



## City of Hamilton Report for Information

**To:** Chair and Members  
General Issues Committee

**Date:** July 9, 2025

**Report No:** PED24163(c)

**Subject/Title:** 10-Year Downtown Revitalization Strategy Project  
Update and Interim Consultant's Report

**Ward(s) Affected:** Ward 2

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### Recommendations

That Report PED24163(c) regarding the 10-Year Downtown Revitalization Strategy Project and Public Engagement Update **BE RECEIVED** for information.

### Key Facts

- The purpose of this Report is to provide an update on the 10-Year Downtown Revitalization Strategy.
- The Report outlines the project timeline and engagement activities to date and includes an interim report from the project's consultants, Cultural Spaces Consulting, attached as Appendix A to Report PED24163(c). This report identifies overarching themes emerging from public and stakeholder engagement, as well as key insights informing the strategy's future vision, guiding principles and next steps.

### Financial Considerations

There are no financial implications associated with this Information Report.

## Background

On December 11, 2024, City Council approved amended recommendations of Report PED24163 respecting a series of initiatives to be led by the Economic Development Division respecting Downtown. These initiatives were intended to recognize community concern respecting the current state of the Downtown and to kick-start a renewed City priority for sustained and on-going Downtown revitalization efforts.

Initiatives approved by Council through Report PED24163 included:

- Development of a Downtown office-to-residential/hotel conversion program (approved by Council on May 28, 2025, via Report PED24163(b));
- Making permanent the Downtown graffiti removal grant program for property owners and commercial tenants; and
- Initiating the development of a 10-Year Downtown Revitalization Strategy (the Strategy), which is the primary focus of this report.

The Strategy is intended to establish a common, forward-looking vision for the Downtown over the next 10 years and identify priority actions (short, medium and long-term) needed to bring that vision to life and ensure Downtown is a place people want to once again live, work and experience. In addition, the Strategy's actions will be informed by, and seek to identify opportunities in the context of Downtown Hamilton, that will support existing city-wide strategies already working to address systemic challenges in the city in terms of housing, community safety and well-being and climate change among others.

As part of discussions, Council approved the following amended recommendations (amendments are italicized and bolded for reference):

- (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
- (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.***

This Report is being provided in response to recommendation (e) above.

## **Project Phases**

The development and final Council consideration of the Strategy will occur in three phases.

<p><b>PHASE 1: Community Engagement</b>  <b>(April – June)</b></p>	<p><b>Hear from the community and stakeholders about the Downtown.</b></p> <p>Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensuring the strategy is based on an accurate understanding of the communities' challenges, needs and wants for Downtown;</li> <li>• Building trust and relationships towards success; and,</li> <li>• Changing the narrative and invoking pride and ambition about what could be.</li> </ul>
<p><b>PHASE 2: Development of the Draft Strategy</b> (including vision, guiding principles, and priority actions)  <b>(July - November)</b>  <b>(December review by Council)</b></p>	<p><b>Collaborate with internal Departments/Divisions and key stakeholders to develop the priority actions that the City and its partner will lead/action over the next 10 years.</b></p> <p>Culminates in delivery of the draft Strategy to City Council for review and feedback at the December 3 General Issues Committee.</p> <p>Goals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify actions that can occur immediately, and over the horizon of the Strategy, to ensure consistent and on-going priority and attention is given to Downtown;</li> <li>• Everyone working together to create real, tangible plans reflecting what Hamiltonians want for our collective Downtown;</li> <li>• Working collaboratively to share skills and resources to make things happen; and,</li> <li>• Fostering organic, grass roots efforts to achieve long-lasting change and ownership of Downtown.</li> </ul>
<p><b>PHASE 3: Final Strategy Approval</b>  <b>(Q1 2026)</b></p>	<p><b>City Council review and approval of the final Strategy and implementation recommendations.</b></p>

## **Project Timeline and Activities To-date**

The following provides an overview of the project's timeline and associated activities to-date. Specific details respecting the engagement activities referenced in the timeline are discussed further in the 'Consultation' section of this Report.

