



## City of Hamilton

# Report for Consideration

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

**Date:** April 15, 2026

**Report No:** PED24163(e)

**Subject/Title:** Final 10-Year Downtown Hamilton Revitalization Strategy

**Ward(s) Affected:** City Wide

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### Recommendations

- a) That the 10-Year Downtown Hamilton Revitalization Strategy, contained in Appendix “A” to Report PED24163(e) **BE APPROVED**;
- b) That staff **BE DIRECTED** to incorporate the directions and actions of the 10-Year Downtown Hamilton Revitalization into all applicable City departmental and divisional work plans;
- c) That the City Manager or designate **BE REQUESTED** to complete a governance review of departmental roles and responsibilities respecting the Downtown and West Harbour and report back to General Issues Committee by the end of Q1 2027 with recommendations for any organizational structural improvements or refinements to roles and responsibilities needed to support the efficient and timely implementation of the 10-Year Downtown Hamilton Revitalization Strategy, and that this review **BE**

**FUNDED** from Economic Development Initiatives Project 3621708900 to a maximum of \$75,000;

- d) That until such time as a Downtown and West Harbour governance review is completed, the Economic Development Division **BE DIRECTED** to continue as the interim coordination and implementation planning lead for the 10-Year Downtown Hamilton Revitalization Strategy across all City departments;
- e) That the General Manager of Public Works **BE DIRECTED** to identify existing response times for service requests within Downtown public rights-of- way and parks, and where deemed insufficient, identify potential opportunities to improve response times benchmarked against those achieved for Downtowns in comparable municipalities, and report back in advance of the 2027 budget process on any budget pressures that would result from achieving those improved standards;
- f) That the Economic Development Division, in collaboration with identified departments/divisions, **BE DIRECTED** to undertake the following initiatives to support downtown revitalization, commencing in 2026, and funded entirely through existing departmental/divisional resources:
  - i. Explore and implement a pilot project for permanent infrastructure improvements on James Street North between York Boulevard and the West Harbour GO Station that would better enable recurring and cost-effective temporary street closures for festivals and events in collaboration with the Transportation Division, Transportation Planning and Parking Division, Transit (Hamilton Street Railway), Hamilton Police Services, and the Tourism and Culture Division;
  - ii. Identify and implement improvements to John-Rebecca Park that would better enable greater public use of the park including through placemaking events and activations, public art and other temporary amenities in collaboration with

- the Tourism and Culture Division and Environmental Services Division;
- iii. Develop and implement a Wayfinding Strategy, including updated pedestrian, active transportation and vehicular directional signage to strategic destinations, parking amenities, transit, and other visitor focused needs in alignment with the City Wide 2024-2028 Tourism Strategy and in collaboration with the Tourism and Culture, Transportation Planning and Parking, and Transportation Divisions;
  - iv. Identify and implement pilot projects that will support street-level activation on York Boulevard to increase vibrancy and pedestrian activity in collaboration with the Hamilton Farmer's Market, Tourism and Culture Division and Transportation Division;
  - v. Investigate the current state of use and physical condition of Commonwealth Square and report back to General Issues Committee in Q1 2027 respecting potential next steps to address the future/role function of the Square;
  - vi. That the Public Works, Healthy and Safe Communities, and Planning and Economic Development Departments **BE DIRECTED** to jointly undertake a comprehensive audit of Downtown lighting and other safety-related conditions within public rights-of-way, public parks, and municipal parking lots, and to develop and implement a work plan that expedites interim and permanent improvements and/or mitigation measures to enhance overall safety in the Downtown;
- g) That the Planning Division **BE DIRECTED** to prepare a Precinct Plan for the area around TD Coliseum, identified as an area to leverage in the 10-Year Downtown Hamilton Revitalization Strategy, to develop a framework for coordinating future development, infrastructure and urban design needs required to achieve an identifiable and vibrant entertainment district within Downtown;

- h) That the Tourism and Culture Division **BE DIRECTED** to engage the Downtown Business Improvement Area as the on-going operator of the King William Summer Pedestrianization Program to support continued and uninterrupted activation and placemaking with such costs limited to \$50,000 annually, with annual increases tied to inflation, and with such agreement to be executed by the General Manager of the Planning and Economic Development Department including such terms and conditions as determined by the General Manager of the Planning and Economic Development Department and in a form satisfactory to the City Solicitor;
- i) That the Economic Development Division **BE DIRECTED** to provide annual updates on the status of implementing the 10-Year Downtown Hamilton Revitalization Strategy through Economic Development's annual State of the Downtown reporting to the General Issues Committee over the duration of the Strategy's implementation;
- j) That Clerks **BE DIRECTED** to remove Outstanding Business List Item GIC-12/04/24-10.5l.

