the investment needed for deep retrofits and/or that have not considered the long-term benefits of such a retrofit. The Bayfront Industrial Area needs a catalyst to initiate this change to support future private investment. Through the Economic Development Division's current Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Community Improvement Plan comprehensive review, staff are seeking to develop and implement a new program to support sustainable retrofits of these buildings within the Bayfront Industrial Area. Staff have identified this gap in current program offerings as retrofits of existing buildings generally do not result in</p>	<p>\$250,000</p>

Project Title /Applicant	Summary Description	Funding
	<p>meaningful tax uplift to the City, which is the existing source of funding under the current Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) Community Improvement Plan tax increment program (i.e. no new tax revenue means no grant to support sustainability efforts).</p> <p>Relevant Climate Action Strategy Actions Climate Mitigation Plan: Action 6c - Finance and deliver mass deep energy retrofit program for the residential sector, scaling up to city-wide program considering development of a commercial retrofit program Climate Change Impact Adaptation Plan: Action 10.1 - Provide guidance to local businesses on how to maintain business continuity (e.g. supply chain) during extreme weather (i.e. through business continuity planning, green business practices, adaptation measures, etc.)</p>	
<p>Low Impact Development/ Green Standards Training & Implementation</p> <p>Growth Management Division, Planning & Economic Development</p>	<p>CLIMATE MITIGATION/ADAPTATION INITIATIVE</p> <p>Funding will assist with implementation of the Low Impact Development Site Servicing Guidelines through the designation of funds for a training program for internal staff and external consultants. Site Servicing Guidelines will be applicable to all future site plan control applications once the guidelines are in place. Therefore, there is a need to ensure that both staff and external consultants are fully trained on the implementation of the guidelines. Applying the Site Servicing Guidelines to both the preparation and the review / approval of site plan control applications will be a new process for all involved. Applicants will be required to provide documentation of how the Site Servicing Guidelines are applied within the application, including the design criteria for the subject site (targets), the description of Low Impact Development Best Management Plan measures, operation and maintenance requirements and a Site Works Certificate Form. City staff will be required to review this information and determine if the appropriate design criteria are being utilized.</p> <p>Relevant Climate Action Strategy Actions</p>	<p>\$50,000</p>

Project Title /Applicant	Summary Description	Funding
	<p><i>Climate Change Impact Adaptation Plan:</i> Action 1.1 - Develop requirements for the incorporation of Low Impact Development (LID) features and green infrastructure into new development and redevelopment projects and consider watershed and landscape scales in the development of plans and objectives.</p>	
<p>If Trees Could Talk Public Education Initiative</p> <p>Forestry & Horticulture, Public Works</p>	<p>CLIMATE MITIGATION/ADAPTATION INITIATIVE</p> <p>This technology enables the development of ‘personalities’ for selected trees as a creative way to engage and communicate with residents regarding the benefits and challenges that trees can face depending on the planting environment.</p> <p>Tree data will be gathered and hosted on a publicly accessible dashboard and dedicated social media platforms and will include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Dendrometer data to monitor how trees respond to fluctuations in environmental conditions such as rainfall and drought. -Soil life sensors data to assess and forecast the impacts of climate change on the health of our urban forest. -Sap flow as an indicator of the tree's response to environmental conditions such as temperature changes. <p>These metrics all provide insight into the impacts of climate on a tree’s ability to survive and thrive, enabling staff and residents to see how climate change affects our urban forest. This information and public understanding will assist staff in better supporting the urban forest into the future and will enable residents to better understand the impacts of climate change on tree health and well-being, helping residents to better care for their own neighbourhood trees. Data generated through this project can also be made available to academic researchers and anyone else who might be interested through OpenData.</p> <p><i>Relevant Climate Action Strategy Actions</i> <i>Climate Mitigation Plan:</i> Action 23 - Set a target of 50,000 trees planted per</p>	<p>\$28,500</p>

Project Title /Applicant	Summary Description	Funding
	<p>year within City boundaries</p> <p>Climate Adaptation Plan:</p> <p>Objective 8: Monitor, maintain and improve the diversity and resiliency of urban trees and forests.</p> <p>Action 8.1: Work with local partners to continue tree planting and preservation, explore community partnerships and naturalization programs to reduce urban heat island and enhance ecosystem function.</p>	
<p>Air Conditioning in Hamilton Rental Housing – Feasibility Case Study</p> <p>CityHousing Hamilton</p>	<p>FEASIBILITY STUDY – ADAPTATION INITIATIVE</p> <p>This project involves a detailed feasibility study and the preparation of a publicly available case study that assesses the feasibility of providing in-suite air conditioning at three of CityHousing Hamilton's main building archetypes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural Gas-heated Townhouses; • Natural Gas-heated Apartment buildings; and • Electrically-heated Apartment buildings. <p>By evaluating the technical and financial implications of providing in-suite air conditioning at each of these common forms of rental housing in Hamilton, the City of Hamilton will be in a better position to understand what is necessary to support and enable future adaptation efforts associated with the climate risk of extreme heat in rental housing.</p> <p>Relevant Climate Action Strategy Actions</p> <p>Climate Change Impact Adaptation Plan:</p> <p>Action 3.3 - Coordinate local efforts to address excessive indoor temperatures in rental housing</p> <p>Action 3.4 - Align ongoing efforts within the City to continue expanding affordable housing to protect vulnerable populations to reduce climate-related impacts from extreme weather and temperatures</p>	<p>\$150,000</p>
<p>Fleet Services Electric Vehicle and GRID Feasibility Assessment</p> <p>Office of Energy Initiatives, Public Works</p>	<p>FEASIBILITY STUDY – MITIGATION INITIATIVE</p> <p>The feasibility assessment will review City facilities Fleet Services has previously identified as suitable charging locations and provide high level costing, identify any necessary electrical upgrades, and assess current available capacity. These feasibility assessments are needed because, as fleet greening efforts continue across City divisions, informed action must be taken to ensure a reliable</p>	<p>\$150,000</p>

Project Title /Applicant	Summary Description	Funding
	<p>network of vehicle charging infrastructure is available.</p> <p>Relevant Climate Action Strategy Actions Climate Mitigation Plan: Action 10 – Establish then implement a city-wide Electric Vehicle Strategy (residential, commercial, and municipal) The Plan’s Low Carbon Scenario calls for 100% of new municipal small and light-duty vehicles to be electric by 2040.</p>	
<p>Organics Management – Phase 2 Feasibility Study</p> <p>Waste Management Division, Public Works</p>	<p>FEASIBILITY STUDY – MITIGATION INITIATIVE</p> <p>The detailed feasibility study for preferred Source Separated Organics (SSO) and Leaf & Yard (L&Y) waste management options will provide valuable data including the estimated project dollar cost/tonne CO2e reduction achieved for each option. These insights can guide future decisions and strategies for the management of the City’s Organic and Leaf /Yard waste streams.</p> <p>The options being evaluated in this project have estimated Biogas Generation rates of 6,900 – 9,150 m3/hr at 60% methane. The estimated renewable natural gas (RNG) production is 173 - 229 m3/hr.</p> <p>Relevant Climate Action Strategy Actions Climate Mitigation Plan: Action 17 – Technical feasibility study of expanded anaerobic digestion facilities Action 20 - Technical + financial analysis for expanded organics collection and diversion</p>	<p>\$250,000</p>
TOTAL		\$2,501,500

Term Sheet for Municipal Housing Project Facilities Amending Agreements

90 Carling Street

Borrower: 1649626 Ontario Inc. ("1649626")

Lender: City of Hamilton ("City")

Type of Agreements: Municipal Housing Project Facilities Agreements ("MHPFAs")

Type of Loan: Forgivable loan to secure long term affordable housing commitments as set out in the Municipal Housing Project Facilities Agreements ("MHPFAs")

1. In exchange for 10 additional affordable housing units within the 90 Carling Street development project being maintained at or below 125% of CMHC Average Market Rent for a minimum of 15 years from the date of occupancy of all 20 affordable units are rented at or below 125% of CMHC Average Market Rent and entering into an Amending Municipal Housing Project Facilities Agreement with the City, the principal amount of the forgivable will be increased by \$104,150.00 representing paid Cash-in-lieu of Parkland Dedication fees for the additional 10 affordable housing units, in accordance with the requirements of Parkland By-Law 18-126 which was in effect at the time of payment, as approved by Council through Report HSC20009(a).
2. That the additional principal amount of \$104,150.00 shall not be advanced until all conditions for its advance have been satisfied including:
 - (a) 1649626 withdraws its appeal in respect the cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication fees (in OLT-21-001820), and provide a full and final release to the City respecting parkland dedication requirements for this project;
 - (b) the security for the loan in the form of a collateral mortgage be increased in the amount of \$104,150.00 and that the security remain in a priority as provided for in the terms and conditions contained in Appendix "B" to Report HSC20009 and approved by Council on April 8, 2020 ("Original Terms and Conditions")
 - (c) such other conditions as deemed appropriate by the City Solicitor and General Manager of the Healthy and Safe Communities Department.

3. That no further appeals will be filed related to cash-in-lieu of parkland dedication fees for the development and that no appeals or disputes of any fees associated with the development be made by 1649626 Ontario Inc..

4. Such other conditions as deemed appropriate by the City Solicitor and General Manager of the Healthy and Safe Communities Department.

5. All other terms and conditions contained in the Original Term sheet shall apply to the provision of 20 affordable housing units except for the amount of the financial assistance which shall be altered by paragraph 1 herein.



Hamilton's 2024 – 2028 TOURISM STRATEGY



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The Diplomat



Battlefield House Museum & Park National Historic Site



Woman With Flowers by Megan Oldhues, Gown and Gavel, Hess Village

Land Acknowledgement

The City of Hamilton is situated upon the traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee and Mississaugas. This land is covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, which was an agreement between the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabek to share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. We further acknowledge that this land is covered by the Between the Lakes Purchase, 1792, between the Crown and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation.

Today the City of Hamilton is home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island (North America) and we recognize that we must do more to learn about the rich history of this land so that we can better understand our roles as residents, neighbours, partners and caretakers.

Beyond this acknowledgement, as allies, we hope that the goals outlined in this document work to further reconciliation with our Indigenous neighbours, to better steward the land, to nourish the people who live on the land, and to celebrate the many stories of the past and present peoples who call this land home.

We encourage everyone to learn more about the work that the City is doing on these topics by reading the [Urban Indigenous Strategy](#), by visiting the [Indigenous Relations Division](#) Webpage, and by learning from the many resources listed in the [Indigenous Hub](#).

Miigwetch (Anishnabek – pronounced MEE-gwetch), Niá:wen (Haudenosaunee – pronounced Nee-AH-wah), Tiawenhk (Huron-Wendat – pronounced Tee-AH-wenhk)



Eagles Among Us by David M. General



Acknowledgements

This strategy was developed by the City of Hamilton's Tourism & Events section, in close collaboration with the Tourism & Culture Division and consultation with divisions across the City, Mayor, and Council. The strategy is informed by consultation with industry partners who make Hamilton the vibrant tourism destination it is today.

Photographer and Artist Contributions

Hamilton is a tourism powerhouse, with tremendous amenities and attractions providing unlimited potential. As a hub for art, culture, sport, and heritage, we are thankful to have talented creators who partner with us. This strategy includes the talented photography and artwork of the following creators:

- Angela DeMontigny
- Pall Rodrigue
- Cobalt Connects
- LaFontaine Iron Werks
- David M. General
- Kyle Joedicke
- Patricio Munoz
- Billy Dhillon
- Mike Highfield
- Marisa Mercanti
- Christine & Sarah MacLean
- Megan Oldhues
- Mike Monson
- Josh Johnson
- Brisbin Brook Beynon Architects/OVG
- Jennifer Howe
- Dam De Nogales
- Carlos Guerreiro
- Nathan Nash
- Patricia Ferreira
- Bary Gray
- And several others who have asked to remain anonymous.

Front Cover Images:

Pier 8 Waterfront Trolley, FirstOntario Concert Hall, Gage Park, Dundurn National Historic Site, All Our Relations, Webster Falls, Art Gallery of Hamilton, The French

Back Cover Images:

Wild Waterworks, Hamilton Farmers Market, LIUNA Station, Rafaga Unleashed sculpture at Pier 8, James Street North, Saltlick Smokehouse, Wolsak & Wyn, Dundurn National Historic Site, Whitehern Historic House & Garden National Historic Site, Bridgeworks

Executive Summary

Hamilton's Tourism Strategy is rooted in a vision to become a top Canadian destination celebrated for its vibrant tourism districts, captivating nature-based activities, and authentic and sustainable experiences. Embracing a regenerative 'whole city' approach, the strategy revolves around four strategic priorities.



FunSplash, Binbrook Conservation Area, Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority

01 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.

02 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.



Westdale Village

03 Promote and Support the Sustainability of Natural Assets

Recognizing Hamilton's abundant natural assets, this priority 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.



African Lion Safari

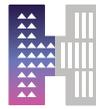
04 Strengthen Hamilton's Major Events and Festival Sector

Hosting major events and festivals is crucial for attracting visitors and enhancing Hamilton's reputation as a destination. This priority focuses on securing investments 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 additional opportunity to actively seek out and support major festivals geared towards equity deserving groups that expand the diversity of audiences as well as supporting cultural development (such as music, arts, theatre). The strategy aligns with Council priorities for enhancing the city's reputation as a center of culture, sport, and tourism, and integrates with economic development goals to attract investment and stimulate year-round vibrancy.



Arkells, The Rally, Tim Hortons Field

By implementing these strategic priorities and related actions, Tourism Hamilton aims to position the city as a dynamic and sustainable tourism destination that drives economic growth and fosters Hamilton's unique identity within and beyond our borders.



DEVELOPING THE Tourism Strategy

1.1 A 'Whole City' Approach

While tourism is the specific mandate for the Tourism team, staff across the City play a role in Hamilton's success as a tourism destination. Without clean streets, safe communities, and good infrastructure, tourism can not flourish. While tourism staff are not most responsible for operating the city's parks or greenspaces, tourism events activate public spaces and outdoor attractions that promote the enjoyment of Hamilton's natural assets. Similarly, while tourism staff are not most responsible for the city's workforce, downtown office vacancy, or resident quality of life, the tourism industry is a major employer in the city and cultivating vibrant tourism districts improves resident quality of life and demand for commercial real estate.

In a 'whole city' approach to tourism, City Departments, Divisions and Sections work in partnership to not only create and support tourism experiences and businesses, but also to ensure the city's overall prosperity and attractiveness as a destination.

The **actions required to create a vibrant tourism destination harmonize with the City of Hamilton's Council priorities. Sustainable Economic & Ecological Development** is integral to Hamilton's tourism strategy as a resilient economy is the bedrock of a healthy host community. Similarly, promoting ecological sustainability aligns with the growing trend of attracting visitors who prioritize environmentally responsible destinations. Tourism contributes significantly to economic growth by generating revenue, creating jobs, raising the city's reputation, and stimulating investment in local businesses. Therefore, working to enhance the City's reputation as a centre of culture, sport, and tourism has a symbiotic relationship with the city's economic and ecological goals.

Similarly, **Safe and Thriving Neighbourhoods** are vital to Hamilton's appeal as a tourism

destination. Well-maintained public spaces, placemaking initiatives, efficient transportation, and affordable housing options all contribute to making Hamilton an attractive destination. This not only benefits visitors, but also contributes to making Hamilton an employer of choice for hospitality workers. Additionally, increased tourism activity can incentivize improvements to infrastructure and public spaces, benefiting residents and visitors alike by enhancing a community's 'sense of place' and the overall quality of life. For example, increasing access to the waterfront is a key action within this strategy that will animate the neighbourhood and create new recreational options for both residents and visitors.

Furthermore, **Responsiveness and Transparency** are essential elements for stewarding a tourism destination. Involving partners in an inclusive decision-making process leads to authentic tourism initiatives that benefit the entire community. Engaging with partners also ensures that tourism initiatives align with community values and priorities, fostering a sense of co-ownership and pride among residents. As with all industries, effective public engagement and transparent communication in tourism build trust and credibility among residents and visitors alike.

Lastly, the foundation of travel is discovery, engaging with culture, and learning from diverse peoples. Throughout the strategy, the city aims to be intentional and thoughtful of using a lens of **Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Accessibility (IDEA)**. This includes examples such as curation of events, co-creating tourism products with partners, and being mindful of signage.

In summary, Hamilton has built a name for itself as a burgeoning tourism destination. The city has excellent natural and cultural attractions, unique communities, and several new developments underway. For example, the renovations to the entertainment district and the trails and public

spaces being developed at the waterfront are revitalizing key tourism areas in the city. **However, in order for tourism to continue to positively impact the city, there is work to be done to better protect the city's natural assets, steward community relationships, and develop the hard and soft infrastructure to offer enriching experiences for residents and guests.**

STRATEGY INPUT & ALIGNMENT

Tourism has a unique opportunity to create vibrancy and prosperity in the city. Tourism tells the authentic story that connects Hamilton's people to their place, encourages local cultures and neighbourhoods to thrive, and educates guests on how to steward Hamilton's natural landscape and waterways.

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 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)
- Transportation Master Plan: City in Motion (2018)

- Accelerated Active Transportation Implementation Plan (2023)
- Hamilton's Strategic Music Business Plan (2021)

Understanding the vital role industry partners play in creating a thriving tourism destination, staff have also sought input from tourism partners through quarterly Team Hamilton Tourism meetings, one-on-one meetings, and roundtable style discussions. Furthermore, as residents are a key part of what makes Hamilton a great destination, staff sought resident feedback on the drafted tourism strategy and have incorporated the feedback into this final document.

1.2 City of Hamilton's Tourism & Culture Division

TOURISM & CULTURE DIVISION

Hamilton's Tourism & Culture Division sits within the Planning & Economic Development Department. The Division is responsible for cultivating and stewarding Hamilton's rich culture and creative industries through four sections:

- Creative Industries & Cultural Development, including music, fashion, film, and art.
- Placemaking & Public Art
- Heritage and Resource Management, including Hamilton's Civic Museums
- Tourism & Events, including Hamilton's Destination Management Organization (DMO), Tourism Hamilton

Each of these sections has their own strategic direction and plan, with staff



Sam Lawrence Park



Confederation Beach Park



RBC David Braley & Nancy Cordon Rock Garden



Treetop Trekking Hamilton

working together to steward Hamilton's rich culture and creative industries and avoiding duplication. Each of these sections aid in stewarding the destination, telling our city's stories, and bringing vibrancy to our communities. This Tourism Strategy is reflective of the work across the Division.

WHAT IS A DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION (DMO)?