December 2024	Council approves amended recommendations of Report PED24163 to begin the Strategy.
January 2025	<p>Staff, in collaboration and consultation with procurement staff, confirm the use of the 'Request for Quotations (Good and Services)' procurement process to retain a supporting project consultant.</p> <p>The Request for Quotations bid document is prepared and approved by senior leadership.</p>
February 2025	Five consultants with the expertise deemed necessary for the work are invited to respond to the Request for Quotations bid starting on February 1. Invitees are provided until February 28 to submit their bids.
March 2025	<p>Cultural Spaces Consulting (the Consultant) is confirmed as the successful bidder and their services are procured.</p> <p>Initial introductory meetings and tours of the Downtown between City staff and the Consultants take place.</p> <p>Public engagement and communication plans are developed for engagement and project awareness efforts during Phase One of the project.</p>
April 2025	<p>Phase One Public engagement and project awareness efforts commence including the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The project page at <a href="http://www.hamilton.ca/OurFutureDowntown">www.hamilton.ca/OurFutureDowntown</a> goes live April 1</li><li>• The Engage Hamilton engagement project page at <a href="http://www.engage.hamilton.ca/OurFutureDowntown">www.engage.hamilton.ca/OurFutureDowntown</a> goes live April 2</li><li>• A Communication Update to City Council is provided April 1</li><li>• A City press release respecting the strategy's launch is issued April 23.</li><li>• Print and digital ad buys in local media and social media platforms commence.</li><li>• The first of 13 scheduled in-community pop-up engagement event occurs on April 26 with the Magnolia Hall grand opening.</li></ul>
May 2025	Public engagement and project awareness efforts continue including:

- Nine in-community pop-up engagement events are held.
- An informational project postcard is mailed out during the week of May 9.
- Roundtable stakeholder meetings are held with over 200 stakeholders invited to engage on key Downtown topics/themes.
- Additional individual stakeholder meetings/outreach occur with individuals, groups, associations and organizations.
- Print and digital ad buys continue through May.

Note at the time of writing this Report, the following activities are planned but have not yet occurred.

June 2025	Public engagement and project awareness efforts continue, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• An additional three in-community pop-up engagement events being held.</li><li>• Online engagement and feedback through the Engage Hamilton project page continues until June 30 for Phase 1 of the project.</li></ul>
July 2025	Interim Information Report delivered to General Issues Committee July 9.  A detailed report back to community summarizing the feedback heard through public engagement to the end of June is prepared and shared on Engage Hamilton and directly with engaged stakeholders before the end of July.

In July 2025, Phase Two of the project commences.

## **Analysis**

Appendix A of Report PED24163(c) includes an interim report prepared by the project consultants. It identifies overarching themes emerging from public and stakeholder engagement to date, as well as key observations and insights regarding the strategy's future vision, guiding principles and next steps for Downtown revitalization.

## **Alternatives**

As this is an Information Report, there are no alternatives presented.

## **Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities**

The Strategy is intended to support key Council priorities respecting Downtown revitalization, particularly as it relates to Council's priorities to support sustainable economic and ecological development and ensuring Downtown is a safe and thriving neighbourhood.

## **Previous Reports Submitted**

[PED24163 Downtown Hamilton Office and Storefront Commercial Sector Update and Action Report \(Ward 2\)](#)

[Our Future Downtown: 10-Year Downtown Revitalization Strategy Project Update \(Ward 2\) Communication Update, April 1 2025](#)

## **Consultation**

In collaboration with the Public Engagement and Corporate Communications teams in the City Manager's Office, staff developed a comprehensive public engagement and communication plans for Phase One of the project. The goal was to raise as much awareness as possible about the strategy and engage a broad section of Hamiltonians about the Downtown within the project timeframes and available budget.

Engagement efforts also aimed to hear from non-Hamilton residents who visit or work in the Downtown, recognizing the important role that employment and tourism play in its success.

**Phase One** of the project included the following outreach:

1. Engage Hamilton Project Page;
2. Direct Mail-outs;
3. Digital and Print Media Ad Buys;
4. In-Community Pop-Up Engagement;
5. Residential High-Rise Lobby Posters;
6. Stakeholder Roundtables;
7. Individual Stakeholder Engagement/Outreach; and,
8. Additional Focused Engagement Efforts

Additional details on each of these engagement efforts are provided below.

