2022-2027 CITY OF HAMILTON

YOUTH STRATEGY REPORT











MESSAGE

FROM THE HAMONTYOUTH STEERING COMMITTEE

Youth voice, engagement and leadership are central pillars of a strong community. It takes a strategic approach to ensure that youth are included in a meaningful way. Conversations about issues of civic importance need a venue where youth voice is heard and respected. Engaging with youth who have a wide variety of lived experiences requires a targeted commitment by the community and can result in numerous benefits.

The Youth Steering Committee was created almost four years ago and has provided many rewarding experiences for youth. We love that we get to meet as a diverse group of youth from across the city, learn and unlearn together, and help create that venue for youth voices to be heard. It is exciting to see our network grow, work collaboratively with City staff to identify successes and challenges and create opportunities for youth to participate in the process. We are grateful to have been actively involved at all stages in the development of the Youth Strategy. The engagement results highlight many things youth enjoy and appreciate about living in Hamilton and they also show what the City can improve on from a youth's perspective. It has been a lot of hard work, and we are so proud to be a part of the creation of Hamilton's first Youth Strategy.

We are excited for the next steps and to continue our collaboration with City staff and agency partners in helping to make Hamilton the best place to raise a child and age successfully.

Maryam Akhtar

Former member of HWDSB Student Senate YSC Member since 2018 **Lillian Guy**

Director of Operations Model City Hall YSC Member since 2021

On behalf of the membership of the Youth Steering Committee

MESSAGE

FROM THE MAYOR

The City of Hamilton is committed to be the best place to raise a child and age successfully. A key part of that is ensuring our youth have the necessary supports to develop in a positive and healthy way.

While we work to make our city the most youth friendly it can be, it is crucial that we include the voices of the very youth we are serving. They bring fresh ideas, and new perspectives to issues and being involved in the process gives them the opportunity to develop skills as they move forward in life.

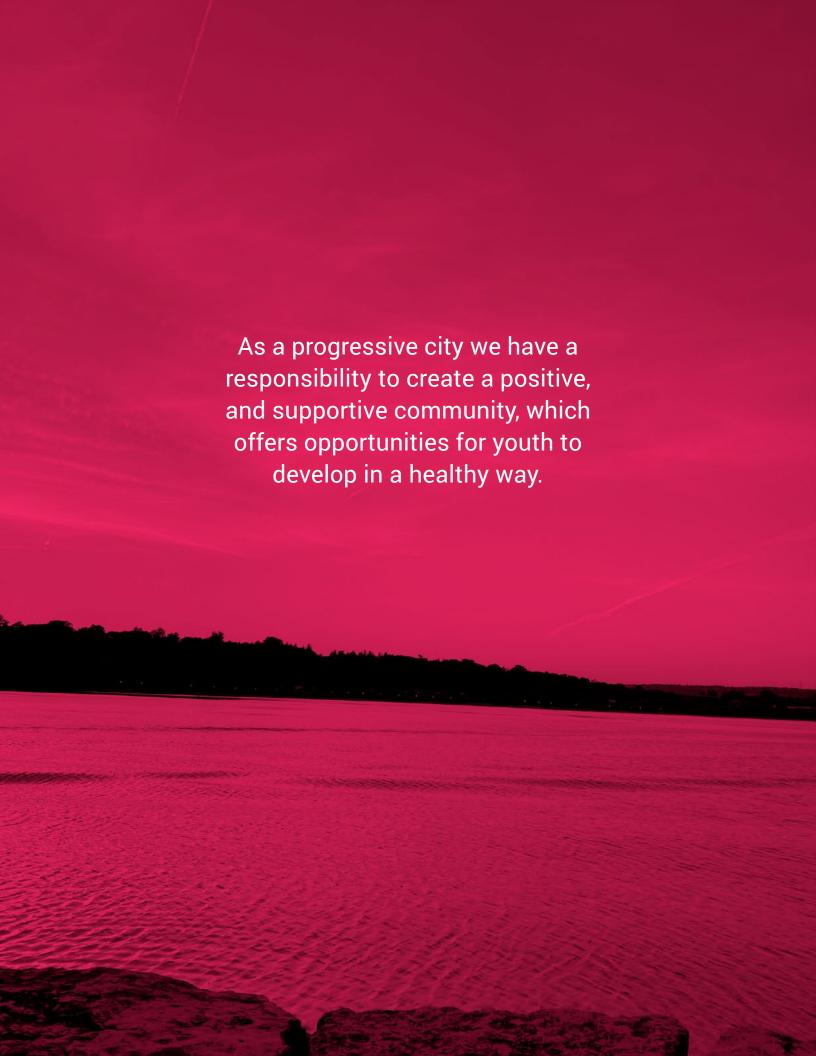
Our first Youth Strategy acts as a foundational piece to that work. The strategy maps out a plan for how youth voices are informing the priorities. It also makes certain that youth continue to be a part of the process moving forward

A big thank you to all who participated, and a special thank you to the young people who worked alongside the City of Hamilton as part of the Youth Steering Committee.



