



10-Year Downtown Revitalization Strategy Project Update and Interim Consultant's Report PED24163(c)

General Issues Committee – July 9, 2025

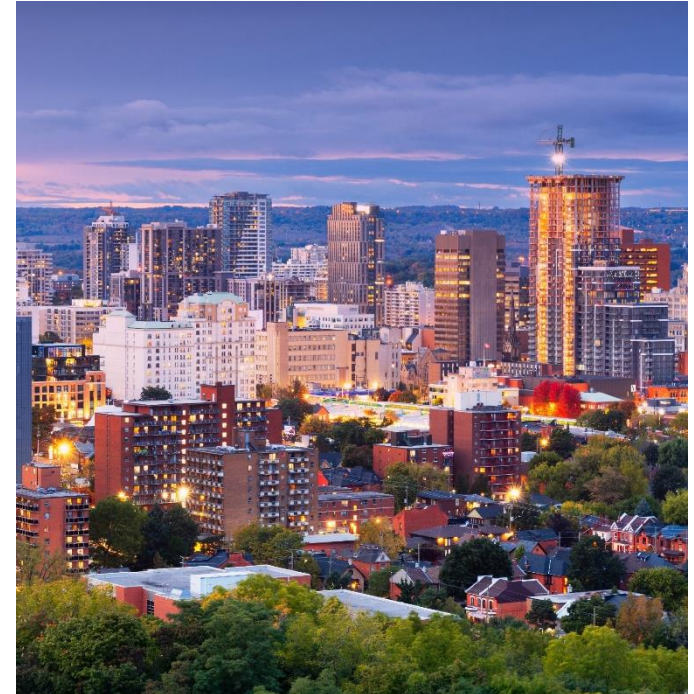
Background

- Council approved the development of a 10-Year Downtown Revitalization strategy in December 2024
- Strategy is an effort to reprioritize Downtown revitalization efforts and City focus on the Downtown in the face of emerging and systemic issues:
 - Depressed commercial storefront occupancy rates in the Downtown and International Village Business Improvement Areas relative to other city BIAs
 - Potential for rising office vacancy as a pre-COVID tenant leases come up for renewal over the next couple of years
 - Systemic societal changes and challenges respecting hybrid work, mental health and addiction, affordable housing
 - Economic pressures and uncertainty impacting the development of new housing and the growth of Downtown's resident population
- Strategy is being developed with the support of external consultants and on an expedited schedule

Downtown's Importance

- ✓ Encapsulates the city's **cultural** and **civic identity**
- ✓ Serves as a **major economic hub** for the city's business community and destination for **City and social services**
- ✓ Where over **30,000*** Hamiltonians call **home**
- ✓ A place of work for over **28,000*** people
- ✓ Serves important **city-wide functions** including **transportation linkages**, a hub for the **arts, culture and creative industries** and a major source of the city's **small businesses** and **entrepreneurship**
- ✓ Contributes **\$4.8B in assessment** generating **tax revenue** that **supports City initiatives and operations for all Hamiltonians**

**2021 Census Data*



Current City Downtown Initiatives

Its not just about the strategy.....City divisions have been continuing to action new initiatives in 2025 to better support Downtown:

- Downtown office to residential/hotel grant program (*Ec. Dev.*)
- Graffiti removal grant program for commercial property owners/tenants (*Ec. Dev.*)
- Proactive graffiti management on public property and enforcement on private property (*Municipal Law Enforcement/Transportation*)
- Launch of ad campaigns and direct window service to address graffiti (*Transportation*)
- Enhanced core cleanliness with new equipment and additional staff resources allowing for increased frequency of service (*Waste Management/Transportation*)
- Summer 2025 Downtown Hamilton Clean Team Pilot to expedite and streamline responses to cleanliness issues (*Waste Management*)
- Increased hours of service for response to by-law complaints (*Municipal Law Enforcement*)
- Increased outreach and collaboration with local partners to address site specific issues/concerns (*Housing Services*)

Downtown Strategy Engagement To-Date

In-Community Pop-up Engagement

13 engagement events in April May and June at different events/locations in the city:

- Lime Ridge Mall
- Touch-a-Truck Event (Pier 8)
- Art Crawl
- Hamilton Farmer's Market
- Central Library
- Boats in the Park
- Gage Park Greenhouse
- Newcomer Day
- ... and others

Direct Mail-out

Canada post mail-out to 55,000+ businesses, apartments and residences in Wards 1, 2 and 3)

Print and Digital Ad-buy

The Spec, Instagram/Facebook, Reddit, Bell/CTV etc.