According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), "The destination management organization (DMO) should be at the centre of the destination and be a leading organizational entity, encompassing the various authorities, stakeholders, and professionals, facilitating partnerships towards a collective destination vision. This means bringing together all relevant stakeholders in the destination, as well as local communities, and develop a coherent tourism strategy in pursuit of a common goal: ultimately, the sustainability and competitiveness of the destination."

Responsible and sustainable destination management should entail a process that effectively and harmoniously addresses the interactions between the visitors, the industry that serves them, the community that hosts them, and the environment in a broad sense (natural and cultural resources).

TOURISM HAMILTON: HAMILTON'S DESTINATION MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION (DMO)

Working in harmony with the Tourism & Culture Division's other sections, the Tourism & Events section is responsible for:

- **Sector Development**, which includes supporting the businesses and workforce, as well as investment attraction.
- **Event Attraction and Hosting**, including major events, meetings and conventions, sporting, festivals, etc.
- **Tourism Marketing**, both to individual leisure travelers (B2C) and business development and event attraction (B2B).
- **Visitor Services**, offered digitally through the TourismHamilton.com website and physically at the Visitor Experience Centre at 28 James St. N.
- **Product Development**, this is a new function by which staff curate unique experiences for visitors and co-create Tourism Products¹ with local businesses and organizations.

Tourism Hamilton staff work closely with industry partners and have regular communication through quarterly Team Hamilton Tourism meetings, one-on-one meetings, and roundtable style discussions.

¹UN Tourism defines a **Tourism Product** as "a combination of tangible and intangible elements, such as natural, cultural and man-made resources, attractions, facilities, services and activities around a specific center of interest which represents the core of the destination marketing mix and creates an overall visitor experience including emotional aspects for the potential customers. A tourism product is priced and sold through distribution channels, and it has a life cycle". A simple example would be a brewery tour, where the "tourism product" is created by combining transportation, beer tastings at each brewery, and a guided experience.

1.3 Where We've Been

Since the previous Tourism Strategy (2015-2020), the city has grown and made gains in developing the destination. The 2015 to 2020 strategy's actions were focused on three strategic priorities. Many of these actions were achieved or exceeded, while others require additional or renewed attention.

Strategic Priority 1: Leadership

This was focused on developing a sustainable and collaborative leadership structure to facilitate the growth of tourism and secure additional funding for business development and marketing. Overall, this strategic priority's actions were achieved:

- Tourism Hamilton is now the established DMO for Hamilton with dedicated marketing and sales teams.
- The DMO has had great success in winning and hosting several major events such as the NHL Heritage Classic, Canadian Country Music Awards, NDP Conference, Grey Cup 2021 and 2023, and more.
- Through the Destination Marketing Program (DMP), Tourism Hamilton worked collaboratively with hotel and industry partnerships on strategic event attraction. Though the DMP will now be replaced by the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT), the industry trust and relationships built through the DMP will carry forward.

Strategic Priority 2: Marketing and Communications

These actions sought to establish a positive destination identity and grow Hamilton's share of the market with the highest potential for return. These actions were also largely achieved.

- The award-winning Tourism Hamilton brand was developed and has successfully built a significant following on various social and digital channels. Tourism Hamilton has over 80,000 followers on social media and roughly 12,000 subscribers to the monthly digital newsletter.
- Through the development of Tourism Hamilton's digital channels, Hamilton targets leisure visitors and promotes the city as an attractive destination.
- A Customer Relation Management (CRM) system was implemented for advanced booking and offering integrated bidding for

sports, meetings and conventions, event space, and hotel rooms.

- Strong relationships have been built with national and provincial associations in sports, meetings and conventions, and other tourism industry segments to keep Hamilton top of mind and in the rotation for repeat events.

Strategic Priority 3: Destination Development

These actions focused on creating a great destination and enhancing Hamilton's 'welcome.' Several actions were achieved in developing the destination, however there is still work to be done.

- The Visitor Experience Centre (28 James Street North) renovation was completed. The Centre now integrates physical and digital visitor amenities, boutique retail featuring local artists, an event space, and rotating exhibit activations.
- The Centre is committed to fostering a culture of equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging. The Centre is fully accessible, Rainbow Registered², and it actively partners with the Ontario Corporate Training Centre (OCTC) on their Disability Inclusion project. Additionally, the Centre is working towards GreenStep sustainability certification, demonstrating its commitment to creating a safe, inclusive, and environmentally responsible space.
- Tourism staff aided in the development of identified tourism districts, such as the James St. North corridor and Waterfront; however, these areas are still underdeveloped and require further investments in visitor infrastructure, activation, and placemaking.
- Hamilton has worked to foster a flourishing festivals and events scene. Working closely with the City's Special Events Advisory Team (SEAT), tourism staff collaborate seamlessly across departments, making Hamilton a top host destination and a best practice community in this regard.
- While improvements are being made on transportation, both at a regional and city level, better collaboration is still needed to make travel to and within Hamilton a seamless experience.

In conclusion, while Hamilton has made great strides, several gaps and challenges remain. This strategy seeks to build on the destination's strengths and past successes and address identified gaps and challenges.

²The **Rainbow Registered Accreditation Program** is a national accreditation for 2SLGBTQI+ friendly businesses and organizations. When you see a Rainbow Registered symbol, you know the business or organization meets a stringent set of standards to ensure 2SLGBTQI+ customers feel safe, welcomed, and accepted. The accreditation was created by Canada's 2SLGBTQI+ Chamber of Commerce (CGLCC), with Tourism HR Canada.



RBG Rock Chapel Escarpment Trail



Copsps Pier Park



King's Forest Trail

1.4 Current State of Tourism

The following section is a brief overview of the tourism landscape—both nationally and internationally—and the relevant trends affecting the tourism industry. These factors and trends have a local impact on Hamilton as a destination and its businesses.

TOURISM'S UNEVEN RECOVERY & PROJECTED GROWTH

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 country³.

By these numbers, the tourism industry is almost recovered from the global pandemic, however the recovery remains uneven. A resilient travel sentiment and pent-up travel demand aided a quick rebound in domestic travel, but a 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.

Typically, destination demand in Canada is seasonal, with leisure demand—those

travelling for pleasure or to visit friends and relatives—mirroring the most common times to travel and take vacation. Therefore, 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 mainly 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.**

Traveler segments are also recovering unevenly, with leisure visitors leading the recovery and outperforming 2019 levels, both nationally and in Hamilton. As stated in the Downtown Hamilton Office Report (PED23081), work-from-home policies have impacted Hamilton's office market. As the slow return to office is hindering downtown recoveries across Canada, individual corporate business travel is lagging considerably behind pre-pandemic levels and weekday hotel occupancies have been slow to recover. Major events and meeting and conference travel are recovering faster

³ Destination Canada Tourism Outlook Fall 2023, via Statistics Canada National Tourism Indicators 2023 Q2 and Labour Force Survey via Tourism HR Canada

than independent business travel; however, this segment is not expected to fully recover until 2026.

In 2023, visitors to Hamilton spent an estimated \$775 million in the city, an increase from \$701 million in 2022⁴. Furthermore, tourism businesses make up a significant portion of Hamilton’s labour and workforce, with more than 3,250 tourism business in the city⁵.

As the industry continues to recover from the pandemic, global projections for tourism indicate strong, continued growth. The World Travel and Tourism Council predicts that tourism’s contribution to Canada’s GDP could double by 2033.

TRENDS IN TOURISM & TRAVEL

The tourism industry is constantly being shaped, not only by visitor trends but also by the economic forces impacting operators. This section gives an overview of current trends shaping the industry as new generations enter the travel sphere, visitor sentiments change, tourism business needs evolve, and host communities grow. Data was compiled from industry research, consultation with industry and local operators, and excerpts from federal and provincial publications.

Trends Influencing Visitor Travel

The following is a summary of how and why visitors travel to and within Canada and what they are looking for in a destination.

Authentic & Cultural Tourism

When travelling, visitors seek out authentic places and are eager to learn their stories. Increasingly, the industry is seeing uptake in

educational entertainment, opportunities to support local and independent businesses, and demand for the “hidden gems” and “travel like a local” experiences. In turn, host destinations have sought to incorporate creative public art and placemaking initiatives to communicate a destination’s ‘sense of place.’

Visiting Friends & Relatives

This is the primary reason for most Canadian travel and a common purpose for many international visitors. In line with the above trend, residents are often the best tourism ambassadors as they not only bring visitors to the key tourism sites in their area but also show them their favorite local spots, unique experiences, and authentic cultural events within a destination.

Outdoor Adventure & Sustainability

This is another trend that has seen massive growth during the pandemic and continues to be a main motivator post-pandemic; visitors are seeking both passive and active outdoor adventures and becoming more aware of their eco-footprint. Examples include passive activities like hiking or cycling or active options like high-ropes attractions or ziplining. This trend also includes agritourism as a way for visitors to practice healthy consumption while immersing themselves in authentic outdoor experiences.

Health and Wellness

Building on outdoor tourism, visitors are also looking to be physically active, visit healing and natural places, and stay mentally healthy on vacation. This trend has seen exponential growth coming out of the pandemic. Examples include locally sourced dining options, water-based activities, or choosing active sightseeing transportation options such as kayaking or cycling over sedentary options like driving.

Indigenous Tourism

This is one of the fastest growing segments within Canada. As defined by the Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC), “authentic Indigenous tourism is BY Indigenous Peoples, not ABOUT Indigenous Peoples.” Indigenous tourism experiences not only offer visitors the opportunity to experience another culture, but ITAC also states that “Indigenous Tourism is the strongest tool in the toolkit to

⁴ Estimated spend data is derived from Destination Canada’s Lodging Spend Reporting (July 10, 2024). Use, distribution, or republication of these estimates requires Destination Canada’s written consent.

⁵ Industry Canada, 2023 Canadian Business Counts



Hamilton City Hall



HAMBRGR



Sherman Falls



SuperCrawl

help Canadians to support reconciliation.”

Safety, Security & Welcome

Beyond the physical health and safety concerns (made worse during the pandemic), visitors seek out a welcoming and accepting environment where they feel actively included. This is especially true for marginalized groups such as 2SLGBTQAI+ travellers, BIPOC travellers, women, or visitors with mental or physical accessibility needs. According to a Destination Canada survey, the friendliness of locals is the highest ranked influencer of visitor experiences in a destination, followed closely by safety and cleanliness.

Inclusion, Diversity, Equality, Accessibility (IDEA)

Operators and destinations alike are working to meet physical and digital IDEA standards and create a welcoming environment at all stages of the travel journey, including planning, transportation, accommodations, attractions, and post-trip follow-up.

Blended & Extended Stays

Several travel motivations are combining to create this trend, including “bleisure travel” (combining business and leisure trips), travelling in off-season times to avoid high costs, or adding tourism activities to a trip while visiting friends and relatives. This has led to visitors travelling in off-peak months or times of day, winter activities gaining popularity, or leisure accommodations being used for a business trip to accommodate accompanying family members.

Digital Integration

Spanning from accessible website design and mobile-friendly applications to artificial intelligence and augmented/virtual reality experiences, consumers expect digital integration to be seamless. The digital elements are often not the main attraction, but rather are expected to flawlessly blend into the journey (including pre- and post-trip) to allow for enhanced experiences, aid with accessibility needs, and reduce friction at key points such as payment, processing, or documentation.

Social Engagement

While this trend has been emerging for several years, the pandemic was a catalyst for social engagement. Visitors are eager to travel socially, whether participating in group activities, using social recommendations to plan their trip, or engaging in online social media as part of the pre-, during, and post-trip journey.

High Quality & Unique Products

With declining discretionary income and increasing destination competition, visitors seek out experiences where they receive good value and high-quality experiences for their dollar. Visitors are looking for superior value for money, high standards and coordination across all aspects of their travel journey, and authentic experiences that cannot be duplicated in another destination.

Range of Offerings

As visitors curate detailed itineraries, having

a range of product and experience offerings is vital. This includes passive options like trails, parks, and self-guided tours and ranges up to luxury, hyper-customized experiences like exclusive events, luxury hotels, or culinary encounters. It also includes options at varying financial price points, allowing visitors to choose where to spend their money and to customize their trip based on their values. Some visitors may value exclusive dining options in a destination and will choose inexpensive accommodations and activities in order to keep to their budget.

Trends Influencing Tourism Business & Destinations

The following is a summary of the trends currently affecting destinations and tourism businesses.

1. Regenerative Tourism

Regenerative Tourism is a recent best practice in the tourism industry, which prioritizes the community and environment, reframing the tourism destination as a 'host community' rather than a resource to be exploited or consumed. This approach grew exponentially coming out of the pandemic as a response to "over tourism," capacity restraints, negative impacts on residents, and degenerative development. Capacity gaps were especially evident during the pandemic where Canadian destinations with natural assets suffered problems of ecological destruction and overcrowding due to lack of infrastructure such as public washrooms, wayfinding, clear signage, available parking, and capacity management.

2. Lack of Access & Reduced Transport Connectivity

This is especially true for rural communities and travel between cities. Within larger cities, transportation is based on commuter and resident needs, with little coordination between regional and local transportation modes and a significant 'last mile'⁶ gap. For example, Hamilton is connected to neighbouring communities by rail and has a growing international airport, but a visitor to Hamilton would need to use several modes of transportation to travel from the regional transit stations or airport to reach their final

destination. These last mile gaps and the associated transportation costs are barriers to visitors using sustainable multi-modal options.

3. Labor & Skills Shortage

A shortage of labour and skills is limiting the capacity of almost all tourism businesses. According to Destination Canada's Q1 2023 Tourism Snapshot, while the Canadian overall unemployment rate was 5.4% in March, the tourism unemployment rate was 6%. Furthermore, while the Canadian labor force expanded 5.8% above pre-pandemic levels by March 2023, the labor force active in the tourism sector remained 4.2% below its pre-pandemic levels.

4. Recovering Individual Corporate Business Travel

This is a key factor affecting the tourism industry's lagging recovery. As previously detailed, work-from-home policies and the slow return to office are affecting travel, especially during mid-week periods. For example, travelling for sales calls or customer support is especially slow to recover as businesses have tighter travel budgets, appreciate the ease and efficiency of virtual software, and are mindful of their carbon emission targets.

5. The Night-Time Economy

This is a relatively new concept in Canadian destinations, however European and Asian destinations are far ahead in this regard. Though most often thought of in terms of music, entertainment, or food and beverage establishments, the night-time economy involves all activities and work that take place between 6:00 PM and 6:00 AM, including transportation, health care, and public services. Canadian destinations are working to improve the services and offerings to support night-time economies. The night-time economy is an important economic driver as it builds capacity in destinations, expands business offerings, and brings vibrancy to cities' often dark and unanimated times of day.

6. Higher Costs

Higher costs are degrading operators' profit margins and further raising the barrier to entry for new businesses. Not only are high

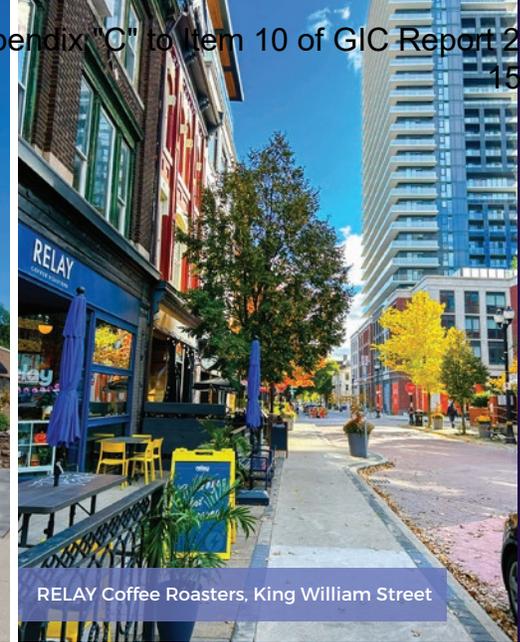
⁶ The "last mile" is the gap between a person's trip from a transportation hub (rail, bus, airport, ferry) to their final destination. The greater the "last mile," the less likely a person is to use multi-modal transportation.



Detour Cafe, Downtown Dundas



The Squire, Locke Street



RELAY Coffee Roasters, King William Street

construction costs and rising land costs making capital investments more expensive, but inflationary pressures, rising property taxes and insurance prices, food and labour costs, and business operation costs are making operations more expensive. While some businesses are raising prices, expenses are rising at a far greater pace than consumer pricing, thereby lowering operators' profitability.

7. Reduced Access to Capital & Limited Financial Liquidity

This is severely dampening investment into tourism assets, both new and capital upgrades. The tourism industry has always been a higher risk real estate investment, however there is less of a desire for these types of investments with the current market uncertainty and higher appetite for safe investments.

8. Aging Tourism Assets & Infrastructure

Product degradation is a challenge across Canada as aging assets require capital investment; this is made worse by visitor expectations of high-quality experiences and rising costs. This is especially true for attractions, such as waterparks, amusement parks, or entertainment assets. Coming out of the pandemic, many tourism businesses are laden with high levels of debt and have no extra funds to re-invest into their products—especially given higher construction costs.

9. Shift in Capacity & Role of DMOs

All of these trends are leading to a higher

expectation of direct involvement and aid beyond marketing from Destination Management Organizations (DMOs).

FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL INITIATIVES

Canada's Federal Tourism Strategy

In response to the state of the tourism industry, in 2023 the Federal government released a tourism growth strategy, "*Canada 365: Welcoming the World. Every Day.*" The strategy is guided by four key principles:

- Equity, diversity, and inclusion
- Reconciliation in action
- Sustainable and regenerative approaches
- A focus on rural Canada

By 2030, hundreds of millions of dollars will be invested to support the strategy's five tourism priorities:

- **Invest in tourism assets**, including increased investment in tourism attractions and tourism support from the Business Development Bank of Canada,
- **Embrace recreation and the great outdoors**, including a Trails Tourism Strategy for Canada and leveraging recreational opportunities and Canada's great outdoors,
- **Partner to grow Indigenous tourism** through strengthening partnerships,
- **Attracting more international events**, as well as hosting more international events, and



Dundurn National Historic Site



Grey Cup Half Time Show,
Tim Hortons Field



HMCS Haida National Historic Site

- **Improve coordination through a Federal Ministerial Council**, including aligning government policies and programs to grow tourism.

To measure the performance of the Strategy, ambitious targets have been set through to 2030 to fulfill the two main objectives: to increase tourism's economic output and to improve Canada's competitive standing internationally.

These priorities align with Hamilton's current tourism needs and the city is poised to take advantage of several of these funding opportunities.