## Key Facts

- The purpose of this Report is to present for approval the Final 10-Year Downtown Hamilton Revitalization Strategy (the Strategy) prepared by project consultants Cultural Spaces (the Consultants).
- The Strategy comprises a mission statement, vision, guiding principles, priorities, and implementing actions.
- The Strategy and associated implementing actions are rooted in public and stakeholder consultation, and Council feedback.

- The Strategy identifies areas of focus for City advocacy to other levels of government needed to support long-lasting revitalization of Downtown as well as a potential measurement and reporting framework to inform annual reporting on the Strategy's implementation and progress to Council and the community; and,
- Base level annual funding of \$1,000,000 will be put towards the implementation of the Strategy from existing financial resources allocated to the Economic Development Division annually over the duration of the Strategy's implementation.

## **Financial Considerations**

There are no financial considerations arising from this Report. Given the financial and budgetary pressures of the City, it is staff's intent that the Strategy's implementation be facilitated primarily through the following means unless otherwise directed by Council:

- Reallocation/reprioritization of existing resources;
- Funding already allocated to the Economic Development Division annually intended to support Downtown revitalization initiatives in the amount of \$1,000,000; and,
- Where implementation of certain actions may require additional funding/resources, that these be brought forward by respective departments/divisions through individual business cases and the regular budget cycle cross-departmentally and in collaboration with the Economic Development Division.

## **Background**

On December 11, 2024, City Council approved the amended recommendations of Report PED24163 respecting a series of initiatives to be led by the Economic Development Division respecting Downtown, including the development of the Strategy.

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 revitalization efforts in the Downtown.

On July 9, 2025, staff presented information Report PED24163(c) to the General Issues Committee which provided a project update and an interim Consultant's Report identifying the key themes heard through community and key participant engagement about the current state of the Downtown.

Although the July Report was originally intended to present a draft vision and guiding principles, key observations and insights respecting the strategy's future vision and guiding principles were provided as staff and the Consultants believed that, based on the engagement feedback heard at that time, it was too soon to engage in discussions around a draft vision and guiding principles and that further consultation, data collection and analysis were required.

As a further supplement to the July Report, a subsequent Communication Update was provided to Council and the community on August 21, 2025, detailing the results of online engagement activities carried out through Engage Hamilton up until the end of July 2025. These results provided more specific insights into the opinions and views of those who responded with the results further reinforcing the key themes and findings presented in the Consultant's Interim Report.

On December 3, 2025, Report PED24163(d) presented the Draft Strategy including mission statement, vision, guiding principles and action markers to General Issues Committee. Report PED24163(d) provided an opportunity for Council feedback as well as an opportunity for additional consultation with over 100 City staff focused on the development of the priority actions.

Additional consultation occurred in Q1 2026 which reconfirmed the draft mandate, vision and guiding principles, while simultaneously assisting with the development of the implementing actions. Consultation focused on leveraging existing assets, resources, budgets and relationships, gave a high-level idea of the financial costs, and identified possible barriers to implementation of the actions. Prioritization of actions was discussed as the first years of implementation of the Strategy are imperative to seeing its success through trust building and momentum building.

## **Analysis**

Appendix A contains the final version of the Strategy prepared by the Consultants. The Final Strategy is largely consistent with the Draft version presented on December 3, 2025, through Staff Report PED24163(d), with the addition of finalized actions and the identification of strategic locations with the potential to have a transformative impact on the Downtown. The Final Strategy reflects feedback received from the public, Council, and key stakeholders.

Successful delivery of the Strategy depends on the early implementation of high-impact actions that demonstrate how its priorities can work together to achieve positive outcomes and build public confidence. The identified actions represent practical steps to advance implementation and have been prioritized to deliver quick wins while building on work already underway to support revitalization of Downtown.

Actions scheduled for Years one to three focus on establishing momentum and trust by achieving measurable progress early. These actions emphasize cleanliness, rapid maintenance and repair, reliable lighting, consistent activation of public spaces, and direct support for businesses and residents. Implementation during this initial phase will leverage existing funding and prioritize collaboration across departments and with external partners to ensure early, visible success.