Engage Hamilton

Survey, submit questions and share feedback/stories/big ideas)

Focused Stakeholder Roundtables

- Arts and Culture
- Downtown Transportation
- Small-Mid Sized Businesses/BIA's
- Commercial Landlords
- Community Safety and Well-being

Individual Stakeholder Meetings

- Hamilton is Home
- Hamilton Chamber of Commerce
- Hamilton Police
- OVG/HUPEG
- HamOntYouth Steering Committee
- ... and others

Timeline/Deliverables

July	Prepare a detailed report back to community on what we heard through the public and stakeholder engagement
July to September	Development of the draft strategy and its priority actions including internal cross-departmental collaboration and engagement
October	Community and Stakeholder engagement respecting the draft actions
November	Finalize draft strategy and actions
December 3 GIC	Draft strategy is presented at GIC for feedback
Q1 2026	Strategy is finalized and brought to Council for final approval before the end of Q1 2026.

Downtown Revitalization Strategy

Phase 1 Summary Interim Report

Presentation to Council - City of Hamilton

July 9, 2025



Cultural Spaces
People and Places

Agenda

01

Cultural Spaces

Introduction

02

Past Projects

Ottawa and Winnipeg

03

Summary

Phase 1 activities

04

Next Steps

Workplan for the Strategy

1.



Cultural Spaces

People and Places

Who We Are

A diverse team of experts with decades of experience in creating resilient strategies for natural and cultural sites, sustainable development, and urban planning.

Driven by the vision of **sustainable and meaningful change** where places and projects are culturally appropriate, socially responsible, economically viable, and environmentally compatible.
We aim to foster **resilient and vibrant communities**.

How We Work

- Relationship people and places
- Multidisciplinary
- Treat the place as an ecosystem
- Identify the pressure points, the tensions
- Integrated solutions – avoid silo discussions
- Big and small changes
- Pay attention to who is best placed to affect change

July 9, 2025

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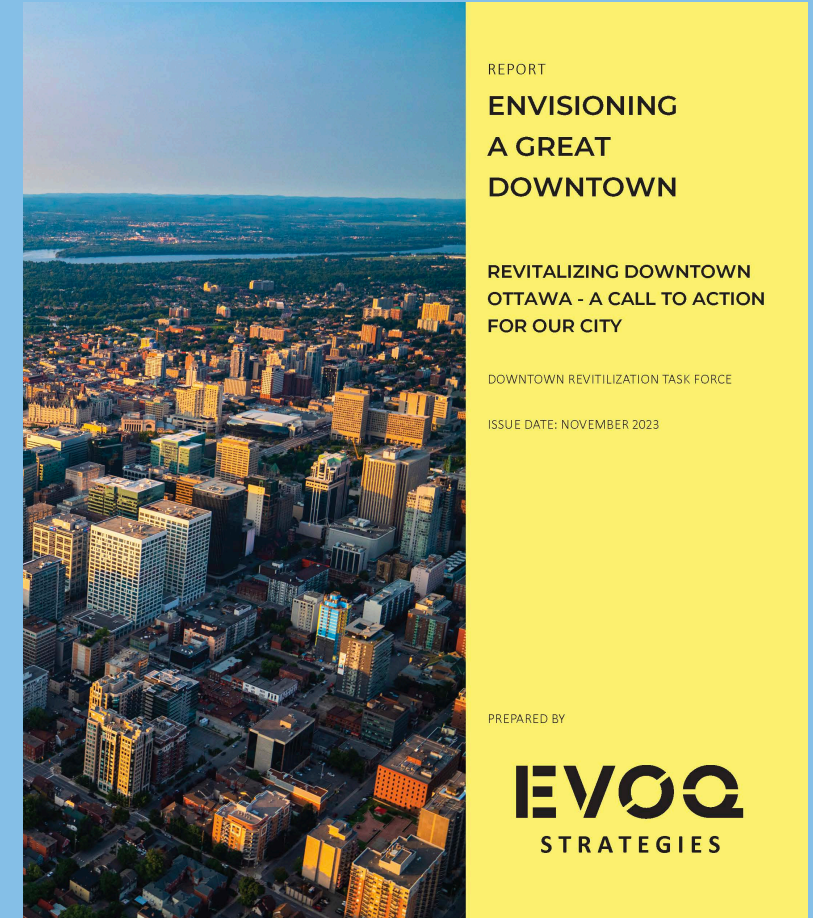
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Past Projects