Ontario's Hamilton, Halton, Brant Regional Tourism Organization (RTO3)

The Ontario government segments the province into 15 different tourism regions. Hamilton is part of Region 3: Hamilton, Halton, Brant, and the Regional Tourism Organization (RTO3) is branded to visitors as "the Heart of Ontario." In 2023, RTO3 released their 2024 to 2026 Strategic Plan, which focuses on four areas:

- **Relationship Development and Communications.** Actions include a regional marketing plan, building relationships with their destinations (including Hamilton), and measuring resident sentiment and understanding of tourism.
- **Leadership and Representation.** Actions include creating a better-connected region, especially around transportation, policy, and infrastructure.
- **Ecosystem Development and Value Co-Creation.** Actions include improving

visitation research, data collection and sharing, supporting a regional Truth and Reconciliation Action Plan, sustainability and destination stewardship initiatives, and developing cross-regional tourism products and experiences.

- **Resource Management.** Actions include exploring investment and funding opportunities, as well as creating revenue-generating products and services.

As the largest destination in Region 3, Hamilton works closely with the regional tourism organization. Key areas of alignment for this strategy involve developing new tourism products and experiences as well as a regional approach to sustainability and destination stewardship.

RTO3 is certified as a high Bronze Level **Sustainable Tourism Destination through GreenStep**. Founded in 2008, GreenStep is the only Canadian-based sustainable tourism certification provider covering all types of tourism businesses and destinations. GreenStep's Sustainable Tourism Certification is an assessment-based program⁷ that provides guidance and support to tourism businesses as they strive to operate more sustainably. GreenStep's Sustainable Tourism Destination Standard was created in alignment with the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and has been globally recognized by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council. Tourism Hamilton staff are part of RTO3's Destination Sustainability Stakeholder Committee.

⁷ The **GreenStep certification process** requires an in-depth assessment that takes into consideration sustainability management systems, compliance with applicable laws, employee and guest engagement in sustainability efforts, availability of sustainable and accessible buildings and infrastructure, energy and water conservation, waste and emissions, community engagement, cultural heritage preservation, IDEA, and more.

1.5 Hamilton's Current Destination Overview

INTRODUCTION: WHAT MAKES A DESTINATION?

Ultimately, a destination is made up of tourism products and experiences; the more variety and higher the quality of assets, the more demand a destination will drive. Tourism asset categories include accommodations, attractions, food and beverage, entertainment, recreation, event facilities, transportation, visitor services, heritage and cultural, and natural and outdoor assets.

Furthermore, assets within a destination have a symbiotic relationship: a community or key tourism area needs a variety of assets to thrive. For example, an ideal tourism area may have a hotel, a number of restaurants, a natural asset, and an attraction within a 20-minute walking radius.

At the same time, a healthy tourism destination requires a whole-city approach. Prioritizing Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Accessibility (IDEA) is imperative to not only truly reflect Hamilton's population but to attract visitors with diverse backgrounds and cultures and ensure a deeper understanding of customer needs and provide better service delivery. Similarly, without healthy and safe neighbourhoods, a sustainable economy, and protected ecology, Hamilton cannot be a healthy host community. While Hamilton has strong tourism assets in some of these categories, there are several gaps and challenges that need to be addressed.

PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

Tourism product development is a key opportunity for Hamilton to build on its strengths and help visitors experience all the city has to offer. A "tourism product" is created by tying together unique elements within a destination to create an authentic experience. A simple example would be a brewery tour, where the "tourism product" is created by combining transportation, beer tastings at each brewery, and a guided experience.

Product development is vital to destination development, as visitors expect curated experiences to guide them to genuine places and tell their stories. Following regenerative tourism practices, tourism product development is about fostering healthy communities and inviting visitors to experience authentic local tastes, cultures, and stories. As a steward of the destination, a DMO works to co-create tourism products with local business operators and community organizations.

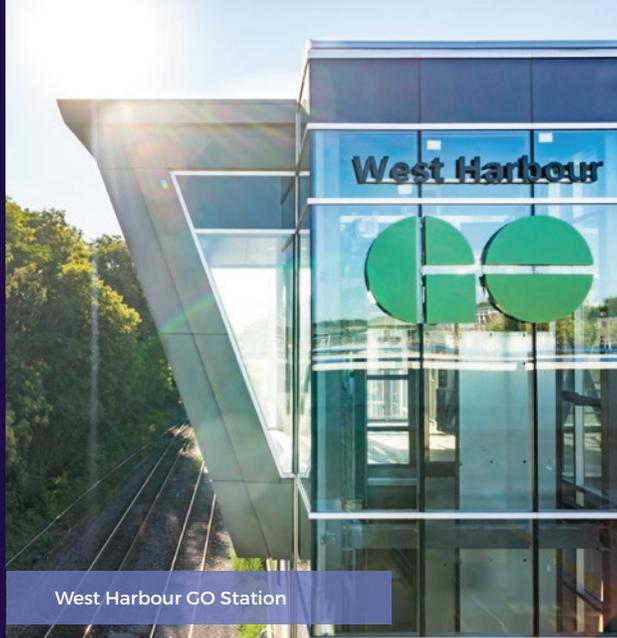
Hamilton has a long list of tourism assets, such as a burgeoning culinary scene, a growing reputation for music, and well-established heritage and natural assets, but product development is required to engage and entice visitors and offer transformational tourism experiences. Examples could include an Indigenous walking tour of the problematic monuments, a Hamilton Donut Trail, a farm-fresh cycling tour, a History of Hamilton bus tour, or a "trail mix" experience offering live music on Hamilton's trails. Many of Hamilton's strengths will benefit from product development and examples are given in several of the following sections.

Some product development can be done by tourism staff; however, the majority will require working closely with partners to co-create authentic experiences. In other areas, tourism partners are already creating top-tier products and simply require promotional assistance.

Lastly, **once products are created, they must be promoted and shared through the tourism industry's distribution channels to reach national and international audiences.** Examples include working with industry partners like the Ontario Motor Coach Association (OMCA), Attractions Ontario, Destination Ontario, Destination Canada, and more.

Hamilton's Reputation as a Destination

Hamilton competes globally for international visitors and nationally for Canadian visitors. While the city's location between Toronto and Niagara—two of Canada's most visited destinations—helps with drive-through exposure, **Hamilton is currently**



West Harbour GO Station



John C. Munro Hamilton International Airport

overshadowed in the competitive market and has a low international profile.

Locally, Hamiltonians are friendly and humble, but resident sentiment has been weakening due to social challenges. Residents are often not aware of all that Hamilton has to offer and there are limited visitor services to encourage residents to explore their own backyard. **Residents who are proud of their city and invite their friends and relatives to experience Hamilton’s offerings are the best tourism ambassadors.**

Burgeoning Tourism Districts

Hamilton has several burgeoning tourism districts. The entertainment district is about to undergo a major transformation with the renovations to the FirstOntario Centre arena and Hamilton Convention Centre as well as the launch of the National Centre for New Musicals at Theatre Aquarius. In addition, the city has a reputation for quality music and cultural venues. These assets work together with the surrounding restaurants, retail, and attractions—like the Art Gallery of Hamilton—located within walking distance of the Downtown Hamilton BIA, International Village BIA, Hess Street, and James Street North corridor make for an excellent urban destination.

Hamilton is home to a total of 11 Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), each with a unique sense of place and authentic identity. Historic villages such as Ancaster, Dundas, Waterdown, Westdale, and Stoney

Creek, draw visitors seeking quaint main streets, historic charm, and boutique retail and restaurants.

Furthermore, Hamilton’s West Harbour development is growing the waterfront into a key tourism district. The improvements to trail connectivity and public spaces are prime examples of how infrastructure supports and creates a sense of place.

While Hamilton has excellent destination elements, there is limited infrastructure and no cohesive messaging around its tourism districts. These tourism districts need to be defined in ways that are clear to visitors. Related to this, Hamilton has limited, disjointed, and outdated physical and digital wayfinding.

Sustainable Transportation & Connectivity

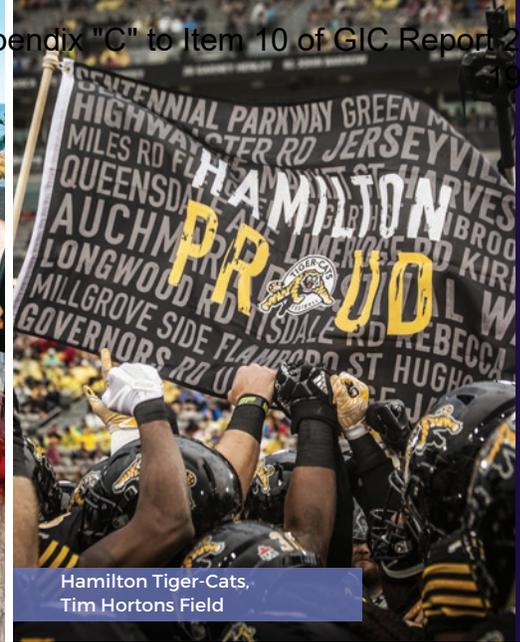
From a municipal viewpoint, Hamilton has excellent connectivity and transportation by road, rail, and air. Especially relevant to tourism, Hamilton’s John C Munro International Airport is working to become the gateway to Southern Ontario and undertaking a 10-year capital master plan. The City’s recent 49-year lease deal to extend the airport’s management lease until 2073 will see a \$400 million investment. Furthermore, Air Canada recently introduced the Air Canada Landline service to offer seamless ground transportation between Toronto’s Pearson International Airport and Hamilton’s John C Munro International Airport. **Having an international airport within the city is a**



Rockton World's Fair



Barangas On The Beach

Hamilton Tiger-Cats,
Tim Hortons Field

major strength for attracting visitors and a unique advantage for Hamilton.

For visitors, transportation within Hamilton currently includes HSR (bus service) and active transportation options such as the bike share program and e-scooters. The reimagined HSR routes, LRT project, expanded GO station, and an accelerated active transportation network development will continue to improve transportation options.

However, these modes of transportation require different programs, apps, and payment platforms. International visitors have a lower barrier to using multi-modal transportation, but **Canadians are often averse to sustainable transportation options because of the lack of user-friendly education, the significant last mile gap, and associated costs.**

Lastly, while the **LRT will greatly improve connectivity to several tourism areas once complete, construction will cause a long period of disruption for businesses and visitors navigating the city.**

Impact of Construction & New Developments

While Hamilton will benefit from the exciting major infrastructure projects underway in the long-term, the short-term will see disruption and increased congestion from construction and renovations—especially in the downtown core. In addition to roadwork, construction from LRT, and temporary

inactivity around renovated spaces, several parking lots within key tourism areas are being redeveloped into housing or commercial areas, decreasing the capacity for visitors traveling by car.

Lastly, the changing parking scene is affecting Hamilton's capacity to host bus tours or those requiring parking for larger vehicles, such as food trucks or film crews who require special power and utilities.

Working with partners such as HSR and Metrolinx, further education is needed for visitors to choose active and more sustainable forms of transportation, such as GO or VIA rail options or moving through the city on HSR or bike-share. This is especially true for large events or major festivals.

To mitigate short-term negative effects, staff are working closely with partners such as Metrolinx and various city departments on creative supports. Examples include targeted marketing or creative placemaking and temporary public art projects. This includes providing communication on timelines, phasing, and future benefits of new infrastructure through engaging and creative efforts.

Downtown Safety & Cleanliness

Increasingly, local partners and visiting guests have raised concerns about the cleanliness and safety of Hamilton's downtown. As stated, safety and cleanliness are highly ranked influencers of visitors' experiences in a destination. Without safe,



African Lion Safari



Grandad's Donuts



Forge FC, Tim Hortons Field

healthy, and clean neighbourhoods, tourism cannot flourish.

Though this is a complex issue, one underlying factor is the lack of vibrancy in downtown, especially after 6pm. When streets are dark, businesses are closed, after-hour transportation is unavailable, and people choose to go elsewhere in the evening, the lack of animation encourages bad behaviour. **However, by encouraging night life, investing in infrastructure, and expanding transportation and support service hours, Hamilton's night-time economy can reinvigorate downtown and help to improve downtown safety and cleanliness.**

Fostering a healthy night-time economy also includes a closer look at the city's policies and planning. For example, encouraging alternative uses for after-hour activities will allow community members more access to spaces for hosting events or animating spaces. **International cities that have invested in these policy changes state that underrepresented communities, such as BIPOC, 2SLGTBQAI+, Indigenous, or cultural organizations, see the biggest benefit as they are typically underserved by traditional venues.**

Accommodations & Overnight Demand

A key metric of a destination's health is overnight stays, particularly in hotels and short-term rentals, as these guests are most likely to be out of town visitors (tourists). The higher a city's overall accommodation

occupancy, the higher the demand for the tourism destination.

Hamilton has several excellent midscale and upper midscale hotels, however there is an insufficient amount of high-quality economy hotels, no luxury hotels, and limited alternative accommodations (i.e., cottage rentals, glamping). Hamilton has a few campgrounds, such as Hamilton Conservation Authority's Valens Lake and Fifty Point campgrounds or Pine Valley Park, which have excellent onsite outdoor assets. However, the campgrounds are far from complementary attractions for visitors and are located closer to Hamilton's neighboring municipalities. Most accommodations are located in the downtown and surrounding areas, with gaps in several BIAs, the airport, the waterfront, and rural communities.

Overall, Hamilton's overnight demand is growing, though unevenly. Similar to destinations across Canada, hotel demand is recovering unevenly from the pandemic; while weekend and leisure stays are healthy, weekday and independent business stays are lagging. As stated, major events and meeting and conference travel are recovering well, but this segment is not expected to fully recover until 2026.

However, the accommodation supply is insufficient during peak demand periods, such as major festivals, large conferences, or city-wide events. Not only does this hamper the city from attracting larger major events, but the demand and visitor spending spills

over to neighboring communities outside of the city's. Hamilton's neighbouring destinations face similar limitations to attracting major events. **Therefore, there is an opportunity for cities to collectively bid on major events as a region, pooling event hosting resources and overnight accommodations.**

Natural & Outdoor Tourism

Hamilton has world-class natural assets and is becoming known as a desirable hiking and cycling destination and as the "Waterfall Capital of the World." Hamilton is home to numerous trail systems, the largest botanical gardens in Canada (RBC), and the Niagara Escarpment (a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve). Hamilton also has excellent conservation areas managed by several conservation authorities within its borders, including the Grand River Conservation Authority, Conservation Halton, Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority, and Hamilton Conservation Authority. These areas, along with the waterfront and several urban routes, are popular for cycling, fishing, birding, and outdoor activities.

However, infrastructure to support these activities is often lacking. **For residents and visitors to enjoy the natural assets while protecting the land, Hamilton must find creative ways to expand capacity and improve infrastructure.** Examples include onsite washrooms, improved signage and wayfinding, lighting on trailheads, adequate parking, and expanded capacity-management controls such as reservation systems.

There is an opportunity for further product development to help visitors experience Hamilton through cycling, fishing, birding, and other outdoor activities. These could also be tied with outdoor overnight stays, such as glamping. Glamping, a mix between "glamours" and "camping," has become an attractive concept in recent years, especially for those who are new to camping or as a unique overnight experience. Similarly, Hamilton is a popular stopover for RV road trips, however the city does not have adequate RV parking.

Similarly, Council has identified increased

access to the Waterfront and recreational services as a priority. While much work has been done to improve the waterfront infrastructure and trails, there is a gap in infrastructure and governance structure. For example, to facilitate on-water recreation and encourage water-based operators, additional docks and visitor services will be required. In addition, there is an opportunity to work closer with local organizations, such as the Bay Area Restoration Council (BARC), to educate visitors on rehabilitation efforts and visiting respectfully.

Local and regional organizations, such as the Royal Botanical Gardens, the Waterfront Regeneration Trust (Waterfront Trail), the Bruce Trail Conservancy, and Hamilton's Conservation Authority are working to improve their offerings and capacity as well. Improvements are also taking place on a federal level as Canada invests in the TransCanada Trail—parts of which go through Hamilton. In addition, there is an opportunity for the city to support efforts that are already in the works, such as the Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark system.

Visitor Services

Tourism Hamilton offers visitor services through the TourismHamilton.com website and at the newly renovated Visitor Experience Centre in downtown. While the Visitor Experience Centre has excellent offerings in a safe and inclusive space, **awareness of the Centre and its resources is lacking.** Furthermore, for visitors who do not travel to downtown Hamilton, there are no other physical visitor services offered. **There is an opportunity to work with partners at the "gateways" to Hamilton, such as the GO stations, airport, and hotels, to offer visitor services. As these partners work to warmly welcome visitors, they require support to promote Hamilton's offerings and educate guests.**

Digitally, Tourism Hamilton has a strong, award-winning brand and growing social and digital audiences. However, digital travel and tourism technology is rapidly evolving, and visitors have high expectations of their destinations to curate unique, personalized experiences and offer a range of customized



Team Canada VS Team USA FIFA World Cup Qualifier at Tim Hortons Field



Collective Arts Brewing



Hamilton Cardinals Baseball Club

itineraries. **Tourism Hamilton's current website infrastructure is ill-equipped to integrate new technology or cater to visitor's increasing digital expectations.**

Similarly, as Hamilton becomes a more popular destination, there is an opportunity to offer services in other languages, especially French. Tourism Hamilton can lead by example by working to incorporate other languages into visitor services to be better equipped to reach international visitors, host international events, and be a top Canadian destination.

Partners have also identified opportunities for tools to educate visitors coming for major festivals or business events on Hamilton as a destination. Examples include, a list of family-friendly activities for relatives of an amateur sport participant, dining options for concert attendees, or options for conference attendees to extend their stay and explore Hamilton's history and culture.

Home-Town Visitors

In addition to visitors from outside of Hamilton, Hamilton is home to many new and temporary residents. The city has several excellent secondary and post-secondary educational institutions that draw a number of international students, such as McMaster University, Mohawk College, Redeemer University, and Columbia International College. These students often have friends and relatives visit from outside of Canada and some students choose to stay in Hamilton post-graduation. In addition, Hamilton

welcomes new Canadians every year. The city has many supports for newcomers and works to attract international investment in Hamilton through Global Hamilton and the Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council (HIPC).

Tourism staff already work closely with the post-secondary institutions and assist in offering visitor services, both online and in-person. For example, during their orientation week tour, international students from McMaster stop at the Visitor Experience Centre for presentations and to familiarize themselves with off-campus activities.

However, there is an opportunity for greater partnership with education institutions, HIPC, and community organizations to help new and temporary residents learn all that Hamilton has to offer. Similarly, there is an opportunity to partner with community leaders to co-create tourism products to help visitors engage in meaningful experiences that celebrate a diverse range of cultures and are offered in multiple languages.