The feedback and comments received through these efforts so far have informed the interim report contained in Appendix A to Report PED24163(c). A more fulsome and detailed report back to the community respecting what has been heard will be prepared by staff and made available though the Engage Hamilton project page and directly to engaged stakeholders by the end of July.

## **Engage Hamilton Project Page**

The Engage Hamilton project page launched on April 2, 2025, offering the public several ways to contribute to the development of the Downtown Revitalization. Participants could complete a survey, share comments and concerns, submit personal stories/special memories and ideas, and ask questions.

As of June 5, 2025, the platform had achieved the following engagement:

- **Visitors Summary:**

- **Total visits** - 10,100
- **Max visitors per day** - 379
- **Visitors by Channel:**
  - Direct (using URL) - 6,866
  - Email - 227
  - Search Engine - 530
  - Social media - 1842
  - Referrals - 610;

- **Tool Performance:**

- Survey Submissions - 276
- Guest book Entries (Downtown Challenges and Concerns) - 57
- Stories (Special memories) Submissions - 3
- Questions Submitted - 10
- Ideas Posted:
  - "What's your big idea?" - 173
  - "What is your vision for Hamilton's downtown core?" - 39
  - "What do you value about the downtown core?" - 28

In total, over 1,100 contributions (including comments posted to and up/down voting on individual ideas posted publicly); and,

- **Documents Page:**

- Visitors - 49
- Documents Downloaded – 74.

## **Direct Mail-out**

To expand awareness and participation, postcards were mailed to over 55,000 residents, property owners, multi-residential tenants, and businesses in the greater Downtown area of Wards 1, 2 and 3.

The goal was to reach more people living in high-rise residential settings, which are often harder to engage.

A broader citywide mail-out was considered but found to be cost-prohibitive due to budget constraints. Instead, awareness was supported through other channels, including ads and community outreach.

### **Digital and Print Media Ad Buys**

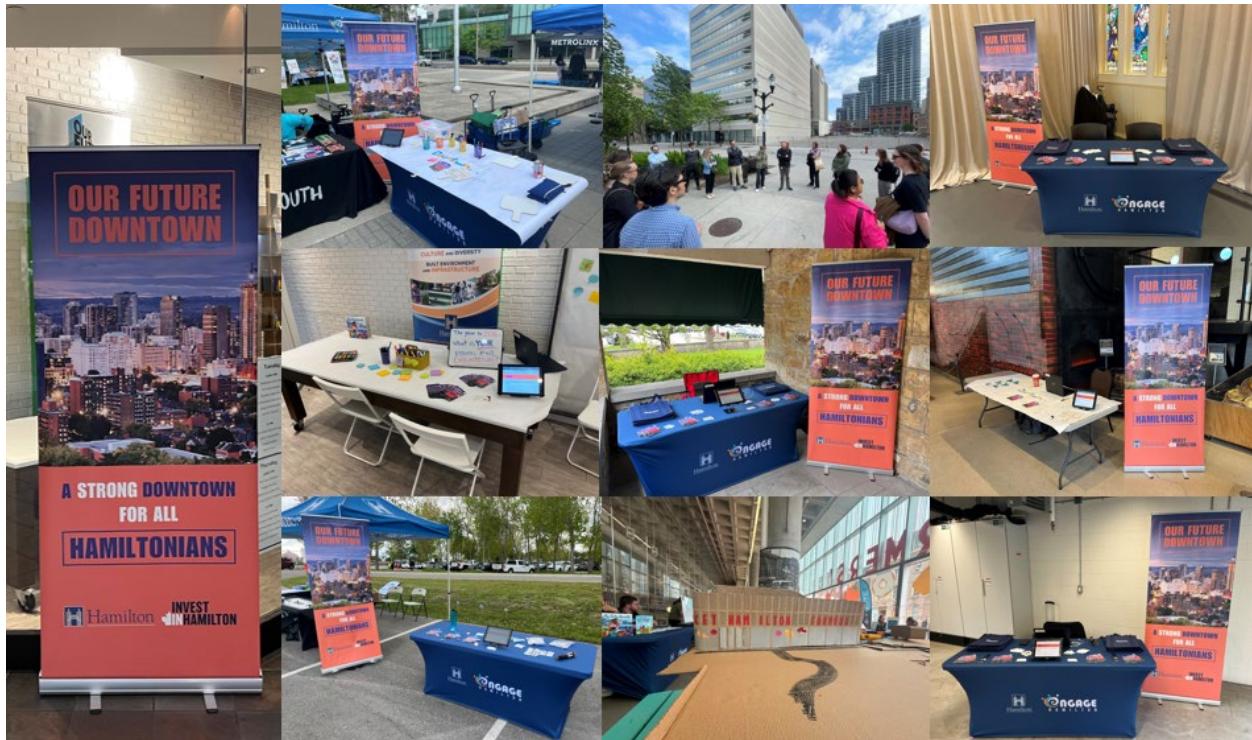
A coordinated media campaign ran across local newspapers, websites, and social media platforms to promote the project and encourage engagement.