Actions identified for Years three to five builds on this foundation and are intended to advance more complex initiatives, including catalytic redevelopment projects, permanent transformations, the creation of signature public spaces, and the development of a more cohesive public realm. The first five years of implementation are critical for demonstrating progress, achieving early successes, and applying a mindset of learning and continuous improvement. Early and sustained success will help build confidence among the public, internal stakeholders, and other levels of government, potentially enabling future investment opportunities. Visible improvements to physical infrastructure and overall perception of the Downtown will serve as key indicators of progress.

The Strategy and its associated actions have been designed to remain flexible, allowing implementation leads to adapt based on outcomes and lessons learned. Successful implementation will require alignment across City programs, investments, and partnerships so that actions reinforce one another in support of the Strategy's Vision. No additional budget requests are being made at this time; however, as implementation progresses, additional funding requirements may arise and would be brought forward through subsequent reports as appropriate.

### *Beyond Downtown*

While the Strategy is focused on revitalization efforts for Downtown, the challenges giving rise to this Strategy are not isolated to Downtown and can be found in other neighbourhoods of the City to varying degrees.

As such, it is staff's intent that the opportunities this Strategy will provide to pilot and test new ideas and explore new ways of doing things will, if successful Downtown, could have the potential to inform urban revitalization efforts in other areas of the City.

### *Governance Review and Interim Implementation*

To support the efficient and timely implementation of the 10-Year Downtown Hamilton Revitalization Strategy, the Consultants have recommended that a review of departmental roles and responsibilities respecting Downtown occur to identify potential opportunities for organizational improvements and/or refined roles and responsibilities across City divisions and departments. Recommendation associated with this review would be expected to come to Council for consideration and discussion before the end of Q1 2027. The goal of the review would focus on identifying opportunities to improve organization structure with a view to identifying efficiencies, reprioritization and reallocation of existing resources which will put in place an administrative model that allow for timely and accountable implementation of the Strategy.

Ahead of the completion of the governance review, Economic Development Division staff who have worked with the consultants on the preparation of the Strategy will be the interim leads for the continued coordination and implementation planning of the Strategy. Economic Development Division staff are equipped to temporarily lead the implementation and coordination of actions within the initial year, however past the initial year, impacts to core job duties would occur.

To further assist with coordination and implementation planning of the Strategy, staff are also recommending that the terms of reference for the existing internal Downtown and West Harbour Coordinating Committee be updated to identify it as the primary means through which cross-departmental collaboration and implementation planning for the 10-Strategy will occur until such time as the Downtown and West Harbour governance and program review is completed.

The Downtown and West Harbour Coordinating Committee is made up of staff representing divisions across the City and meets monthly to coordinate matters impacting the Downtown and West Harbour.

### *Coordination of Efforts and Downtown Service Standards*

Through the development of the Strategy, staff repeatedly heard that Downtown Hamilton's infrastructure within the public realm and public parks and waste collection

efforts are not meeting the standards that residents, businesses and visitors expect of a Downtown. As a result, staff are seeking direction to explore opportunities to exceed the current service standards and identify the associated cost implications for improving current service standards, benchmarked against other comparable municipalities, for future consideration by Council. As part of this exercise, efforts to improve coordination and find efficiencies in service delivery will be explored. Should there be associated budget pressures resulting from implementing improved service standards for Downtown, these needs will come forward for consideration through the 2027 budget process.

### *Permanent Infrastructure Improvements for Temporary Road Closures on James Street North*

The temporary closure of James Street North to support festivals and activations has been occurring for years, with growing frequency. Given the frequency of activations, and the costs associated with street closure, staffing and rental of temporary Hostile Vehicle Mitigation measures, staff are recommending exploring permanent infrastructure to reduce annual costs of street festivals and activations on James Street North. This recommendation also provides an opportunity to work with Tourism and Culture Division staff to incorporate art or beautification with any permanent infrastructure to facilitate temporary road closures.

Report PW26003 discusses pedestrian and crowd safety measures and the associated budget costs to implement, which are estimated at \$300,000 for 2026 across the City. Economic Development budget also support deficit costs associated with 2025 closures in the amount of \$150,000. It is the intent of this recommendation to reduce the costs associated with the road closure and hostile vehicle mitigation measures. Coordination with Hamilton Police and internal Divisions will occur.