Culinary & Agritourism

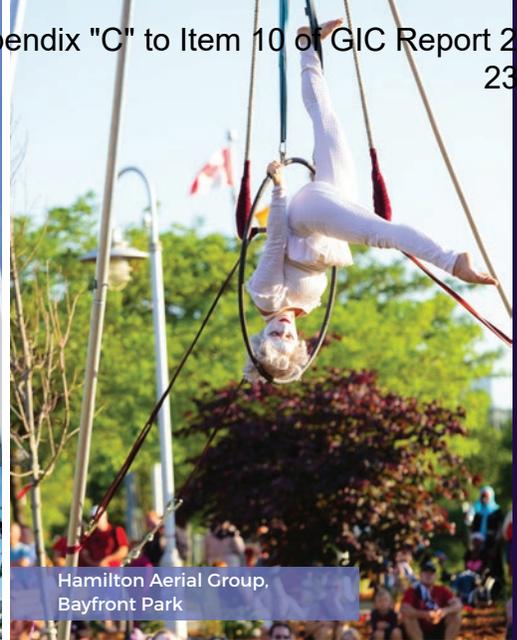
Hamilton is gaining a reputation as a "foodie" destination. Hamilton has excellent culinary options across the city, ranging from restaurants and bars to breweries and cideries to farm-fresh agritourism experiences. Several food and beverage establishments in Hamilton have won international awards, such as Cowabunga Pizza, Ancaster Mill, and Rapsallion, and two of Hamilton's restaurants are now



Spencer Gorge Conservation Area,
Hamilton Conservation Authority



All Our Relations



Hamilton Aerial Group,
Bayfront Park

featured in the internationally-recognized MICHELIN Guide: Quatrefoil and Berkeley North.

Hamilton also has excellent agri-tourism experiences, such as Ridge Road Winery, West Avenue Cider, Leaning Post Wines, and Summit Station Dairy.

To help visitors truly experience Hamilton’s culinary scene, additional product development and curated experiences are required. Examples could include a farm-fresh cycling tour or creating a new product out of a distinctly Hamilton food item such as a Donut Trail. There is also an opportunity to partner with the Hamilton, Halton, Brant Regional Tourism Organization (RTO3) in a regional agritourism experience.

Attractions, History, & Heritage

Hamilton’s reputation for history and heritage is built on its many museums, the HMCS Haida National Historic Site, the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum, the Football Hall of Fame, Westfield Heritage Village Conservation Area, and several others. In addition, Hamilton has several strong arts and cultural attractions such as the Art Gallery of Hamilton, Theatre Aquarius, and the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra. The city also has top nature-based and outdoor adventure attractions such as the Royal Botanical Gardens, TreeTop Trekking, and African Lion Safari.

While these attractions have strong core offerings, there is tremendous potential for

further product development. Examples include historic cooking classes at Dundurn National Historic Site using herbs from the onsite kitchen garden and traditional kitchen tools to make a meal or RBC’s concert series that bring new audiences to view the beauty of the gardens lit up at night with musical entertainment. This kind of product development entices visitors to return, help manage capacity by offering activities at off-peak times, and continually offer new experiences to keep visitors engaged.

In addition, several key attractions in Hamilton are expanding into the group and international tour market. This market represents an opportunity for Hamilton as several attractions already have the capacity to host group and international tours, while others are investing in capacity building and infrastructure to grow into this market.

However, some of Hamilton’s attractions require capital investments and only a few new attractions have come into the city in recent years. For example, the city has identified Wild Waterworks and the surrounding Confederation Beach Park as an area that requires investment.

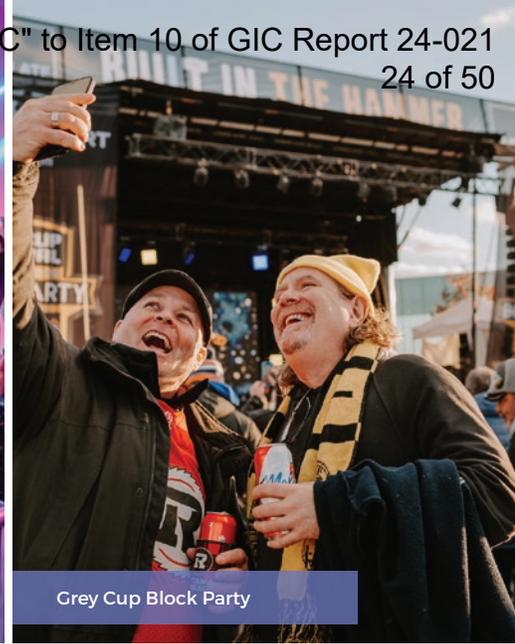
While Hamilton has several strong attractions, there are **gaps in family-friendly attractions, attractions aimed at youth and young adults, and wellness-related attractions.** As stated, destinations function best when tourism assets are co-located. Unfortunately, most of Hamilton’s



Toronto Rock Lacrosse Club



RBC Canadian Open SiriusXM Concert Series,
Hamilton Golf & Country Club



Grey Cup Block Party

attractions are spread across the city and do not have supporting assets such as restaurants or hotels nearby.

Indigenous Tourism Experiences

In June 2019, Hamilton City Council endorsed the City of Hamilton’s Urban Indigenous Strategy (UIS). The UIS identifies specific actions that the City needs to take to ensure Indigenous contributions and experiences are honoured and commemorated. As allies, Tourism Hamilton has a role to play in reconciliation and to support authentic Indigenous businesses in Hamilton.

Despite the success of Indigenous tourism experiences across Canada and the high demand in the market, the supply of market-ready experiences is severely lacking in southern Ontario and there are currently no year-round, market-ready Indigenous tourism products in Hamilton.

Therefore, Tourism Hamilton and the Indigenous Relations Division are working with local Indigenous partners to co-create several authentic Indigenous tourism experiences. The process must begin with consulting the Indigenous community to ensure that all tourism products and experiences are developed and delivered in a way that support Indigenous communities represented in Hamilton and the region.

This project is currently in process and the ultimate objective is to create authentic Indigenous tourism experiences in Hamilton. As Keith Henry, President & CEO of

Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada, states, “Indigenous Tourism is the strongest tool in the toolkit to help Canadians to support reconciliation.” These experiences would seek to create Indigenous jobs, provide opportunities for investment in Indigenous tourism, and bring visitors to the Hamilton region for these experiences.

Culture, Film, & Creative Industries

Hamilton has a rich culture scene and film industry. Hamilton’s diverse population is enthusiastic about sharing their culture through creative expression. As the city’s creative and cultural profile grows, Hamilton continues to attract new artists, makers, creative professionals, and supporting industries. Key creative industries like music, film, fashion, and art are vital to telling Hamilton’s authentic story and raising the City’s international profile. **There is an opportunity to collaborate with local partners to co-create tourism products to help visitors enjoy Hamilton’s many cultures and creative experiences.** Examples could include a Street Art Mural tour, a “Filmed in Hamilton” self-guided walk, or shop-local retail experiences.

Music

In addition to creative industries listed above, Hamilton also has a growing music scene. The city is home to several high-quality music venues and businesses and has also had success attracting the supporting amenities and services required to host large-scale cultural events. Examples



Battlefield House Museum & Park National Historic Site



Theatre Aquarius



The Westdale

include musicians such as the Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra, businesses like Sonic Unyon or Main Stage Rehearsals, and top-tier venues ranging from Stonewalls and Bridgeworks, to the First Ontario Concert Hall, Tim Horton’s Field, and FirstOntario Centre arena. However, while Hamilton has strong small- and large-scale venues, there is a gap in the city’s mid-scale venue offerings. Some downtown venues and several smaller venues have closed, especially during and coming out of the pandemic.

As major concerts and entertainment shows come to Canada, visitor demand for these high-quality events is growing, but few destinations have the capacity to host thousands of spectators. **With the renovation of FirstOntario Centre arena, Hamilton will be in a unique position to capitalize on the major entertainment and concert market.** There are opportunities to further partner with music and venue partners to promote Hamilton as a music destination and bring top talent to Hamilton.

Working with the Hamilton Music Advisory Team (HMAT) several initiatives are underway to support and grow the music scene. Examples include policies around load-in zones, reviewing the sound bylaw, and the city’s busking policy. Included in these initiatives are improving supports for creators who are part of the gig-economy. These creators often work three to four parttime jobs and are often not accounted for in traditional economic metrics. **There**

is an opportunity to better market Hamilton’s music offerings and educate creators about how to best take advantage of opportunities in Hamilton.

Lastly, improving the city’s night-time economy will also benefit musicians and the music industry through offering non-traditional spaces, improving late- and overnight transportation, and extending the city’s vibrancy past 6pm.

Sport Tourism

Hamilton has a long history of being a “sports town” and is home to several major sporting teams that draw in visitors: the Hamilton Tiger-Cats, Forge FC Football, Toronto Rock Lacrosse Club, and the Hamilton Cardinals Baseball Club. The Tim Hortons Field is a strong sporting asset and the City has also recently made investments into additional sporting assets, such as cricket pitches. Furthermore, the City’s Parks Master Plan (2022) and Recreation Master Plan (2022) detail the importance of continuing to reinvest and improve the City’s recreational assets. Similarly, the potential for a new major sports team being based at the renovated FirstOntario Centre arena will further enhance sporting and sport tourism in Hamilton.

These strengths combine to give Hamilton a competitive edge in attracting not only spectator visitors, but also significant sporting events, ranging from amateur to professional.

Festivals & Major Tourism Events

Hamilton has made a name for itself as a key festival and event destination. Local partners host over 20 annual events in Hamilton, several of which are award-winning. A few key festivals include Supercrawl, Rockton Fair, Winterfest, Telling Tales, Hamilton Fringe Festival, and Hamilton Film Festival. These events speak to the healthy music and cultural industries in Hamilton.

In addition to the “home grown” festivals, Hamilton has shown itself to be an excellent destination to host sport, meetings and conferences, and other large-scale events. Building on Hamilton’s strong history as a sports town, the city draws visitors in for sporting events year-round, ranging from amateur sports to hosting major professional sporting events. A few examples of recent major tourism events include the NHL Heritage Classic, Canadian Country Music Awards, NDP Conference, Grey Cup, and the RBC Canadian Open.

While events bring vibrancy and visitors to Hamilton, events and festivals have become exceedingly expensive to host and at the same time, funding has seen tremendous cuts. **Events and festivals across the world are feeling this pressure and are at risk of not continuing without creative funding solutions.**

The city has seen tremendous success with small, community-based events that grow into massive festivals with significant tourism impact. For example, Art Crawl inspired and became Supercrawl over the course of a decade; this event now attracts approximately 300,000 visitors to the downtown over three days in the fall. A sustainable eco-system of support is required to replicate this success and provide resources to allow small events to grow into big ones.

Event Infrastructure

Hamilton is an attractive event host destination because event facilities are clustered with hotel rooms and complementing amenities (restaurants, retail) in the downtown core. This contributes greatly to a positive visitor experience and in securing large city-wide events. The

city’s event hosting capacity will continue to grow with the major capital investment and renovation of the Hamilton Convention Centre.

While the city has several strong event spaces and a collaborative city-wide approach to major events, Hamilton is held back by lacking event and festival infrastructure. Examples include public washrooms, access to sufficient power and servicing connections, equipment storage, or parking for trucks and event crews. **Similarly, during large city-wide events, there is an insufficient supply of overnight accommodations.**

There are opportunities to strategically build out new infrastructure and enhancements aligned with event partners and city departments, such as parks and public works. For example, installing power and servicing connections along James St. North or in key event parks like Bayfront, Gage, T.B. McQuesten, or Pier 4 will create more seamless plug-and-play event spaces. This would also reduce the need for diesel generators and enable event organizers to be more sustainable.

Similarly, during city-planning projects, infrastructure to host events or fill identified event space gaps should be kept in mind. For example, if a new sport complex or large city-wide park is being planned, considering the infrastructure needed to host sporting tournaments, festivals, or major events in these parks should be planned for during the inception phase. This could also be an opportunity to remove strain from overly popular parks and event areas by planning new spaces aligned to the Parks Master Plan.

Business Events & Conferences

While business events and conferences may not be as visible as major tourism events or festivals, they play a vital role in creating year-round vibrancy in a tourism destination. Most often, these events take place during weekday periods, filling a gap that visiting friends and relatives or leisure guests cannot fill.

As stated above, the clustering of Hamilton’s convention centre and event facilities in

close proximity to its major hotels and complementary assets (restaurants, retail) make it an excellent host city for business events and conferences. With the renovation of Hamilton's Convention Centre, Hamilton is poised to become a key player in this market.

Hosting major events not only ties directly into Council's priority of enhancing the City's reputation as a centre of culture, sport, and tourism, but also acts as an economic promoter. For example, hosting a major conference on agrifood production, life sciences, technology, or goods movement signals to businesses in these industries that Hamilton is a key player and supports Foreign Direct Investment activities. Similarly, leveraging the reputation of Hamilton's internationally known companies or McMaster Innovation Park can help attract conferences in key sectors to Hamilton. Lastly, hosting major events helps bring year-round vibrancy and overnight guests to the city.

There is an opportunity to work closer with Hamilton's event partners and broader industry partners to sell Hamilton as a top business event destination. Funding is also available to help destinations that have a Business Events Attraction Strategy to attract and host international events. An international business events attraction strategy includes a comprehensive plan to position a destination as an attractive hub for hosting international business events. Key components include excellent venues, accommodation, transportation as well as supports in the form of skilled personnel, marketing and promotion, and industry collaboration. Hamilton has all of these components and there is an opportunity to work closely with event partners to unlock funding and international opportunities.

Municipal Accommodation Tax

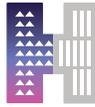
In January 2023, the City of Hamilton implemented a 4% Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) on accommodation stays within its jurisdiction, including hotels, motels, and soon, short-term rentals (STRs). **This MAT aims to generate revenue dedicated to tourism development services and promotion, aligning with the city's Tourism Strategy goals, and serving as a vital source of non-tax levy funding for Hamilton's tourism industry initiatives.**

This Tourism Strategy serves as the guiding framework for directing MAT funds towards initiatives that contribute to the growth, development, and sustainability of Hamilton's tourism industry. Ensuring alignment between MAT expenditures and the strategic priorities outlined in the Tourism Strategy, maximizes the impact of these funds and helps achieve long-term tourism development objectives. Funds directed towards cultural development, growing local events and festivals, and improving event infrastructure provide benefit to Hamilton residents with positive economic impact and improving quality of life through access to enriching experiences.

Based on conversations with other municipalities who have implemented a MAT, best practices recommend creating a MAT Advisory Group made up of a variety of tourism industry partners. Furthermore, several municipalities and regions have created grant programs using MAT funds to aid in event attraction, product development, placemaking, and activation. Not only do these practices align with Council's priorities of transparency and collaboration, but they also ensure that the MAT funds are used to directly benefit the tourism industry.



Tew Falls, Hamilton Conservation Authority



Tourism Strategy

2.1 Introduction

When done well, tourism can create vibrancy, social cohesion, and prosperity. Hamilton's Tourism Strategy is built on a regenerative and 'whole city' approach where Tourism Hamilton works collaboratively with City staff, tourism businesses, and industry partners to steward the destination. The next few years will bring several transformations to Hamilton. This strategy is focused on capturing the momentum of major projects, celebrating the city's diversity, and fostering Hamilton's authentic identity and culture. The following section details the vision and strategic priorities for Hamilton's tourism industry, as well as the actions to achieve the vision.

2.3 Strategic Priorities

To achieve this vision, this strategy is built on four strategic priorities:

- 01 **Grow Hamilton's Reputation as a Leading Tourism Destination**
- 02 **Cultivate Vibrant Tourism Districts**
- 03 **Promote and Support the Sustainability of Natural Assets**
- 04 **Strengthen Hamilton's Major Events and Festival Sector**

2.2 Hamilton's Tourism Vision Statement

Hamilton is a top Canadian destination, celebrated for our vibrant tourism districts, captivating nature-based activities, and authentic and sustainable experiences.



James St. North



Royal Botanical Gardens



Merit Brewing Company

Grow Hamilton's Reputation as a Leading Tourism Destination

This priority focuses on supporting industry partners, welcoming visitors, and facilitating 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.

Increasing a healthy host destination, Hamilton's residents and businesses are the ultimate hosts and best ambassadors to promote all Hamilton has to offer to their visiting friends and relatives. Therefore, inspiring, encouraging, and clearly communicating with residents and tourism partners alike is vital.

Tourism Strategic Actions

1. Develop and implement a Tourism Product Development Program, cultivating authentic experiences to showcase the city's diverse cultural, heritage, music, culinary, and natural assets.
2. Complete and adopt the Indigenous Tourism Experiences Study by 2024.
3. Following recommendations from the Indigenous Tourism Experiences Study, support new and existing Indigenous tourism operators in developing authentic Indigenous tourism experiences.
4. Work with Corporate Communications, Micrmobility Operations, HSR, Metrolinx, and other partners to identify and support the promotion of sustainable, destination-focused transportation options for tourists visiting and navigating the city.
5. Redevelop the Tourism Hamilton website and complete a digital review project to identify and meet visitors' current and future needs.
6. Working with Corporate Communications, Economic Development, and industry partners, foster local pride in place encouraging permanent and temporary residents to explore their own city and invite friends and relatives to visit.
7. Leverage Tourism Hamilton's brand, social channels, and in-kind partnerships to develop lure campaigns targeting leisure visitors and promote the city as an attractive destination.
8. To lead by example, identify priority areas to implement visitor servicing in French and other popular visitor languages, including website, signage and wayfinding, and tools for staff.
9. To lead by example, Tourism Hamilton will obtain a GreenStep Sustainable Tourism Certification, which encompasses efforts in responsible tourism, environmental stewardship, accessibility, diversity, and equity.
10. Create a Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) Advisory Group of tourism industry partners by the mid-2025 to collaborate in a transparent manner on MAT spending.



Core Park

Whole City Approach

Creating a healthy support system for a destination takes a whole-city approach. Hamilton’s Workforce Strategy and related actions support this strategy. For example, promoting Hamilton as an appealing and inclusive place to work and building a workforce pipeline through work placements for secondary and post-secondary co-op students are key for the hospitality and tourism industry. Tourism staff work closely with Economic Development in these areas.

Furthermore, tourism staff are involved with larger City initiatives around Hamilton’s cycling infrastructure and routes as well as projects addressing accessibility and accessible travel, in line with Council priorities for making safe and thriving neighbourhoods. Tourism staff are also following the City’s efforts to increase public engagement to foster trust, inclusivity, and transparency with residents, visitors, and industry partners.