### **In-Community Pop-Up Engagement**

To reach residents who may not engage otherwise, staff organized 13 pop-up events from April through June, aligning with major public events and destinations both inside and outside Downtown. These allowed face-to-face conversations and idea-sharing.

Events included:

- Magnolia Hall Grand Opening (Saturday April 26);
- Gage Park Greenhouses (Friday May 2);
- Open Doors Hamilton at Whitehern Historic House and Garden (Sunday May 4);
- Art Crawl on James Street North (Friday May 9);
- Hamilton Farmer's Market (Wednesday May 14);
- Hamilton Central Library (Friday May 16);
- Lime Ridge Mall (Saturday May 17);
- Touch-a-Truck at the Discovery Centre/Pier 8 (Saturday May 24);
- Newcomer Day (Friday May 30);
- Boats in the Park at Hamilton Museum of Steam and Technology (Saturday May 31);
- Hamilton Farmers' Market (Saturday June 7);
- State of the City (Monday June 16); and,
- Open Streets (Sunday June 22).



Images of in-community engagement (Image Credit: City Staff)

### **Multi-Residential Building Lobby Posters**

Posters were placed in the lobbies of several residential buildings (36 James St. N., 141 Catharine St. S., and CityHousing Hamilton buildings) to boost awareness among Downtown tenants.

Efforts to expand this to more buildings were limited by challenges in identifying and contacting building managers or condo boards. In the successful cases, residents played a key role by helping facilitate connections with building contacts.

### **Stakeholder Roundtables**

A series of focused roundtables took place over two weeks in May. Facilitated by the consultants, these sessions brought together stakeholders from within and outside the City to discuss key revitalization themes, including: arts and culture, community safety and well-being, transportation, branding/marketing/tourism, small and mid-sized business, housing and urban fabric/public realm.

In total, approximately 200 stakeholders were invited to engage through these roundtable discussions.

### **Individual Stakeholder Engagement/Outreach**

In addition to the stakeholder roundtables, staff met with a range of groups, organizations, and individuals to gather input. These included:

- Business Improvement Area Subcommittee;
- HamOntYouth Steering Committee;
- Hamilton is Home Alliance;
- Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council (City staff contacts with future engagement with the council itself to occur in Phase Two of the project);
- Hamilton Farmers' Market Board of Director's;
- Hamilton Farmers' Market Vendors Association;
- Hamilton Police Service;
- Individual Downtown office tenants through in-person corporate calls;
- Oak View Group/Hamilton Urban Precinct Entertainment Group; and,
- Start-up and Entrepreneur Focus Group at Innovation Factory.

### **Additional Focused Engagement Efforts**

- Indigenous Consultation  
Staff have been working with the City's Indigenous Relations team to identify meaningful opportunities to engage with the urban Indigenous community on this project. These activities are planned for Phase Two of the project.
- Ontario Professional Planners Institute Walking Tour (May 29)  
Staff worked with the Ontario Professional Planners Institute to organize a walking tour of the Downtown to discuss Downtown challenges and potential opportunities from an urban planning and design perspective.

### **Appendices and Schedules Attached**

Appendix A: Interim Report prepared by Cultural Spaces Consulting

<b>Prepared by:</b>	Phil Caldwell, Acting Manager of Commercial Districts and Small Business Planning and Economic Development Department, Economic Development Division
<b>Submitted and recommended by:</b>	Norm Schleeahn, Director of Economic Development Planning and Economic Development Department, Economic Development Division