



# Volunteer Advisory Committee Review

General Issues Committee

February 26, 2025

# Volunteer Advisory Committee Review



## Priority 3: Responsiveness & Transparency

Get more people involved in decision making & problem solving

- Council Motion 11.1 (July 13, 2023)
- Council-directed scope of work (Sept 2023)
- Last Volunteer Advisory Committee review (2015)
- Guided by Term of Council Priorities & municipal best practices
- Recommendations aligned with Hamilton's Public Engagement Policy

# Public Engagement Policy Key Directions

“Getting more people involved in City-led decision-making”

Adopted by Council in January 2024 to:

- Achieve a **consistent, strategic, and outcomes-driven** approach to public engagement
- Increase **impact** of City-led decision-making processes
- Establish **trust** and **relationships** with members of the public who are impacted by decisions

# Engagement Principles

Hamilton's approach to public engagement is guided by five **principles** that support open, transparent, accountable, equitable and inclusive public engagement activities:



**Building Trust and Relationships**



**Adapting Along the Way**



**Every Voice is Valued**



**Continuously Improving**



**Clear, Timely and Transparent Information**

# What is a Volunteer Advisory Committee (VAC)?

## Who?

- Passionate and civically-engaged residents (volunteers)
- Diverse in expertise on a range of local priorities

## What?

- Provide advice and recommendations on issues and policies
- Local Board, subject to unique liability and expectations

## How?

Council-directed, supported by clerks and departmental staff

# Organization of Current 14 VACs

## **Audit, Finance & Administration:**

- Committee Against Racism
- Women and Gender Equity
- Immigrant and Refugees
- Hamilton Indigenous Advisory
- Mundialization