Similarly, to foster inclusion, diversity, equity,

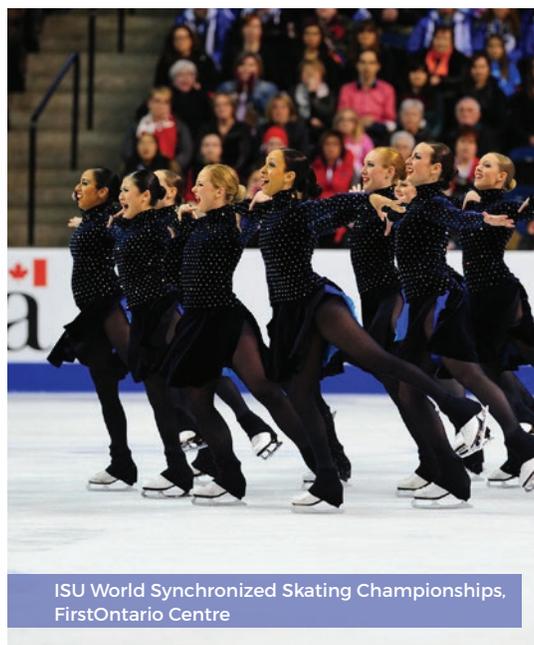
and accessibility, staff will also continue to work with partners such as post-secondary institutions, HIPC and Global Hamilton, to educate post-secondary students, their families, and newcomers to Hamilton.

Furthermore, Tourism Hamilton’s Visitor Experience Centre is committed to fostering a culture of equity, diversity, inclusion, and belonging. In addition to being fully accessible and Rainbow Registered, tourism staff are taking part of the Ontario Corporate Training Centre (OCTC) and Ontario Disability Employment Network (ODEN)’s project dedicated to empowering businesses with the tools, knowledge, resources, and confidence needed to embrace disability inclusive hiring and foster diverse workplaces.

Lastly, tourism staff work closely with Economic Development to create vibrant downtowns and neighbourhoods, thriving live-work-play environments, profitable businesses, and a positive perception of Hamilton nationally and internationally.



West Avenue Cider House



ISU World Synchronized Skating Championships, FirstOntario Centre



Cowabunga Plus

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.

Animating dedicated visitor spaces and creating itineraries to help visitors experience a destination not only matches visitor travel trends, but further extends a host destination’s welcome.

- Tourism Strategic Actions**
11. Through the Downtown West Harbourfront Coordinating Committee, implement safety, cleanliness, and activation initiatives in the Downtown and West Harbourfront areas, focusing on programming, placemaking, and strategic investments to enhance vibrancy and co-create an authentic ‘sense of place.’
 12. Enhance key tourism locations like the West Harbour and Downtown Entertainment Precinct through urban design and public art.
 13. Create and implement a four-year exhibition and community program to use the Visitor Experience Centre as a year-round central hub that also connects to major hosted events.
 14. Establish a Night-Time Economy initiative by the end of 2025 to review City policies and bylaws to remove barriers and encourage operators and community organizations to create a healthy and safe night-time economy.
 15. Conduct a review of City of Hamilton tourism-related wayfinding signage and implement a program to update with current branding and digital technologies, to be completed by 2028.
 16. Execute a tourism business attraction strategy to secure business investments that enhance Hamilton's destination offerings by filling identified gaps in accommodations, attractions, and cultural venues.
 17. For identified tourism districts, work with local businesses, BIAs, organizations, and regional partners to co-create curated experiences and authentic itineraries that entice visitors and reflect the district’s unique identity



Hamilton Arena Project Concept

Whole City Approach

Organizations and departments across the city work to create vibrant neighbourhoods in Hamilton. For example, tourism staff are part of the City's Downtown West Harbour Coordinating Committee. This committee is made up of key City teams all working to improve the city's safety, cleanliness, vibrancy, and LRT readiness. Tourism staff also advocate for the city's safety and security, especially around major events and in key tourism districts.

While tourism staff are not most responsible for downtown office vacancy, efforts to increase visitation downtown will have positive impacts and increase vibrancy. Furthermore, fostering a healthy night-time economy will not only bring that vibrancy past 6:00pm, but will also help improve the safety and cleanliness of downtown Hamilton.

The strategy also seeks to develop the downtown and waterfront as cultural hubs in line with Council priorities and the Economic Development Action Plan which seeks to transform the West Harbour area into a recreational, commercial, and residential waterfront destination. Tourism staff are working closely with colleagues in Real Estate and Parks to animate the waterfront further.

The Tourism Strategy seeks to developing unique identities for all tourism districts across the city and to celebrate the arts, heritage, history, music, and cultural elements of Hamilton. As local businesses and resident organizations play a vital role in fostering the community and animating their neighborhoods, tourism staff rely on these local experts and ambassadors to host visitors alongside tourism staff.

For example, the renovation and new programming at Tourism Hamilton's Visitor Experience Centre have created an engaging and inclusive environment that fosters a strong sense of community, encouraging repeat visits. By introducing unique and diverse events, such as the Unicorn Market celebrating 2SLGBTQAI+ artisans during Hamilton's Art Crawl, and collaborating with local artists and vendors, the Centre has become a dynamic, ever-evolving destination. This vibrancy has not only attracted first-time visitors but also enticed them to return, as evidenced by the growing participation in recurring events like Art Crawl. Moreover, the Centre acts as a central hub for showcasing local artisans and artists, financially supporting them and expanding offerings to include Indigenous products, which will also now be featured at Hamilton's Civic Museums across the city.



Martello Restaurant



Summit Station Dairy



Mural by Kyle Joedicke

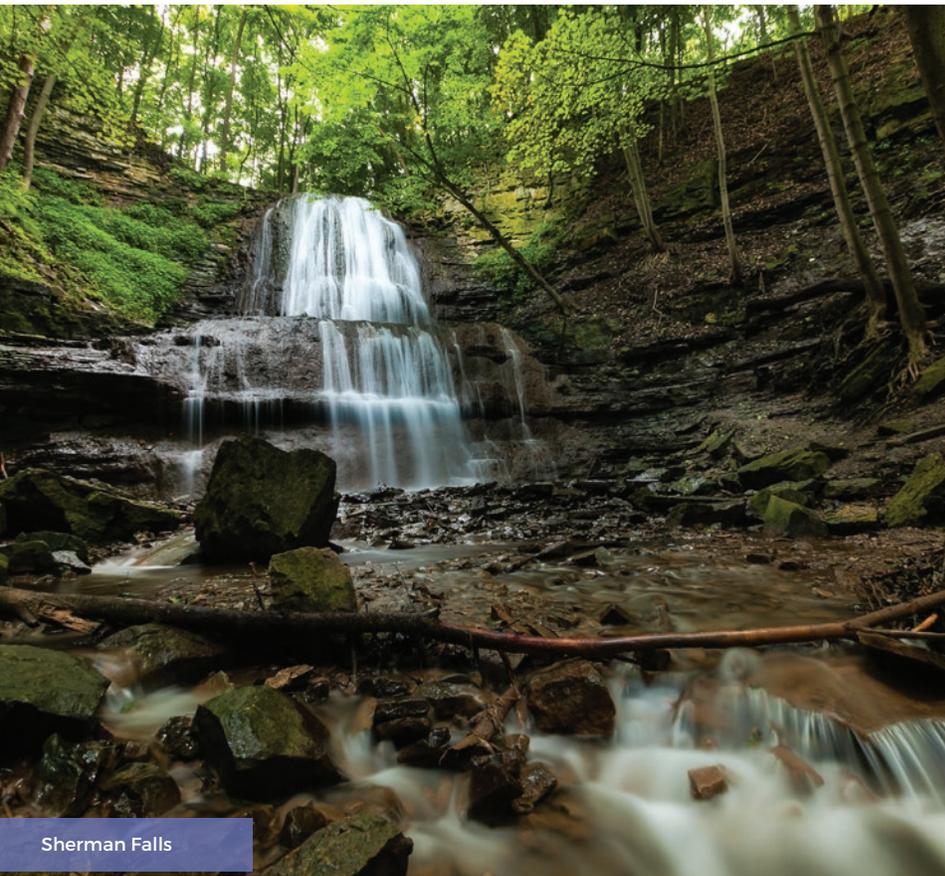
Protect and Improve the Enjoyment of Natural Assets

Recognizing Hamilton's abundant natural assets, this priority 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.

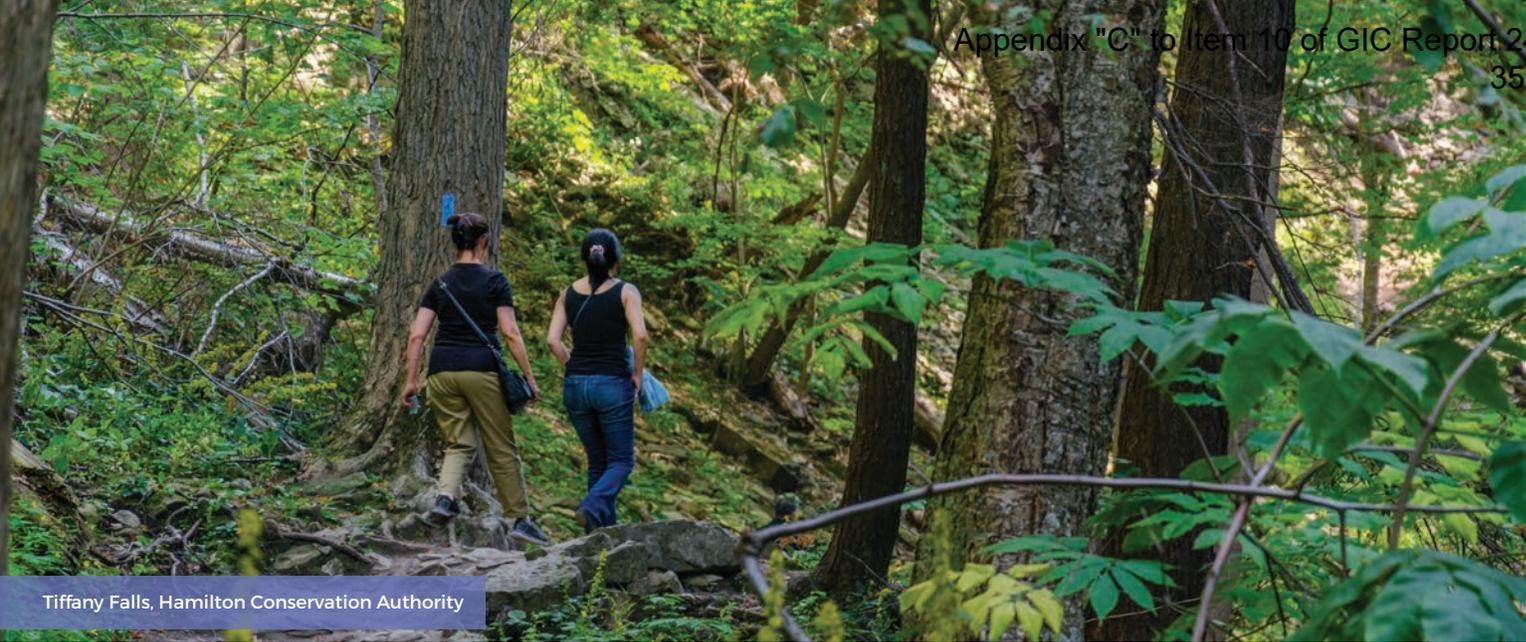
In addition, many of Hamilton's natural assets are located close to vibrant and emerging tourism districts that can be incorporated into a visitor's trip, not only promoting surrounding neighbourhoods but also as a form of capacity-management. However, visitors need help connecting these assets through communication, itineraries, and tourism product development.

Tourism Strategic Actions

18. Complete a Waterfall Destination Master Plan by the end of 2026 to facilitate the safe and environmentally-friendly enjoyment of Hamilton's waterfalls and to identify long-term opportunities to improve visitor capacity at Hamilton's waterfalls.
19. Work with Climate Office, Active Transportation, Corporate Communications, and industry partners to identify and support the promotion of eco-tourism, environmental rehabilitation efforts, and responsible enjoyment of Hamilton's natural assets (i.e. trails, cycling, eco-parks, on-water activities).
20. With Planning and Economic Development and Public Works partners, investigate tourism opportunities for the redevelopment of Wild Waterworks and surrounding Confederation Beach Park lands as a top destination, to have a plan to Council by 2028.
21. Leverage federal and provincial programs as they become available to accelerate capital investments to enhance Hamilton's trail systems and natural assets by 2028 (waterfalls, trails, escarpment, rural agritourism, waterfront, bike racks at tourism assets.)
22. Work with the Land Development Office to establish the physical infrastructure (e.g., docks) and governance structure to facilitate additional recreational and leisure water-based activities and on-water operators at the waterfront by 2026.



Sherman Falls



Tiffany Falls, Hamilton Conservation Authority

Whole City Approach

These actions are aligned with Council priorities surrounding protecting the city's greenspace and waterways, as well as providing vibrant parks and recreation options, and increasing access to the waterfront. Similarly, the Economic Development Action Plan includes completing a feasibility study on how to leverage the economic potential of waterfalls and adjacent natural amenities with consideration to environmental and neighbourhood impacts.

In addition, this strategic priority also supports and is supported by numerous City and community plans, including the Hamilton

Climate Action Strategy (2022), the Hamilton Parks Master Plan (2022), the Hamilton Recreation Master Plan (2022), and the West Harbour Recreation Master Plan (2010).

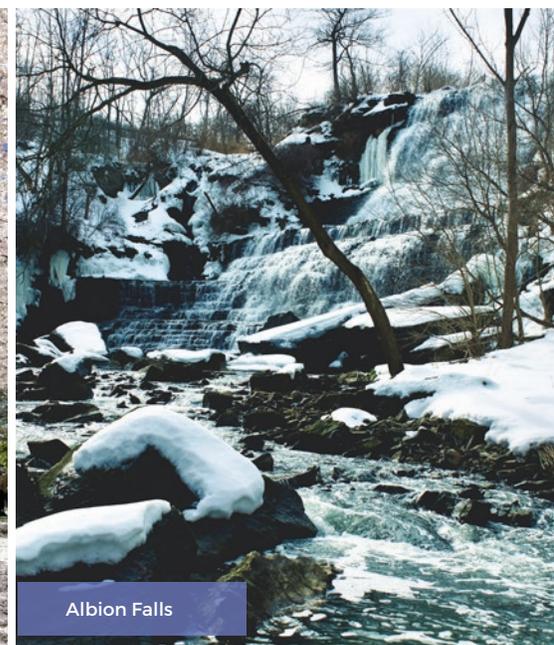
Tourism staff also work closely with Active Transportation colleagues and industry partners such as Hamilton, Halton, Brant Regional Tourism Organization (RTO3) and Ontario by Bike on promoting Hamilton's cycling infrastructure and cycling product development. An example of existing cycling tourism product development includes the Rural on the Ridge cycling experience highlighting natural and agri-tourism assets in rural Stoney Creek and Binbrook.



Christie Lake Conservation Area, Hamilton Conservation Authority



Centennial Park



Albion Falls

Strengthen Hamilton’s Major Events and Festival Sector

Hosting festivals and major events is one of the most visible ways that Hamilton welcomes visitors. These festivals and events bring vibrancy, cultural richness, and additional spending into the community and raise the city’s profile.

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 additional opportunity to actively seek out and support major festivals geared towards equity deserving groups that expand the diversity of audiences as well as supporting cultural development (such as music, arts, theatre). The strategy aligns with Council priorities for enhancing the city's reputation as a center of culture, sport, and tourism, and integrates with economic development goals to attract investment and stimulate year-round vibrancy.

Tourism Strategic Actions

- 23.** Implement sales campaigns to secure sporting and cultural tourism events that leverage investments in Hamilton’s entertainment assets and other public spaces.
- 24.** In line with the Federal Tourism Strategy, implement a sales campaign to secure international, national, and provincial meetings and conventions that provide year-round activity for industry partners.
- 25.** Work with appropriate partners to leverage federal and provincial programs, as they become available, to accelerate capital investments in event and festival infrastructure in public spaces (enhance power, washrooms, lighting, connectivity to airport/transit, etc.)
- 26.** Work with local Indigenous communities to host major sports events for Indigenous athletes (Urban Indigenous Strategy Item #35).
- 27.** Working with Indigenous Relations Division and Indigenous communities, support and promote National Indigenous Peoples Day (June 21st) (Urban Indigenous Strategy Item #20).



RBC Canadian Open, Hamilton Golf & Country Club

- 28. Enter a memorandum of understanding with the Hamilton Sports Group (Tiger-Cats) by the end of 2025 to formalize a partnership to increase the number of sports, culture, and community events and activations hosted at Tim Hortons Field.
- 29. Utilize a portion of the Municipal Accommodation Tax and other non-levy funding sources for bid fees for securing and executing major events, in collaboration with industry Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) Advisory Group.
- 30. Utilize a portion of the City's Municipal Accommodation Tax funds to support cultural development (such as growing music, festivals, and event infrastructure), in collaboration with industry Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) Advisory Group.
- 31. Implement tailored neighborhood strategies for communities heavily impacted by major events (e.g., Stiplely during the Grey Cup) to mitigate effects on residents through effective communication and coordination of essential City services.
- 32. Working with Parks, Recreation, and Real Estate, undertake an analysis and policy review for hosting and infrastructure needs on city properties (power, facilities, venue mix, policing, etc.).

Whole City Approach

Hosting major events ties directly into Council's priority of enhancing the City's reputation as a centre of culture, sport, and tourism. This strategic priority is also in line with the Economic Development Action Plan's stretch target of attracting five major events that generate a total combined economic impact of at least \$50M.

In addition, hosting major events facilitates the growth of key sectors and aligns with several economic development and foreign direct investment goals as it signals Hamilton's economic diversity, raises the city's profile, and brings year-round activity to the city.

During major festivals or downtown hosted events, the Visitor Experience Centre often serves as a community hub, offering subsidized space to marginalized groups who wish to participate or by acting as a volunteer base.

Hamilton is home to several home-grown festivals and events and the new Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) funds will further enable to the city to support cultural development and a sustainable ecosystem to foster small events into larger tourism events.

2.4 Reporting & Processes

To remain transparent and collaborative, tourism staff will provide an annual informational update to Council. In addition, tourism staff will continue to host quarterly Team Hamilton meetings and provide updates to industry partners.