Ottawa and Winnipeg- Relevant experiences for Hamilton

Downtown Ottawa

- Initiative from civil society – MP, councillors, social service groups, business groups, office landlords, community groups, municipal liaison
- Changing landscape – COVID, work from home, federal presence, trucker convoy, homelessness, drug crisis
- Complex authority environment – urban design, planning, activities, regulation
- Aim to identify what was lost, how things are changing, assets to leverage, and coordination to manage change
- Engagement of stakeholders through groups, interviews, and online tools
- End result: framework for stakeholders to work together





Winnipeg Exchange District

- Initiative from the BIA – arts culture and heritage sector, businesses, property owners, investment program managers, social services groups, academic institutions
- Manage change in a historic and stagnating environment – strict heritage regulation, low investment, changing economic drivers
- Engaged stakeholders in various sectors
- Governance and investments were critical
- Together with planning and design firm prepared a blueprint to manage change

Sustainability

Sustainability is the **result of integrating social, cultural, economic, and environmental concerns**

Successful strategies apply a sustainability lens because:

- Urban environments are complex
- There are multiple levers of solutions
- The integrated approach is effective and efficient
- Engages multiple components of the community



3.

Summary

Phase 1- Engagement

Summary - What We Did

- Project began in March with internal meetings to set priorities
- **Site visit 1**- end of March
- Engagement strategy - open and thematic
- **Site visit 2**- early May
- **Site visit 3**- mid-May
- **Site visit 4**- early June
- Online engagement tools 1 for City Staff and 1 for Stakeholders- complements Engage Hamilton by being **targeted and interactive**

Summary - What We Did

The Engagement Strategy was meant to reach out to specific stakeholders and complement the City's own public engagement efforts:

- **Objective:** Meet key stakeholders and listen
- **Structure:** Thematic approach- Arts, Culture, and Entertainment; Small and Mid-Size Businesses; Transportation and Mobility; Safety and Social Services; Downtown Marketing Positioning for Tourism; Housing, Commercial Properties; and Urban Fabric and Public Realm
- **Methodology:** Small groups of stakeholders, diversity within themes, direct interactions on the ground
- **Openness:** we worked with partners to identify participants, do not limit ourselves, remain open

Summary - What We Heard

- Our specific efforts heard from about 200 people in focused one-on-one and group meetings of at least 90 minutes
- Mix of outside organizations and City staff
- Leaders, drivers of change
- Listen, listen, listen

Summary - What We Heard

01 A neighbourhood people care about

03 The perception of abandonment

02 The home and livelihood of many

04 The experience of disconnect

Summary - Vision and Principles

Too soon to develop because of engagement efforts.

However, there are some elements that will inform:

- **Vision:** both a neighbourhood and a destination; City pride; accessible to all; positive energy and excitement; welcoming; opportunities for the city as a whole
- **Principles:** people focused, back-to-basics, build and care, commitment to change, focus on what the City can control, strong public presence, encouraging initiatives, collectively own Downtown and empowering residents.

4.

Next Steps

Work plan for the Strategy

Next Steps

Phase 2:

- ***Draft vision and principles*** - with stakeholders, interactive, review a collection of existing visions and principles from City and stakeholders
- ***Collect Data and Analysis*** - identify and review plans, identify the impact of City initiatives, align existing City initiatives with the vision and principles, connect dots, survey comparables
- ***Draft Priorities and Recommendations*** - relevant, practical, integrated, short to long term, identify levers of change and transformative initiatives
- ***Ongoing stakeholder engagement*** - online and when necessary in person to get guidance, build support, and establish the foundations of long term governance