## **General Issues:**

- Arts Advisory
- Climate Change

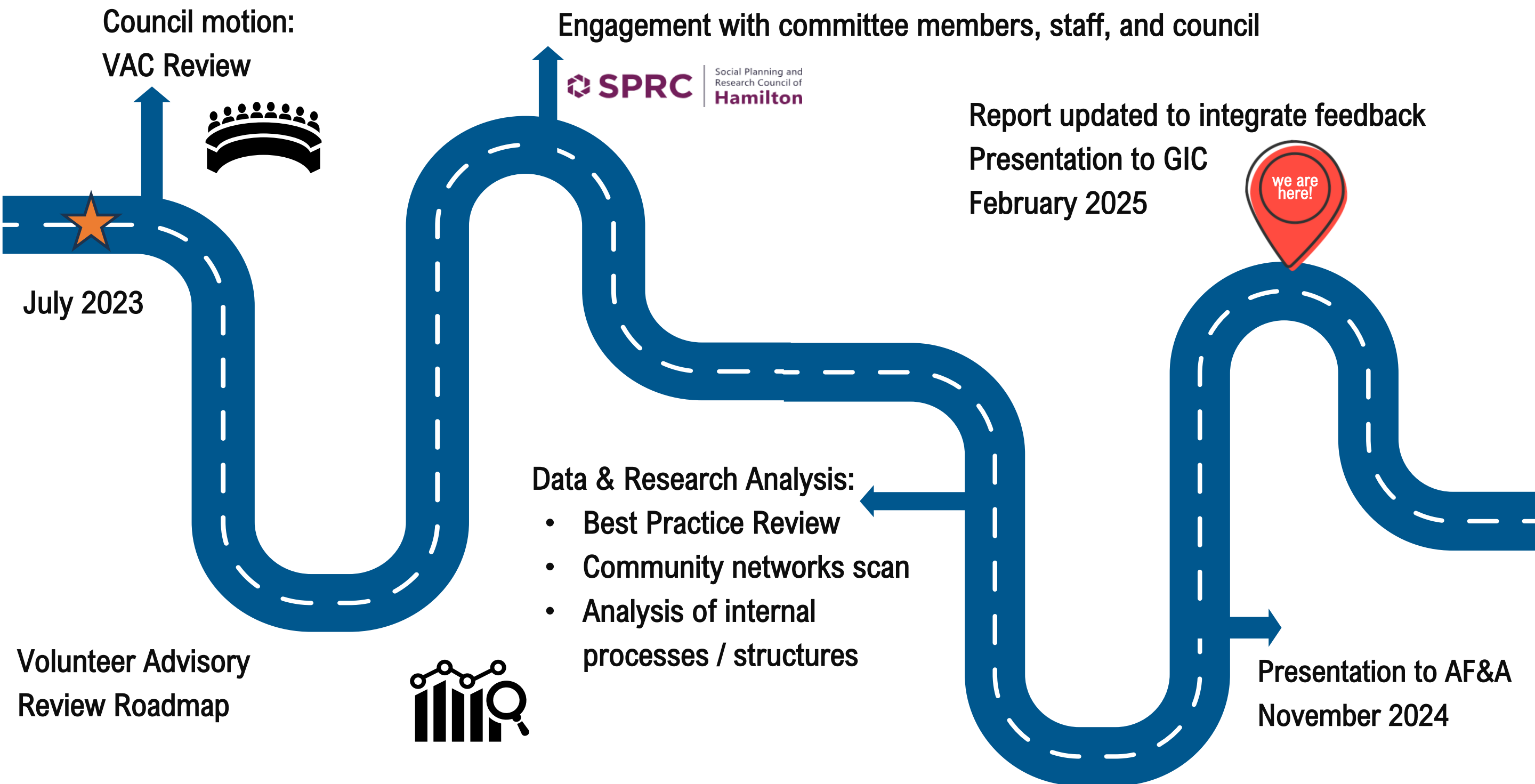
## **Emergency & Community Services:**

- Hamilton Veterans
- Housing and Homelessness
- LGBTQ Advisory
- Seniors Advisory

## **Public Works:**

- Hamilton Cycling
- Keep Hamilton Clean and Green

## **Public Health: Food Advisory**



# Engagement Methods

## Who did we engage?

**56** current VAC members

**10** City of Hamilton Councillors

**10** staff liaisons

City Clerk

Other cross-departmental groups

## What did we do?

SPRC-led public engagement activities:

**66** surveys

**10** interviews

**1** focus group



# What We Heard: A Desire for Change

✓ Meaningful Engagement

✓ Improved Work Culture

✓ Increased Transparency

✓ Structural Changes

✓ Role Clarity

✓ Enhanced Training & Development

# What We Learned

## Local Boards (inclusive of VAC)

- present higher liability for members

## Municipal trends

- Shift from formal structure that follows Procedural By-law to resident-led liaison groups that are responsive to emerging community needs.

# What We Learned (cont'd)

## Key elements for success

- Establish **training** opportunities and process guidelines
- **Alignment** to public engagement best practices
- **Mentorship** and staff support
- **Flexibility** for meeting dates and community participation

# Alternatives

Based on public engagement and research **three alternatives** have been developed:

## Alternative #1

Transition 14 VACs to Community Liaison Group (CLG) model  
(Report CM23025(b))

## Alternative #2

Transition 10 VACs to CLGs, remove four VACs  
(Report CM23025(a))

## Alternative #3

Status quo, no change from current format

## Alternative 1

### Transition 14 VACs to Community Liaison Group (CLG) model

- ✓ Responds to Council directions from November 2024
- ✓ Reflects experiences from VAC members
- ✓ Reduces barriers to support meaningful participation
- ✓ Alignment to relevant departmental work plans
- ✓ Implements Hamilton's Public Engagement Policy
- ✓ Creates training and support opportunities for CLG members

## Alternative 2

### Transition 10 VACs to CLGs

- ✓ Reflects experiences from VAC members
- ✓ Reduces barriers to support meaningful participation
- ✓ Alignment with Hamilton's Public Engagement Policy
- ✓ Creates training and support opportunities for CLG members
- × Four VACs withdrawn
  - × Reflects work being led in community, including City partnerships
  - × Includes: Food Advisory, Mundialization, Committee Against Racism, Immigrant and Refugees

## Alternative 3

### **Status quo, no change from current format**

- ✓ Maintains familiar process
- × Does not respond to experiences shared by VAC members
- × Presents barriers to support meaningful participation
- × Subjects members to higher liability standards
- × Institutional processes prevent meaningful participation
- × Recruitment processes do not offer flexibility or responsiveness
- × Citizen Committee Reports process presents many challenges

# Recommendation: Alternative 1

## Transition 14 VACs to Community Liaison Group (CLG) model

### Benefits:

- Resident-led with support from City staff
- Roles and responsibilities are established by CLG members
- Transition includes:
  - Defining the process for CLGs to share their voice with Council
  - CLGs reflect community interest and needs



# Success Story: HamOnt Youth Steering Committee

- Formerly the Youth Advisory Committee
- Transformed to working group in 2021
- Increased youth participation levels
- Provides a safe space for youth to share ideas & make recommendations for a more youth-friendly city
- Leading model for youth & City staff collaboration



# Thank you