Wherever possible, tourism staff will look to leverage Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) funds or other non-levy sources to achieve new initiatives identified within this strategy. Any requests for funding will continue to go through the appropriate processes.



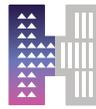
Six Nations Performer, Art Gallery of Hamilton



Hamilton Convention Centre



Westinghouse HQ



Implementation Plan

The following implementation plan outlines the timeline, funding sources, and performance metrics for each of the four strategic priorities.

In measuring performance, metrics can range from:

- Inputs, such as human, financial, or organizational resources, to
- Actions, such as specific activities undertaken using the inputs, to
- Outputs, indicating the results of the actions, to ultimately
- Desired outcomes, which are the broader long-term impacts on the destination.

Funding sources are indicated throughout the Implementation Plan, however there are no new net-levy impacts from this strategy. Sources include:

- Existing resources,
- Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) funding through the Hamilton Tourism Development Corporation (HTDC),
- The City's MAT portion, and
- Other funding sources such as grants, partnerships, in-kind, etc.

Priority 1: Grow Hamilton's Reputation as a Leading Tourism Destination										
Action		Timeline					Funding Source			
		2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Existing	HTDC MAT	City's MAT	Other
1	Develop and implement a Tourism Product Development Program, cultivating authentic experiences to showcase the city's diverse cultural, heritage, music, culinary, and natural assets.		●	●	●	●	✓	✓		✓
2	Complete and adopt the Indigenous Tourism Experiences Study by 2024.	●						✓		✓
3	Following recommendations from the Indigenous Tourism Experiences Study, support new and existing Indigenous tourism operators in developing authentic Indigenous tourism experiences.		●	●	●	●	✓	✓		✓
4	Work with Corporate Communications, HSR, Metrolinx, and other partners to identify and support the promotion of sustainable, destination-focused transportation options for tourists visiting and navigating the city.		●	●			✓		✓	✓
5	Redevelop the Tourism Hamilton website and complete a digital review project to identify and meet visitors' current and future needs.			●	●				✓	

Priority 1: Grow Hamilton’s Reputation as a Leading Tourism Destination										
Action		Timeline					Funding Source			
		2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Existing	HTDC MAT	City’s MAT	Other
6	Working with Corporate Communications, Economic Development, and industry partners, use marketing tools and placemaking initiatives to foster local pride in place to encourage permanent and temporary residents to explore their own city and invite friends and relatives to visit.		●	●			✓	✓		✓
7	Leverage Tourism Hamilton’s brand, social channels, and in-kind partnerships to develop lure campaigns targeting leisure visitors and promote the city as an attractive destination.	●	●	●	●	●	✓	✓		✓
8	To lead by example, identify priority areas to implement visitor services in French and other popular visitor languages, including website, signage and wayfinding, and tools for staff.			●	●				✓	✓
9	To lead by example, Tourism Hamilton will obtain a GreenStep Sustainable Tourism Certification, which encompasses efforts in responsible tourism, environmental stewardship, accessibility, diversity, and equity.		●	●				✓		
10	Create a Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) Advisory Group of tourism industry partners by the mid-2025 to collaborate in a transparent manner on MAT spending.		●				✓			

Metrics

- Number of new tourism products created,
- Visitor ridership on sustainable transportation options,
- Launch of new TourismHamilton.com website,
- Website performance and user statistics,
- Achieved GreenStep Sustainable Tourism Certification,
- Improved resident sentiment of tourism in Hamilton and Hamilton as a destination,
- Indigenous tourism experiences study completed,
- Number of Indigenous tourism experiences created and tourism operators in Hamilton,
- Partner sentiment of tourism staff and support systems,
- Airport seat capacity and passenger traffic (i.e. deplaned passengers),
- MAT Advisory team is created,
- Ridership on active and sustainable transportation modes.

Priority 2: Cultivate Vibrant Tourism Districts										
Action		Timeline					Funding Source			
		2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Existing	HTDC MAT	City's MAT	Other
11	Through the Downtown West Harbourfront Coordinating Committee, implement safety, cleanliness, and activation initiatives in the Downtown and West Harbourfront areas, focusing on programming, placemaking, and strategic investments to enhance vibrancy and co-create an authentic 'sense of place.'	●	●	●			✓	✓		✓
12	Enhance key tourism locations like the West Harbour and Downtown Entertainment Precinct through urban design and public art		●				✓			✓
13	Create and implement a four-year exhibition and community program to use the Visitor Experience Centre as a year-round central hub that also connects to major hosted events			●	●		✓	✓	✓	✓
14	Establish a Night-Time Economy initiative by the end of 2025 to review City policies and bylaws to remove barriers and encourage operators and community organizations to create a healthy and safe night-time economy		●	●	●	●	✓		✓	
15	Conduct a review of City of Hamilton tourism-related wayfinding signage and implement a program to update with current branding and digital technologies, to be completed by 2028			●	●	●	✓		✓	
16	Execute a tourism business attraction strategy to secure business investments that enhance Hamilton's destination offerings by filling identified gaps in accommodations, attractions, and cultural venues		●	●	●	●	✓			
17	For identified tourism districts, work with local businesses, BIAs, organizations, and regional partners to co-create curated experiences and authentic itineraries that entice visitors and reflect the district's unique identity		●	●	●	●	✓	✓		✓

Metrics

- Night-time economy task force is established,
- City bylaw and policies are reviewed to encourage night-time economy,
- Downtown business sentiments improve,
- Overall level of downtown vibrancy improves,
- Number of pop-ups and activations in Visitor Experience Centre,
- Number of physical signs installed/replaced/updated and digital wayfinding elements,
- Number of business attraction campaign activities,
- Number of investment opportunities in key tourism districts,
- Number of visitor itineraries created.

Priority 3: Promote and Support the Sustainability of Natural Assets										
Action		Timeline					Funding Source			
		2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Existing	HTDC MAT	City's MAT	Other
18	Complete a Waterfall Destination Master Plan by 2028 to facilitate the safe and environmentally-friendly enjoyment of Hamilton's waterfalls and to identify long-term opportunities to improve visitor capacity at Hamilton's waterfalls		●	●			✓	✓		✓
19	Work with Climate Office, Active Transportation, Corporate Communications, and industry partners to identify and support the promotion of eco-tourism, environmental rehabilitation efforts, and responsible enjoyment of Hamilton's natural assets (i.e., trails, cycling, eco-parks, on-water activities)			●	●		✓			✓
20	With Planning and Economic Development partners, investigate tourism opportunities for the redevelopment of Wild Waterworks and surrounding Confederation Beach Park lands as a top destination, to have a plan to Council by 2028			●	●	●	✓			
21	Leverage federal and provincial programs as they become available to accelerate capital investments to enhance Hamilton's trail systems and natural assets by 2028 (waterfalls, trails, escarpment, rural agritourism, waterfront, bike racks at tourism assets)				●	●				✓
22	Work with the Land Development Office to establish the physical infrastructure (e.g., docks) and governance structure to facilitate additional recreational and leisure water-based activities and on-water operators at the waterfront by 2026	●	●	●	●			✓	✓	✓

Metrics

- Waterfall Destination Master Plan is completed,
- Amount of provincial and federal funding leveraged,
- Investment in Confederation Beach Park as a top destination,
- Improvements made to Hamilton's natural assets (i.e., number of lights, public washrooms, parking stalls added),
- Number of recreational operators on Hamilton's waterfront,
- Visitor education materials and communication plan is created and launched,
- Decreasing health and safety incidents involving Hamilton's natural assets.

Priority 4: Strengthen Hamilton's Major Events and Festival Sector

Action		Timeline					Funding Source			
		2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Existing	HTDC MAT	City's MAT	Other
23	Implement sales campaigns to secure sporting and cultural tourism events that leverage investments in Hamilton's entertainment assets and other public spaces	●	●	●	●	●	✓	✓		✓
24	In line with the Federal Tourism Strategy, implement a sales campaign to secure international, national, and provincial meetings and conventions that provide year-round activity for industry partners	●	●	●	●	●	✓	✓		✓
25	Work with appropriate partners to leverage federal and provincial programs, as they become available, to accelerate capital investments in event and festival infrastructure in public spaces (enhance power, washrooms, lighting, connectivity to airport/transit, etc.)			●	●	●	✓		✓	✓
26	Work with local Indigenous communities to host major sports events for Indigenous athletes (Urban Indigenous Strategy Item #35)			●	●	●	✓	✓		✓
27	Working with Indigenous Relations Department and Indigenous communities, support and promote National Indigenous Peoples Day (June 21st) (Urban Indigenous Strategy Item #20)		●	●	●	●	✓		✓	✓
28	Enter a memorandum of understanding with the Hamilton Sports Group (Tiger-Cats) by the end of 2025 to formalize a partnership to increase the number of sports, culture, and community events and activations hosted at Tim Hortons Field		●	●			✓			✓
29	Utilize a portion of the Municipal Accommodation Tax and other non-levy funding sources for bid fees for securing and executing major events, in collaboration with industry Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) Advisory Group	●	●	●	●	●		✓		✓
30	Utilize a portion of the City's Municipal Accommodation Tax funds to support cultural development (such as growing festivals and event infrastructure), in collaboration with industry Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) Advisory Group		●	●	●				✓	✓

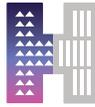
Priority 4: Strengthen Hamilton's Major Events and Festival Sector										
Action		Timeline					Funding Source			
		2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	Existing	HTDC MAT	City's MAT	Other
31	Implement tailored neighborhood strategies for communities heavily impacted by major events (e.g., Stipley during the Grey Cup) to mitigate effects on residents through effective communication and coordination of essential City services	●	●	●	●	●	✓			
32	Working with Parks, Recreation, and Real Estate, undertake an analysis and policy review for hosting and infrastructure needs on city properties (power, facilities, venue mix, policing, etc.)		●	●	●		✓		✓	

Metrics

- Number of major events hosted in Hamilton,
- Number of event bids won,
- Economic impact of major events,
- Improved event infrastructure (i.e., number of new power and servicing access or number of public washrooms in key event locations),
- Sentiment of industry partners and residents,
- Meeting and event planner sentiments,
- Leads generated and secured through campaigns,
- Number of event-related overnight accommodation stays,
- Reputation of Hamilton as a host event city,
- MOU with Hamilton Sports Group completed,
- Dollars invested from MAT into cultural development, events, and festivals,
- Event infrastructure and policy review completed,
- Number of event venues in Hamilton.



Ancaster Mill



Appendices

4.1 Definitions:

Partner: throughout this document, staff have intentionally avoided using the term “stakeholders” as this word has problematic colonial associations. Instead, the word “partner” has been used. The term “partner” also better captures the nature of tourism’s work, as a tourism destination is made up of a collection of partners working toward a common goal.

Tourism district: a tourism district is made up of tourism assets, products, and experiences. Tourism asset categories include accommodations, attractions, food and beverage, entertainment, recreation, event facilities, transportation, visitor services, heritage and cultural, and natural and outdoor assets. Assets within a destination have a symbiotic relationship: a community or key tourism area needs a variety of assets to thrive. For example, an ideal tourism area may have a hotel, a number of restaurants, a natural asset, and an attraction within a 20-minute walking radius.

Tourism Product/Product Development: A “tourism product” is created by tying together unique elements within a destination to create an authentic experience. A simple example would be a brewery tour, where the “tourism product” is created by combining transportation, beer tastings at each brewery, and a guided experience. As defined by UN Tourism, a Tourism Product is “a combination of tangible and intangible elements, such as natural, cultural and man-made resources, attractions, facilities, services and activities around a specific center of interest which represents the core of the destination marketing mix and creates an overall visitor experience including emotional aspects for the potential customers. A tourism product is priced and sold through distribution channels and it has a life-cycle”.

Regenerative Tourism: prioritizes the community and environment, reframing the tourism destination as a ‘host community’ rather than a resource to be exploited or consumed. This approach grew exponentially coming out of the pandemic as a response to “over tourism,” capacity restraints, negative impacts on residents, and degenerative development. Capacity gaps were especially evident during the pandemic where Canadian destinations with natural assets suffered problems of ecological destruction and overcrowding due to lack of infrastructure such as

public washrooms, wayfinding, clear signage, available parking, and capacity management.

Visitor: A visitor is any person travelling more than 40km one way, except for regular work or school routes. This includes people attending events, business trips, family vacations, sporting competitions, etc. both single-day and overnight trips.

Visitor Spending: Visitor spending includes any monies a visitor spends within a destination. For example, a visitor may stay overnight in a hotel (accommodation), eat at a restaurant (food and beverage), take the bus or an e-scooter (transportation) to an attraction, concert, or sporting event (recreation and entertainment).

Tourism Business Counts: This is the number of tourism businesses in Hamilton. For example, the number of hotels, restaurants, etc. A destination requires a healthy balance of all categories of tourism businesses in order to function well.

Hotel Occupancy: Hotel occupancy is calculated by the number of occupied room nights in Hamilton, divided by the total number of available room nights. A healthy destination has an occupancy of approximately 75%.

Hotel Average Daily Rate: The average daily rate is calculated by the total room revenue generated by a hotel divided by the number of occupied room nights sold. Generally, the higher the average rate, the more in demand a destination is.

Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT): Effective January 1, 2023, MAT is a four percent (4%) charge on the purchase of accommodations at hotels, motels, and bed and breakfasts, including those sold online. The MAT is applied on all room rental accommodations of four hours or more and continuous stays of 29 nights or less. Other services, including meeting room rentals, food and beverage, room services, internet and phone charges, are excluded from the tax provided they are itemized separately on the bill. HST is also payable on the MAT portion. The MAT provides the City of Hamilton and the Hamilton Tourism Development Corporation with funding for destination marketing and tourism development initiatives, including investing in hosting significant tourism festivals and events that positively impact the local economy.

4.2 SWOT Analysis

Based on all the preceding analysis, Hamilton’s destination overview, and partner feedback, the following SWOT analysis summarizes Hamilton’s strengths and weaknesses and identifies the opportunities and threats the city faces as a tourism destination.

- **Strengths** are internal value-creating factors that should be built upon.
- **Weaknesses** are internal value-destroying factors that should be mitigated and improved upon.
- **Opportunities** are external value-creating factors that a destination should take advantage of.
- **Threats** are external value-destroying factors that a destination should mitigate where possible and take into consideration when planning for the future.

Strengths

- Burgeoning tourism districts (entertainment district, waterfront, BIAs, historic downtowns, etc.).
- Hamilton has a rich culture scene and growing music and film industries.
- Hamilton has a growing International Airport and direct connection into Air Canada’s platform through the Landline Service.
- Exposure to visitors from ideal location between Toronto and Niagara, two of Canada’s most visited destinations.
- Improvements in sustainable and active transportation options (e-scooters, bikes, HSR re-envisioned, LRT, GO train expanding).
- Tourism Hamilton’s Visitor Experience Centre is a safe and inclusive space that offers visitors excellent digital and physical resources.
- Tourism Hamilton has a strong brand and growing social following.
- Excellent natural and outdoor assets, e.g., waterfalls, trails, Niagara escarpment, waterfront.
- Top nature-based and outdoor adventure attractions such as the Royal Botanical Gardens, TreeTop Trekking, and African Lion Safari.
- Excellent culinary assets and reputation as “foodie” destination, including restaurants, bars, breweries and cideries, agritourism, etc.
- Strong historic and cultural attractions, e.g., HMCS Haida National Historic Site, Canadian Warplane Museum, Football Hall of Fame, Art Gallery of Hamilton, Westfield Heritage Village Conservation Area, etc.
- Hamilton’s history of being a “sports town,” strong sporting assets e.g. Tim Horton’s Field, and the city’s several major sporting teams, e.g., the Hamilton Tiger-Cats, Forge FC Football, Toronto Rock Lacrosse Club, and the Hamilton Cardinals Baseball Club.
- City has several strong event spaces and major parks, and the convention centre will be renovated.
- Collaborative city-wide approach to hosting major events makes Hamilton a good event host and best practice city.
- Newly introduced Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) will generate revenue dedicated to tourism development services and promotion and serve as a vital source of nontax levy funding for Hamilton’s tourism industry initiatives.



Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum

Weaknesses

- Hamilton does not stand out in the competitive destination market and has a low international profile.
- Hamilton's resident sentiment has been weakening due to social challenges and residents are often not aware of all that Hamilton has to offer.
- Limited support infrastructure and cohesive messaging around tourism districts
- Limited, disjointed, and outdated wayfinding and lack of digital wayfinding assets.
- Increasing concerns about downtown safety and cleanliness.
- Lack of visitor services offered physically beyond Visitor Experience Centre downtown.
- Tourism Hamilton's current website infrastructure is ill-equipped to integrate new technology or to cater to visitor's digital expectations.
- Some of Hamilton's attractions require capital investments and only a few new attractions have come into the city.
- Gaps in family-friendly attractions, attractions aimed at youth and young adults, and wellness-related attractions.

- Currently lacking Indigenous tourism experiences, however a project is underway.
- Weak night-time economy due to limited supporting infrastructure, policies, and after-hour transportation.
- Outdoor and recreational infrastructure lacking for nature-based activities, e.g., safety and accessibility of trails and waterfalls, or docks to facilitate on-water rental operators at waterfront.
- Lacking event infrastructure and logistics for major events and festivals, i.e., public washrooms, access to sufficient power and servicing connections, equipment storage, parking for trucks and event crews.
- During large city-wide events, there is an insufficient supply of accommodations.
- Accommodation gaps in high-quality economy hotels, no luxury hotels, and limited alternative accommodations (i.e., cottage, glamping).
- Product development required to tie together Hamilton's assets and engage and entice visitors.

Opportunities

- Hamilton and neighbouring cities can collectively bid on major events in a regional play, pooling event hosting resources and overnight accommodations, aligned with federal tourism strategic priority of attracting more international events.
- Demand for high-quality entertainment and concerts growing. Hamilton can capitalize on this as few other Ontario cities have the capacity to host large entertainment.
- Nature-based activities on the rise as health and wellness become top-of-mind for visitors.
- Economic development synergies between foreign direct investment, key Hamilton industries, and hosting major events and conferences.

- Improving transit will make getting to and around Hamilton easier and increase sustainable options (Reimagining HSR, GO station expanding, LRT project).
- Hamilton Airport positioning itself as a gateway to all of southern Ontario will bring additional visitors and exposure to Hamilton.
- Secondary municipalities are becoming more attractive to investors as construction and land costs continue to rise in major urban centers (i.e., Toronto).
- Similarly, secondary municipalities have a lower barrier to entry for new businesses due to lower commercial rents than major urban centers (i.e., Toronto).
- Council has directed staff to investigate redeveloping Confederation Beach Park as a top destination.