*John-Rebecca Park*

John-Rebecca Park opened in November 2019 in anticipation of significant redevelopment in the surrounding area, which was expected to bring an influx of residents who would benefit from additional outdoor public open space. However, due to the impacts of COVID-19 and shifts in the development landscape, the anticipated redevelopment of surrounding properties has not yet occurred. As a result, the park is currently underutilized relative to original expectations.

Recognizing the ongoing market challenges delaying the development of new housing in the vicinity of the park, it is recommended that staff pursue temporary park activations and improvements with the goal of improving the visitor experience. A combination of programming, minor physical improvements (such as the addition of shaded seating and activities), and public art installations would help activate the park and enhance its usability. Parks Operations staff are also in the process of installing tamper-proof electrical access to further support future activations.

This recommendation aligns with a broader action in the Strategy to review all public spaces in the Downtown area in order to create a comprehensive catalogue of spaces and the amenities and features they provide.

### *Downtown Wayfinding Strategy*

The ability to navigate into, within, and out of the Downtown—and to easily locate key destinations such as parking facilities, commercial shopping districts, the GO Train Stations and the bus terminal, and major cultural attractions—is essential to a successful visitor experience. Effective wayfinding extends beyond individual signs; it is a coordinated system that helps residents and visitors orient themselves and move through the Downtown in an intuitive and informative manner.

Ahead of the City-wide Wayfinding Strategy, identified as an action in the Tourism Strategy, staff are recommending the preparation and implementation of a Downtown Wayfinding Strategy. This initiative will allow the City to pilot a specific design approach and visual style to present a more cohesive visual identity for Downtown, while also providing valuable insights to inform the future City-wide Wayfinding Strategy.

Report PED14218 previously outlined wayfinding initiatives intended to support growth and development in the Downtown. Building on this earlier work, and in coordination with other internal divisions currently undertaking signage initiatives (such as Active Transportation and cycling route signage), a collaborative approach is essential to creating a downtown that is easy to navigate, cohesive, and welcoming.

### *York Boulevard and Farmers' Market Activation*

There is an opportunity to collaborate with the Hamilton Farmers' Market to pilot an activation along York Boulevard that utilizes both the sidewalk and interior space along the front of the Market building. Potential activations would aim to increase pedestrian activity and vibrancy along this stretch of York Boulevard, while providing opportunities to expand Market programming and vendor presence during the busy fall harvest season and in conjunction with events at TD Coliseum.

The initial pilot will focus on activations from September to October 2026 and would coincide with Supercrawl as well as several evening events at TD Coliseum. The recommended investment would support the provision of temporary outdoor seating along the front of the Market, as well as the installation of necessary infrastructure and support to enable the interior space to accommodate multiple vendor stalls and special event programming.

Lessons learned from this pilot activation would inform future activations for the Hamilton Farmers' Market and could provide a model for other property owners along York Boulevard between Bay Street North and James Street North—an area that is experiencing increased foot traffic following the reopening of the arena and ongoing redevelopment along the corridor.

### *Commonwealth Square*

The Strategy identifies several strategic locations with the potential to support transformative change, including Commonwealth Square. Commonwealth Square is a

municipally owned asset, elevated above Summer's Lane between the Art Gallery of Hamilton—where a master plan with proposed expansion is being contemplated—and the Hamilton Convention Centre, which is currently undergoing aesthetic and functional improvements.

This recommendation focuses on undertaking a review of the Square's current condition, use, and performance, and on developing a plan to explore potential future uses of Commonwealth Square. The outcomes of this work would be reported back to Council with options and recommendations to guide next steps.

Staff note that the Commonwealth Square is one of a number of examples of urban renewal efforts in the Downtown dating to the 1970's and 1980's and which are reaching a point in their lifecycle when major considerations about their future use/role and cost to maintain must be considered. Meanwhile, these strategic assets, such as Commonwealth Square, represent a unique opportunity to serve as a catalyst for change by supporting the creation of welcoming, high-quality public spaces that strengthen connections between key cultural and civic destinations. Advancing planning efforts for this site, as well as other past urban renewal projects, would contribute directly to the implementation of the Strategy, help activate the surrounding area, and demonstrate visible momentum toward the broader revitalization objectives for Downtown.