Threats

- Increased competition as several other destinations in Ontario are implementing Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) and beginning destination development and marketing efforts.
- Disruption related to LRT construction and the closing of the entertainment assets during renovation.
- Lack of affordable housing and wage pressures threatening hospitality workforce.
- The rising costs of travel and inflationary pressures are leading to diminishing discretionary income for consumers.
- Canadians are often averse to sustainable transportation options because of the lack of user-friendly education, the significant last mile gap, and associated costs.

- The less vibrancy in a downtown, the less safe visitors, businesses, and residents feel, which can contribute to a downward spiral of people and businesses leaving downtowns.
- Funding for arts, culture, festivals, and events is significantly declining, threatening their continuation and new development.
- Climate change is affecting Hamilton's natural assets (i.e., eroding trails, blue-green algae at the waterfront, increase in number of trees falling down) and inclement weather is becoming a risk factor in event planning.

4.3 Consultation & Engagement

METHODOLOGY

This strategy was created in close consultation with industry partners, City departments, and residents. Prior to writing the strategy, tourism staff sought industry sentiments through one-on-one meetings, roundtable discussions, and Team Hamilton tourism partner meetings. Tourism staff also read intersecting City departments' strategies to ensure alignment and avoid duplication of efforts.

A draft of the strategy was completed in the summer of 2024 and presented for feedback throughout the summer and fall, including:

- Industry consultation with over 80 industry partners, through several one-on-one meetings and 5 virtual group feedback sessions.
- Public consultation was done through the Engage Hamilton platform with an in-person and online option:
 - The online Engage Hamilton Tourism Strategy webpage was live in September 2024 and allowed residents to give feedback on the draft, share their thoughts on the current state of tourism in Hamilton, and provide their ideas for future opportunities.
 - An in-person option was also available at the Visitor Experience

- Centre which allowed the public to answer similar questions by putting sticky notes on posterboards. This option was launched at Supercrawl (beginning September 13th)– one of the busiest times for the Centre—and was available through October 14th.
- The draft was presented to Council and the Open for Business Subcommittee for feedback:
 - Open for Business Subcommittee: 2024-2028 Tourism Strategy Status Update (PED24046) (City Wide), July 15, 2024
 - Council at General Issues Committee: 2024-2028 Tourism Strategy (PED24046(a)) (City Wide), September 18, 2024
 - Tourism staff also met individually with Councilors and the Mayor to gather feedback throughout the summer and fall.
- Tourism staff also gathered feedback on the draft strategy from staff across the City, including the Indigenous Relations Division, Parks, Recreation, Corporate Communication, Active Transportation, Hamilton Street Rail (HSR), Economic Development, Real Estate, and others.

The following section provides a high-level summary of the feedback, grouped by key themes. Staff have incorporated the insights and feedback from all consultation into this final strategic document.

KEY THEMES

1. Safety & Security

- **Top priority:** Ensuring safety is a core concern for stakeholders, impacting local pride and visitor attraction. The downtown area, in particular, faces issues with safety, which deters both residents and tourists.
- **Policing and Support:** There is a call for more policing and collaboration between tourism bodies and city authorities to foster a safer environment.

2. Transportation and Connectivity

- **Concerns:** Worries over LRT construction, traffic, parking, and lack of express airport services were prominent. Connectivity

challenges affect the ability to attract visitors, especially during peak times.

- **Airport Access:** The absence of airport shuttle services from hotels and the need for an "Airport Express" service were highlighted.

3. Communication, Marketing, & Awareness

- **Improving visibility:** Stakeholders emphasized the need for better promotion of Hamilton's attractions, including an updated website, curated itineraries, and localized campaigns.
- **Local Awareness:** Residents are unaware of cultural and tourism assets, which hampers local pride. Marketing strategies must focus on both residents and visitors to foster engagement.

- **Event Promotion:** Creating materials like visitor handbooks and improving "Know Before You Go" information for major events were suggested to enhance visitor experiences.

4. Collaboration & Partnership

- **Breaking silos:** There's a desire for stronger collaboration between city departments, private sectors, not-for-profits, and tourism stakeholders to support unified growth and development.
- **B2B Marketing:** Regional partnerships with RTO3, Metrolinx, and others were highlighted, including suggestions for joint marketing initiatives and increased Familiarization (FAM) tours.

5. Product Development & Year-Round Activation

- **Curated Experiences:** The development of themed itineraries and cultural experiences was widely supported, with local businesses and stakeholders eager to contribute.
- **Sustaining Activities:** Calls for more consistent year-round tourism offerings, beyond large events, to support local businesses and attract a steady stream of visitors.

6. Downtown Revitalization & Night-Time Economy

- **Focus on the downtown core:** There are significant concerns about the safety and perception of the downtown area, which has led to a decline in local pride and visitor interest. A downtown-specific strategy was suggested.
- **Night-time economy:** Transportation issues, especially late at night, and a lack of safe spaces have hindered downtown's growth as a nightlife destination. Stakeholders emphasized that safety and nighttime activity must go hand-in-hand.

7. Infrastructure & Visitor Services

- **Event and visitor infrastructure:** Insufficient hotel capacity during peak periods, event venues, and a lack of basic visitor services like information desks were noted as barriers to attracting larger events and visitors.
- **Renovations & Construction:** While acknowledging necessary infrastructure developments (LRT, entertainment venues), there is a need for positive promotion during these disruptions to maintain visitor interest.

8. Inclusivity & Broad Engagement

- **Beyond Downtown:** Peripheral neighborhoods like Waterdown, Flamborough, Stoney Creek, etc. feel disconnected from tourism activities, and there's a desire for a city-wide approach that includes outlying areas.
- **Cultural Events and Support:** Continued support for Hamilton's unique cultural and entertainment offerings, including the importance of building bridges across sectors and engaging in advocacy at all levels of government, was highlighted.

9. Sustainability & Natural Assets

- **Climate Change:** Erosion, maintenance of trails, and blue-green algae affecting the waterfront were discussed as concerns that must be addressed in the strategy.
- **Managing Natural Assets:** Visitor capacity management, particularly at popular sites like waterfalls, needs to be integrated into the tourism plan.

Overall, Hamilton's tourism partners and residents are passionate about collaborating to make Hamilton a renowned destination. While they see an opportunity to grow Hamilton as a tourism and hospitality destination, they stressed that this will require creative solutions and new levels of cooperation and alignment across the sector and all levels of government.





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CONCESSION STREET BUSINESS IMPROVMENT AREA PROPOSED 2025 OPERATING BUDGET

EXPENSE	PROJECTED EXPENSES 2024	ACTUAL 2024 (Oct 1)	PROJECTED 2025
OPERATIONS			
ADMIN, OFFICE SUPPLIES	\$ 1,600.00	\$ 1,600.00	\$ 1,600.00
WEBSITE/TECH/CELL PHONE	\$ 2,500.00	\$ 1,800.00	\$ 1,200.00
RENT	\$ 9,000.00	\$ 9,000.00	\$ 9,800.00
INSURANCE (DIRECTORS LIABILTY)	\$ 5,600.00	\$ 5,056.00	\$ 5,600.00
AUDITOR	\$ 450.00	\$ 450.00	\$ 450.00
UTILITIES	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 1,820.00	\$ 2,200.00
BOOK KEEPER	\$ 4,200.00	\$ 4,200.00	\$ 4,200.00
HAMILTON CHAMBER OF COMMERCE FEE	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00
OBIAA MEMBERSHIP FEE & CONFERENCE	\$ 4,000.00	\$ 2,100.00	\$ 2,100.00
CONTINGENCY	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 3,000.00
SUBTOTAL	\$ 35,850.00	\$ 32,526.00	\$ 30,650.00
PAYROLL			
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR SALARY	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 60,000.00
ADMIN ASSISTANT			\$ 15,000.00
CPP + EI	\$ 7,800.00	\$ 7,800.00	\$ 10,400.00
HEALTH BENEFITS	\$ 2,000.00		\$ 2,000.00
SUBTOTAL	\$ 59,800.00	\$ 57,800.00	\$ 87,400.00
MARKETING & EVENTS			
ADVERTISING *see page 2*	\$ 28,200.00	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 21,000.00
SIDEWALK SOUNDS	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00
STREETFEST	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00	\$ 30,000.00
WINTER EVENTS	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00
FALL EVENTS	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00
EASTER	\$ 600.00	\$ 1,250.00	\$ 1,800.00
FARMERS MARKET STARTUP	\$ 3,000.00	\$ -	\$ -
ADDITIONAL ACTIVATIONS	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 1,000.00
REBRANDING + WEBSITE *one time budget it	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 8,500.00	\$ 11,500.00
SUBTOTAL	\$ 94,800.00	\$ 77,750.00	\$ 77,300.00
EXPENSES TOTAL LESS GRANTS/REVENUES			
BEAUTIFICATION			
SUMMER FLOWERS *see pg 2*	\$ 19,000.00	\$ 19,000.00	\$ 19,000.00
BANNERS/POLE WRAPS (MAINTENANCE/INST	\$ 5,000.00		\$ 2,000.00
STREET CLEANING/WINDOW CLEANING	\$ 300.00	\$ 300.00	\$ 360.00
ONSTREET PATIO/OVERFLOW PARKING	\$ -		
WINTER PLANTERS *see pg 2*	\$ 6,000.00		\$ 1,000.00
SUBTOTAL	\$ 30,300.00	\$ 19,300.00	\$ 22,360.00
EXPENSES TOTAL LESS GRANTS/REVENUES			
BIA EXPENSES TOTAL	\$ 220,750.00	\$ 187,376.00	\$ 217,710.00
GRANTS/REVENUES TOTAL			
TOTAL LEVY REQUIRED			
	\$ 198,550.00		\$ 217,710.00
	2024 LEVY		2025 LEVY
	BASED ON 52.7%+		BASED ON 9.65%+



Hamilton
OFFICE OF THE
AUDITOR GENERAL

Elections

Administration Audit

Management Responses

December 4, 2024

Charles Brown, Auditor General

Brigitte Minard, Deputy Auditor General

Kris Fletcher, Consultant

Valencia Risk

Management Responses Provided by:

Office of the City Clerk, Corporate Services



Introduction

As a result of the audit completed by the Office of the Auditor General (OAG) with support from Valencia Risk (Valencia) and our Elections Expert (Kris Fletcher, Consultant), many significant opportunities for improvement were identified and a total of 50 recommendations were made.

The Office of the Auditor General requested one high-level management response from management in the Office of the City Clerk. They will be providing the OAG with a detailed response to each individual recommendation within the next few months after they consult with Legal and Risk Management Services, Information Technology, Procurement, Human Resource, and Communications.

Initial Management Response, May 2023 (Office of the City Clerk, Information Technology, Corporate Services)

Management is largely agreeable with the Office of the Auditor General's audit findings and recommendations. Management requires additional time to review the recommendations, including further discussion with the Office of the Auditor General, in order to coordinate complete management action plans. During this period, Management will assess and identify the potential need for additional resources and efforts, including, staffing, IT security, funding requirements, vendor procurement and contracts, and staff training. Management will provide Management Action Plans to the OAG for review and reporting to Committee and Council on the status of the audit results. In that way, any additional financial commitments, staffing resources, by-law amendments or corporate policy changes in relation to the Municipal Election will come before Committee and Council for consideration as per its authority under the Municipal Elections Act.

City Clerk General Response, December 2024

The Auditor General's report has provided the Clerk's Office with a comprehensive review of the 2022 Municipal Election in the City of Hamilton, and I am grateful for the analysis and feedback presented. Generally, I agree with all 50 recommendations, many of which are in-progress with research, staffing or implementation, thanks to the hard work of the Elections team.

Below I have synthesized comments from various divisions with respect to how the Clerk's Office will continue to address these recommendations, and translate lessons learned into better processes and procedures for the 2026 Municipal Election.

Matthew Trennum
City Clerk

Election Preparation and Readiness

Recommendation 1

That consistent with the authority granted to the City Clerk in the *Municipal Election Act*, the City Clerk be granted enhanced corporate signing authority for election related expenditures for a specified time period leading up to and after municipal elections and by-elections.

Management Response

Agree.

The City Clerk will bring forward a Report to seek enhanced corporate signing authority for election related expenditures for the year of, and the year preceding an election year.

Estimated Completion: Q4 2024.

Recommendation 2

Consider regularly reviewing staffing standards with respect to the number of staff needed at poll locations as informed by consultations with the Province.

Management Response

Agree.

Each poll boundary analysis is conducted with consideration of the Province and municipal counterparts (Oakville, Burlington, Ottawa, Toronto, Vaughan, Guelph, Greater Sudbury, Markham), as well as being based on population and geography. Of note, the 2022 election staffing model also considered adherence to possible public health measures.

The 2026 analysis is underway and includes:

- Subdivision analysis with GIS and MPAC data with 2500-3500 potential electors.
- Voter turnout percentages.
- Capacity for each position in terms of the number of electors each can serve.

Estimated Completion: Staffing requirements for the 2026 Municipal Election will be finalized in Q2 2025.

Recommendation 3

Consider rationalizing the staffing levels and evaluating the opportunities for savings and reduction of resources through consolidation of poll locations for the next election in response to the persistent challenges of obtaining a sufficient number of staff that arise during each election and with a voter turnout that is consistently 40% or lower.

Management Response

Agree.

Leading up to the 2022 Election, given the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Election team hired contingency staff that provided the flexibility to ensure that poll locations were resourced appropriately, and that COVID-19 health and safety protocols were met.

Prior to the 2026 Municipal Election, Election staff will look at the feasibility of consolidating poll locations in advance of the 2026 Municipal Election, however, will balance this review with ensuring accessibility of polls and voter turnout within the community.

Estimated Completion: Staffing models will be completed by the end of 2024 to update the staffing standards (recommendation 2) by Q2 2025.

Recommendation 4

In assessing the future use of online voting, ensure that the costs, benefits and risks are thoroughly evaluated.

Management Response

Agree.

Staff reported to Council on the potential use of online voting in report FCS21073. At that time, Council decided not to provide online voting as a method of voting for the 2022 Municipal election. Given Council has authorized the use of Online Voting for the 2025 Ward 4 By-Election for the HWDSB trustee seat, Elections staff will revise the risk analysis document and report back with recommendations on the use of online voting for the 2026 Municipal Election, utilizing data obtained through the By-Election.

Additionally, the City Clerk's Office has partnered with Brock University on an experiential learning project, where a Master's level political science course will run a mock election during their fall term, utilizing a vendor to test online voting. The purpose of the project is policy based and will result in the students providing policy

recommendations based on a municipal scan, research, and the results of the mock election. Their research will focus on security, privacy, ballot/vote submission verifiability and voter turnout. Staff will include updated security and risk recommendations concerning all options for voting with its report for the 2026 Municipal Election.

Estimated Completion: Q1 2025.

Recommendation 5

Improve the training provided to election staff and involve the HR Division in the development and delivery of this training, so that staff adhere to SOP's (standard operating procedures) and are able to effectively activate contingency procedures.

Management Response

Agree.

Following the election, staff surveyed elections workers to gain feedback on training, and have identified areas where improvements can be made.

In advance of the 2026 Municipal Election, the Elections team will engage Organizational Development and Learning in Human Resources to identify opportunities for strengthening training and to build out an enhanced training strategy and approach based on adult learning principle.

To support the development of an enhanced training strategy, the position of Project Manager, Election Education & Supports, has been created and filled (September 2024). This role will oversee the redevelopment of training as a part of their portfolio to ensure that preparatory work can be completed well in advance of the next election and to ensure consistency and regular updates of materials between elections.

Estimated Completion: Training for the 2026 Municipal Election will be finalized in Q3 2025.

Recommendation 6

Ensure the Communications Division (web strategy and user experience team) are engaged to provide timely advice regarding the layout and organization of the candidate's portal and by completing user experience testing prior to launch.

Management Response

Agree.

The Communications Division will be included in setting expectations, and requirements. However, the candidate portal utilized in the 2022 Municipal Election was licensed software supplied by a third party, and the City did not have control over its direct operation. Extensive feedback was provided to the vendor after the election, and discussions around 2026 expectations and requirements are underway.

While we may not have control over the candidate portal software (in that vendor options are limited in this arena), staff will engage with Communications (Web Strategy and User Experience Team), Information Technology, and the Digital and Innovation Office to:

- explore other technological options to providing election-related material to candidates outside of third-party systems,
- to assist with the development of requirements in the development of any Request for Proposal for a candidate portal system in future elections,
- to assist with the provision of requirements for training sessions, and
- to assist with user experience testing.

Any vendor agreements will be reviewed for the inclusion of stronger language around the production and needs of such a portal, as well as protections and audit requirements should systems not function as they did in 2022.

Expected Completion: Q2 2025.

Recommendation 7

Initiate the procurement process earlier in the election cycle (e.g. early June 2026 at the latest for the October 2026 election).

Management Response

Agree.

Staff will initiate the procurement process, including vendor evaluation criteria as outlined in the 2025 workplans, for all elections-related procurement in Q2 2025 to ensure adequate time for the procurement process to proceed.

Expected Completion: Q2 2025.

Recommendation 8

Consider cooperative contracting of elections technology vendors with other municipalities.

Management Response

Agree.

The Elections office will consider this as it moves through its procurement requirements, but the City's ability to pursue cooperative contracting will depend on timing and willingness of neighbouring municipalities to participate. In previous elections the City has made use of the Provincial source contracting to provide the best pricing for technology based on the Provincial buying power.

In advance of the 2026 Municipal Election, Elections Office Staff will reach out to municipal partners to investigate options for group contracting of elections technology and will assess the benefits and disadvantages of engaging in cooperative contracting against the current method.

Expected Completion: Q1 2025.

Recommendation 9

Consider whether it is feasible in a municipal context to follow the process of Elections Ontario in authenticating Vote by Mail applicants.

Management Response

Agree.

Presuming City Council approves Vote by Mail (in any iteration) as a voting method for the 2026 Municipal Election, the Elections Office Staff will consult with the Province to better understand their system, process, and security approach for authenticating identification submitted by vote by mail applicants electronically. Elections Office Staff will work with the Privacy Office and IT to identify secure methods and processes for authenticating vote by mail applicants electronically and will continue to monitor the landscape to keep abreast of changes and innovations in systems that would enable secure electronic updating of the voter's list. Such measures will also be in scope for any election technology vendors.

Expected Completion: Q2 2025.

Recommendation 10

Consider enhancing selection and suitability criteria for polling locations so that they are clear and transparent to the public and informed by Provincial standards and any available guidance and/or standards from the AMCTO (Association of Municipal Manager, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario) Elections Working Group.

Management Response

Agree.

The Elections team will continue to engage with the ACPD, provincial and federal elections agencies, and internal resources to ensure that poll selection criteria remains up to date and addresses the needs of electors.

Expected Completion: Ongoing. Q4 2025.

Recommendation 11

Consider adding dedicated, professional communications resources for a longer period of time before Voting Day.

Management Response

Agree.

The addition of a dedicated communications professional for the next regular Municipal Election would be beneficial to further enhancing communications around the election for Voters, Candidates, Third Parties, and the Community. Additional funding was approved as part of the 2024 budget.

Completed. To be initiated in 2025/2026.

Recommendation 12

Evaluate and identify election office staffing resources that need to be ramped up sooner, with a particular emphasis on logistics expertise.

Management Response

Agree.

Funding requests for 2 permanent project managers and the following additional resources updated to Elections were approved in 2024 budget process:

- a dedicated Communications Specialist aligned with recommendation 11;
- an IT Project Manager for 24 Month temporary placement to ensure delivery of recommendations 14-26;
- temporary election staff with experience in recruitment and training to support recommendation 13;
- funding to support the development or procurement of e-filing software, aligned with recommendation 31; and
- appointment booking software in response to recommendation 32.

Completed.

Recommendation 13

Working with City management, ensure that the use of internal City resources continues in future elections, and involves appropriate professional support, particularly HR (recruiting and training), and communications (web strategy and user experience).

Management Response

Agree.

The Program Manager, Election Education and Supports (the PM), will be tasked with finalizing the details of the recruitment plan. The PM will additionally be responsible for hiring an Election Officer (Recruitment) whose focus will be on implementing the recruitment plan. Poll Specialists and Election Assistants will be available during peak recruitment times to assist with recruitment initiatives, and all is reflected in the 2026 Work Plan to ensure adequate resourcing throughout the process.

As set out in the workplan, the PM will speak with SLT in January 2026 to begin the rollout, message dissemination, etc. Touching base with the City Manager in Q4 2025 will allow for top-down supports and an adequate messaging timeline.

Estimated Completion: In-progress (completion Q1 2026).

Technology

Recommendation 14

Ensure IT staff conduct site visits for all polling locations as part of the planning and logistics process for the 2026 municipal election.

Management Response

Agree.

As a part of the lessons learned exercise conducted following the 2022 Municipal Election, staff identified the need to ensure that IT staff visit each polling station to complete a technical review of each site to ensure that election equipment (i.e. modems) function as required. This is already underway in preparation for the 2025 Ward 4 By-Election.

IT staff will coordinate with Elections Team members responsible for conducting poll site visits for the 2026 Municipal Election to ensure that each site is assessed against technological requirements.

Estimated Completion: Q1 2026.

Recommendation 15

Until such time as Canadian guidance is available, elections management should adopt the principles outlined in Draft NIST IR 8310 and engage the IT department to ensure the expertise needed to address IT Security and Cybersecurity relevant to the Elections process.

Management Response

Agree.

IT Security and Cybersecurity will work with the Elections team to ensure that relevant election processes are safe and secure. The Elections team will look to IT for expertise and to advise of security standards that should be followed, such as NIST IR 8310. IT and Elections staff will continue to engage with AMCTO, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Centre for E-Democracy and the Digital Governance Council to work towards the development of elections standards.

We are monitoring CAN/DGSI 111 - 1:202X Online Voting (current status under public review) as they work to standardize technical design requirements for online voting services and to provide best practices for election administrators implementing online electoral voting in Canadian municipal elections.

Estimated Completion: On-going review.

Recommendation 16

In preparation for the next election, it is recommended that the IT Division review the findings from the Elections Technology Report (Appendix "B" to Report AUD23008), and subsequently collaborate with the Office of the City Clerk to begin planning for the next municipal election.

Management Response

Agree.

The IT Division has reviewed the findings from the Elections Technology Report in tandem with Office of the City Clerk. IT will work with the Elections Team to advise the City Clerk in advance of the 2026 Municipal Election to ensure compliance with City Security and Cybersecurity policies and procedures, and any standards available.

Estimated Completion: Q4 2025.

Recommendation 17

When procuring technology services for the delivery of elections, Elections management should ensure that IT security prepares and reviews the technical specifications and IT security/cybersecurity requirements. A lawyer that is experienced in IT contracts should also review the contracts.

Management Response

Agree.

IT will prepare and review technical requirements for all non-functional requirements (Cybersecurity, capacity, concurrency) for all technology procurements for elections going forward.

A Lawyer specializing in IT contracts and Procurement has been hired by the City and will be available for advising on contracts going forward. Elections staff will consult with this individual during the planning and procurement process for technology services in future elections.

Estimated Completion: Q1 2026.

Recommendation 18

Elections management should make all team meetings and training sessions mandatory for all staff involved in the Elections process. The IT department should be invited to all training sessions. Training for moving to backup processes should be improved as well as adherence to standard operating procedures (SOP's).

Management Response

Agree.

The Training program (including SOPs and manual back-up procedures) will be revamped and improved by the PM, Election Education and Supports (due to start September 2024) to reflect other decisions that are being made but require Clerk input – technology to be used, methods of voting, poll types, poll staffing models, etc.

These SOPs and manual backup procedures will align with the 30 policies and procedures already developed (during and since the 2022 Election), and reflect any lessons learned, or changes to technology, legislation or process that occur prior to the 2026 election.

As was completed for 2022, contingencies will be considered however they will be more thoroughly documented and incorporated into all training and training documents for 2026.

Estimated Completion: In-Progress, completion Q1 2026.

Recommendation 19

Elections management should complete a plan for IT Security Vulnerability Assessment and Management. An IT Vulnerability Assessment that is scoped to deal with controls that could be compromised by the most significant Election day threats should then be completed.

Management Response

Agree.

Staff will work with IT to conduct the Vulnerability Assessment.

Estimated Completion: Q4 2025.

Recommendation 20

Elections management should seek professional advice to determine what additional testing of tabulators and other technologies would be prudent to adopt in consideration of that which is already being done by the Elections Team and by Elections Ontario.

Management Response

Agree.

Elections Management, in collaboration with IT, will continue to engage with Municipal Partners, Elections Ontario and vendors to explore testing approaches used for elections technology and to understand best practices. IT Staff will update testing processes as required based on consultation.

Estimated Completion: Q1 2025.

Recommendation 21

Elections management should consider improving password security for their electronic technologies by requiring at least one capital, number and character, making passwords more difficult to guess. Municipal credentials would be stronger when paired with a password manager.

Management Response

Agree.

IT will work with the Elections team to improve password security. Some work has already been done in this arena, with 2FA implementation and new password length and complexity requirements being enforced by IT post Cyber incident.

Estimated Completion: Q4 2025.

Recommendation 22

IT security should assess and enable detection technologies specific to the Elections process and increase monitoring on election day.

Management Response

Agree.

Detection technologies will be enabled as they pertain to technologies under City Control. IT does not have control over the vendor systems that are utilized during the Elections process, however, Elections Staff will work with IT to ensure that consideration of detection technologies and capabilities is included in requirements for competitive procurements and within contracts.

Estimated Completion: Q3 2025.

Recommendation 23

To protect confidentiality and privacy, Elections management should consider use of a technology appropriate for controlling distribution lists in the Election team's communications instead of relying on the "bcc" function. This type of technology includes email marketing software tools. Existing solutions may already be in use in other areas of the City of Hamilton and these should be considered first prior to procuring another solution.

Management Response

Agree.

The Elections team is working with IT to explore options for technology to control distribution lists for future elections. Additionally, the Elections team will work with IT to develop feedback for vendors of current elections administration systems, which will be provided through the AMCTO election advocacy group. This feedback will include recommendations on enhancements to current systems to provide two-way communications with those voters who subscribe to the Vote by Mail method specifically.

Estimated Completion: Q4 2024.

Recommendation 24

IT incident response scenarios should be developed and tested in a tabletop exercise. This should be researched and implemented for the 2026 municipal election.

Management Response

Agree.

IT will work with Elections staff to determine appropriate test cases and a tabletop exercise to assess incident responses.

Estimated Completion: Q3 2025.

Recommendation 25

Develop more robust contingency plans and processes for the loss or interruption of ePoll book functionality, particularly with respect to when and how to switch to manual backup procedures. Training exercises need to be conducted to ensure the effectiveness of these contingency plans, including a tabletop exercise and easy to understand tools to support staff in the field.

Management Response

Agree.

As a part of the Elections Team's lessons learned exercise, improvements to contingency plans and training for e-poll book functionality and back up processes was identified as an area for improvement. Staff is revising training documents and procedures for future elections and will review documentation prior to future elections to ensure that documentation and processes are up to date with technology, which will include IT input and the suggested tabletop exercise.

Expected Completion: Q1 2025.

Recommendation 26

Stipulate in contracts with election technology vendors, more stringently, the technical and capacity requirements with a mind to ensuring availability of service and minimization of disruption on Voting Day.

Management Response

Agree.

IT will conduct work up front to determine what technical and capacity requirements are needed and will prepare and review all non-functional requirements (Cybersecurity, capacity, concurrency) for all technology procurements.

Legal Services and the Procurement Division will ensure that requirements identified in consultation with IT are reflected in contracts clearly, and that penalties, including penalties pertaining to loss of or reduction of service, for breach of technical and capacity requirements are identified. Additionally, staff will look to include hold-back on payments and options to ensure that the technology works according to technical and capacity requirements on election day.

Estimated Completion: Q2 2025.

Candidate Experience

Recommendation 27

In order to facilitate their post-election needs, consider consultations with Legal Services regarding recent amendments to the Municipal Elections Act with a view to determining if the Voters List can be made available electronically to candidates after Voting Day, and if not whether the City should advocate to the Province to put such access into effect.

Management Response

Agree.

Section 23(8)4 states that candidates provided a copy of the voters lists (or electronic access to it) shall be allowed continued access until the end of their campaign period; after which electronic access will end, and any paper copies must be destroyed, or certified in writing that they have been destroyed.

Estimated Completion: Q3 2025.

Recommendation 28

Consider a service model that offers more dedicated resources to candidates in order to achieve a higher degree of responsiveness to candidate questions and concerns. Features to consider include a dedicated email address, setting and tracking of service standards, and self-help functionality.

Management Response

Agree.

As approved in the budget, a Candidate and Outreach Assistant will act as a dedicated resource to specifically relay information to, and answer questions from candidates. Intended start date of March 2026. Additionally, supporting documents

and training will be updated for candidates, being developed through 2024, recognizing that these may require additional updates as we move closer to the Election period.

Estimated Completion: Q2 2025.

Recommendation 29

Consider a dedicated team, well versed and trained in requirements, to service the needs of candidates.

Management Response

Agree.

As approved in the budget, a Candidate and Outreach Assistant will act as a dedicated resource to specifically relay information to, and answer questions from candidates. Intended start date of March 2026.

Estimated Completion: Q2 2024.

Recommendation 30

Develop guidelines and information tools to assist candidates in understanding the application of the requirement that they may not use City facilities or property for campaign events unless rented or booked.

Management Response

Agree.

Council approved a Use of City Resources During an Election Policy that outlined requirements of Candidates during an election period, including the rental of city facilities and properties for campaign purposes. The Elections Team intends on enhance the existing resources for future elections, including points of contact with candidates and information sessions. Any updates to the current policy will require Council approval no later than May 1, 2026.

Estimated Completion: Q2 2024.

Recommendation 31

Consider the development of a process for the e-filing of nominations, third party registration, and financial filings of candidates and third-party advertisers.

Management Response

Agree.

Staff recognize the convenience that an e-filing system would provide to candidates and third-party advertisers and will explore options for an e-filing process for the 2026 Municipal Election. Staff will work with IT to research and explore internal options and software that would enable secure e-filing of documentation, and secure payments where required.

Estimated Completion: Q4 2024.

Recommendation 32

Consider implementing an electronic appointment management system for booking appointments with the Elections Office for candidate nominations, candidate consultations, vote by mail, proxies, changes to the voters list, etc.

Management Response

Agree.

Staff will research appropriate options to allow for electronic appointment management, consulting IT for the use of software already in existence, such as MS Bookings app, and any functionality that may be realized through our election technology procurement(s). None of this will prevent an individual from calling, or arriving in person to book an appointment, and will do our best to assist individuals who arrive without an appointment.

Estimated Completion: Q4 2024.

Recommendation 33

With respect to the Sign By-law, provide more communication content to candidates regarding how enforcement is administered, retrieval of removed signs is carried out, and the most common enforcement issues during an election.

Management Response

Agree.

By-law Services will enhance existing candidate resources and provide greater detail to candidates about enforcement administration and retrieval of removed signs. Elections Office Staff will take the lead on this project, and additionally include

information regarding the most common enforcement issues in Candidate sessions and associated resources.

Estimated Completion: Q4 2024.

Recommendation 34

With respect to the Sign By-law, develop a policy and standard operating procedure(s) for communicating sign removal to candidates and for handling any requests for sign placement guidance at specific locations or addresses.

Management Response

Agree.

Bylaw Services has added the development of a policy and standard operating procedure to their 2024 workplan, which include direction for communicating sign removal and handling requests for sign placement guidance. The Elections Office Staff will oversee this.

Estimated Completion: Q4 2024.

Recommendation 35

Following on the recommendations of this report, consider a fulsome review of how to improve the entire candidate experience.

Management Response

Agree.

Elections staff will review all Candidate resources and tech with a view to improving the candidate experience, and will ensure that this is actioned through the work of the new position of Candidate and Outreach Assistant.

Estimated Completion: Q2 2024.

Voter/Resident Experience

Recommendation 36

Consider the development of standards for voting hours at retirement and long-term care facilities based on research of other jurisdictions and implement them for the

next municipal election in Hamilton. Research should give consideration to Provincial standards and be informed by the AMCTO (Association of Municipal Manager, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario) Elections Working Group from Elections Ontario in the development of standards for Hamilton.

Management Response

Agree.

Staff will conduct best-practice research, including engagement with municipal counterparts, Elections Ontario and Elections Canada to review approaches to voting hours at retirement homes and long-term care homes. The research will inform the development of standards for voting hours in long-term care facilities and retirement homes for the next regular election.

Estimated Completion Date: Q4 2025.

Recommendation 37

Establish and abide by a service standard for the response time in turning around Vote by Mail applications to vote by mail packages being mailed out.

Management Response

Agree.

Staff will work with vendors to fully understand standards of service, to incorporate those into any vote by mail process and standards including incorporating more frequent mailing of ballots. Standards and delivery expectations will be developed and set with the successful vendor for the 2026 election and will be communicated broadly to candidates and electors.

Estimated Completion: Q1 2026.

Recommendation 38

Develop a clear communication procedure to ensure that on election day, poll locations are positively confirmed to be open.

Management Response

Agree.

A change in poll staffing structures will see a Ward Supervisor (formerly Ward Patroller) confirming in-person with each poll that they are all set and opened on

time. To enhance and clarify processes further, staff will enhance procedures to be followed by poll leadership and implemented on voting days, and will reflect these enhancements in all training and training materials.

Estimated Completion: Q3 2025.

Recommendation 39

Consider a home visit vote program for accessibility purposes.

Management Response

Agree.

A review of the In-Home Voting Program is currently underway – we have reached out to municipal partners (AMCTO Working Group) for policies and procedures in use by municipalities that have implemented an in-home voting program. Additionally, we have requested and compiled costing information, lessons learned and other relevant recommendations from these municipalities. Further cost benefit information has been requested of Elections Ontario – awaiting data.

Recommendations based on the research will be brought to council as directed by MEA s.42(1).

Estimated Completion: Completed and ongoing.

Recommendation 40

Consider implementing a voters-in-training program (for youth).

Management Response

Agree.

Based on the success of outreach initiatives for youth in the 2022 Municipal Election, staff had identified expanding the youth-engagement program as an area of opportunity for the future. Staff will formalize a voters-in-training program for local youth, to be developed by the proposed Project Manager, Education and Supports identified in recommendation 5 and implemented by the elections team.

Estimated Completion: Q2 2025.

Recommendation 41

To improve transparency and accountability to the public, financial information regarding the cost of administering municipal elections and how these costs are broken down and compared to budget should be posted on the City's website (in an easy to understand format, not only a PDF report) and be more broadly shared with the public. Information from prior elections should also be retained and shared on the website.

Management Response

Agree.

Completed. <https://www.hamilton.ca/city-council/municipal-election/election-finances/municipal-election-budget>

Elections management will work with the City's Finance division to enhance the approach to the elections budget, including a buildup to total election line item detail. Additionally, Staff will work with Finance and Communications to include information on Elections budgets on the City's website.

Completed Q1 2024.

Advocacy to the Province of Ontario

Recommendation 42

Advocate to the Province to amend the legislation requiring that polls that open late must automatically remain open past 8:00 pm to make up for the equivalent time lost.

Recommendation 43

Advocate to the Province for clarity regarding the objectives, roles and enforcement of third-party advertisers.

Recommendation 44

Advocate to the Province that Voting Day be held on a day when schools are not in session in order to address concerns about public entry into schools when students are in attendance.

Recommendation 45

Advocate to the Province to increase the amount of time between Nomination Day and Voting Day. One way to accomplish this is to return Nomination Day to the end of July as had been done previously.

Recommendation 46

Advocate to the Province that they be more assistive with legal interpretations of the *Municipal Elections Act*, and procedural requirements, including issuance of guidelines and interpretation notes.

Recommendation 47

Advocate to the Province of Ontario about the need for clarity regarding the responsibility for regulatory oversight of third-party advertisers. Following the determination of a process, ensure that it is communicated so that third-party advertisers and the public understand the roles and procedures for cases of potential non-compliance.

Recommendation 48

Advocate to the Province and/or work with municipal partners toward the development of criteria for assessment of poll location accessibility and general suitability.

Recommendation 49

Advocate to the Province that the endorsement form, Form 2, for candidates obtaining nomination signatures be amended to accommodate collection of more than 25 nominations.

Recommendation 50

Advocate to the Province to provide clarity and guidance regarding when declarations of emergency should be made by a Clerk during municipal elections.

Management Response (Recommendations 42 to 50)

Agree for Recommendations 42 through 50.

For all of these points respecting Advocacy, I agree that more can be done. Clerk's Office staff will prepare a Report to Council (Aiming for January-February) to seek direction to write the province and AMO advocating for these items and changes.

Note: Elections Management has communicated this recommendation to staff at the AMCTO responsible for coordinating recommendations for amendments to the Municipal Elections Act to the Province.

Estimated Completion: January-February 2025.