### *Entertainment District Precinct Plan*

The preparation of a Precinct Plan is recommended for the area surrounding the TD Coliseum. The Plan would establish a strategic framework for development and urban design as well as coordinate public infrastructure—such as streets, parks, and community facilities—with private development to support the creation of a vibrant, cohesive and identifiable entertainment district within Downtown. The plan would allow the City to further leverage investments and success-to-date of TD Coliseum to the benefit the broader public and the revitalization of Downtown through an enhanced public realm including through the development of a network of distinctive and dynamic

public spaces centered around the TD Coliseum and strengthened connections to surrounding commercial corridors.

### *King William Street Activation*

Building on the success of the Summer 2025 King William Street Pedestrianization Program, which was undertaken in conjunction with the Downtown Hamilton Business Improvement Area, staff recommend that the Downtown Hamilton Business Improvement Area be supported in leading the delivery of the Pedestrianization Program going forward. King William Street, between James Street North and Hughson Street North, is located entirely within the Business Improvement Area's boundary, enabling the Business Improvement Area to directly support businesses and respond to local needs within its established mandate and administrative structure.

The 2025 programming was well received by businesses, residents, and visitors, and leveraged existing partnerships, most notably with Fringe Fest, which can be maintained and strengthened through continued Business Improvement Area leadership. Retaining the Downtown Hamilton Business Improvement Area as the Program lead allows the City to build on proven operational capacity, established relationships, and lessons learned. Continued Business Improvement Area leadership provides consistency, cost efficiency, and program continuity, while aligning with Strategy actions that emphasize easing barriers to activation and scaling successful initiatives. This approach supports incremental improvement of the Program over time and ensures momentum is maintained in activating King William Street.

Based on staff's experience to date, staff recommend that the City's annual contribution to support the Downtown Hamilton Business Improvement Area as the operator of the King William Pedestrianization Program be capped at \$50,000, with annual adjustments indexed to inflation.

## **Alternatives**

In the event that the Final 10-Year Downtown Hamilton Revitalization Strategy is not approved by Council, it should be referred to staff for further refinement and consultation.

## Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

The Strategy identifies a number of priorities and actions for Downtown that, if implemented, would support several priorities of Council including the following:

See [2022-2026 Council Priorities, Outcomes & Measures of Success | City of Hamilton](#) for more information on Council's Priorities.

1. Sustainable Economic & Ecological Development
  - 1.1. Reduce the burden on residential taxpayers
  - 1.2. Facilitate the growth of key sectors
  
2. Safe & Thriving Neighbourhoods
  - 2.1. Increase the supply of affordable and supportive housing and reduce chronic homelessness
  - 2.2. Make sure people can safely and efficiently move around by foot, bike, transit or car
  - 2.3. Provide vibrant parks, recreation and public space
  
3. Responsiveness & Transparency
  - 3.1. Prioritize customer service and proactive communication
  - 3.2. Get more people involved in decision making and problem solving
  - 3.3. Build a high performing public service
  - 3.4. Modernize City systems

## Previous Reports Submitted

- [PED24163\(d\) Draft 10-Year Downtown Revitalization Strategy](#)

- [PED24163\(c\) 10-Year Downtown Revitalization Strategy Project Update and Interim Consultant's Report \(Ward 2\)](#)
- [Our Future Downtown: 10 Year Downtown Revitalization Strategy Project Update](#)
- [Our Future Downtown: 10-Year Downtown Revitalization Strategy Interim Engage Hamilton Summary Findings Report](#)
- [PED24163 Downtown Hamilton Office and Storefront Commercial Sector Update and Action Report](#)
- [PW26003 Pedestrian and Crowd Safety Measures with the City's Municipal Right of Way](#)

## Consultation

Consultation undertaken during Phase One of the project, through July 2025, was detailed in Report PED24163(c). Phase Two consultation was summarized in Report PED24163(d) which included how the feedback was incorporated into the Draft Strategy presented at the December 3, 2025 General Issues Committee.

Subsequently, through Q1 2026, staff reengaged with a number of key stakeholders externally as well as internally with over 100 City staff across all departments to refine the final Strategy and its actions to support successful implementation. Should the Strategy be approved, staff have recommended that the Strategy and its actions inform and be incorporated into departmental/divisional works plans across the City, where applicable.

## Appendices and Schedules Attached

Appendix "A": 10-Year Downtown Hamilton Revitalization Strategy – Final Report

**Prepared by:**

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