Mayor Fred Eisenberger





CONTENT

2022-2027 CITY OF HAMILTON

YOUTH STRATEGY REPORT

EVECUTIVE CURARANDY



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	b
1. Project Summary	7
2. Youth Steering Committee	9
3. HAMONTYOUTH	10
ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN	12
1. What we know about youth	13
2. What research did we do?	14
3. What engagement did we do?	15
4. What we learned about youth engagement	16
5. Priorities for youth 14-29 in Hamilton	17
RECOMMENDATIONS TO ADDRESS IDENTIFIED PRIORITIES	18
1. Implementation Plan	19
2. Addressing Priority Themes	20
2a. Accessing Mental Health and Addictions Supports	21
2b. Accessing Employment and Training	22
2c. Access to Safe and Affordable Housing	23
2d. Enhance Safety and a Sense of Inclusion	24
2e. Enhance Youth Engagement and Leadership Opportunities	
CONCLUSION	28
SPECIAL THANKS	30

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1. PROJECT SUMMARY

We are pleased to present the City of Hamilton's first Youth Strategy.

Established in 2007, the Hamilton Youth Advisory Committee (HYAC) served as an official Advisory Committee of Council. HYAC disbanded in 2017 and Council directed staff to look at different models for the City to engage with youth. In 2018, staff began extensive engagement with youth, City staff, parents and agency partners. The purpose of this work was to understand youth priorities and how to best engage them moving forward. This strategy will help to address many of the issues brought forward by the community and encompass solutions in collaboration with youth. This five-year strategy will inform, guide and build awareness about Hamilton's youth while encompassing their voice as part of the process.

Youth, parents and youth-serving agency partners have all contributed to informing this work. Staff were prepared to present these findings in the spring of 2020, however the impacts of COVID-19 delayed this work. Staff, alongside the Youth Steering Committee recommended re-engaging with youth, parents and agency partners to review the priorities of 2018. The goal of the re-engagement process was to confirm if the 2018 priorities were still relevant or if new priorities emerged due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

According to the 2016 Census, youth 15-29 make up 19.5% of Hamilton's population. Young people play a crucial role in city building. The voices of youth keep the city moving forward with fresh ideas and new perspectives. As a progressive city, we have a responsibility to create a positive and supportive community, which offers opportunities for youth to develop in a healthy way.

HAMILTON'S YOUTH STRATEGY FEATURES:

- The most important issues for youth 14-29
- An implementation plan for next steps
- Recommendations on the best ways to connect, consult and collaborate with youth

A Youth Steering Committee was created to enable staff to collaborate and embed the youth voice into this strategy. The steering committee meets regularly and since its inception, 61 youth have participated in its monthly meetings. Currently, there are 21 youth on the committee.

The collaboration with the Youth Steering Committee led to the creation of a new youth brand, HamOntYouth. A dedicated youth Instagram page called @HamOntYouth was also developed. This provides a youth-friendly platform to connect as identified by our members. Youth Steering Committee members collaborate with staff on content and social media campaigns featured on the page. The Youth Steering Committee provides input and advice on the engagement process.



A newly formed integrated staff team was also created to support this important work. This team includes a youth-dedicated Ontario Works Case Manager, Xperience Annex Navigator, Project Manager of Strategic Youth Initiatives and two Learning, Earning and Parenting/Youth Coordinators. This staff team also includes four part-time Youth Engagers that are hired on six-month contracts to engage peer-to-peer and represent youth at various City tables. The staff team also develops a monthly newsletter that goes out to agency partners to inform them of youth events and initiatives that support youth in Hamilton.

The methodology used to inform the Youth Strategy included surveys and focus groups. In total, 1,043 youth surveys, 196 agency partner surveys and 177 parent surveys were completed in the 2018 and 2021 engagement process. There were 583 total participants in our focus groups.

While there are similarities in the priorities identified during the 2018 and 2021 engagement, the order of importance did shift and new priorities emerged. The following priority themes were identified:

• Accessing Mental Health and Addiction Supports

 Opportunities to improve access to mental health support, alcohol and substance use among youth.

Accessing Safe and Affordable Housing

- Opportunities to improve affordability of housing.
- Opportunities to improve supports to youth who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.

Accessing Employment and Training

 Opportunities to improve access to sustainable job opportunities and post-secondary training.

• Enhance Safety and a Sense of Inclusion

- Opportunities to improve the fostering of more cultural awareness.
- Continue community conversations on how to address guns, gangs and violence.

• Enhance Youth Engagement & Leadership

- Opportunities to improve youth voice in City planning and decision-making.
- Continue to connect youth to services.

This report will summarize the findings from the re-engagement and include recommendations for addressing the priorities that were identified through the process.

2. YOUTH STEERING COMMITTEE

The Youth Steering Committee is designed to be easily accessible to youth who live, work or play in Hamilton. All youth are welcome to participate and there are no minimum attendance requirements for meetings to maintain membership. The meetings are a safe space for youth to share their opinion, to learn and to have fun. The Youth Steering Committee allows City staff and youth to collaborate on:

- 1. Effective techniques and locations to connect, consult and collaborate.
- 2. Help make evidence-based recommendations on youth initiatives.
- 3. Collaborate with City staff on creating youth-friendly City and community initiatives.
- 4. Identify projects that would make Hamilton a more youth-friendly city.





Youth Steering Committee Meeting – July 2018

Currently the Youth Steering Committee has 21 members who meet monthly. They contribute to the ongoing development of the strategy and collaborate with other City departments.

Some examples of how the Youth Steering Committee supported this work include:

- 1. Creating the HamOntYouth Brand
- 2. COVID-19 Youth Campaigns
- 3. Voter Experience Project
- 4. Bayfront Industrial Strategy Youth Focus Groups
- 5. Bell Let's Talk Day
- 6. HSR Re(Engage)
- 7. Celebrating National Youth Week

Moving forward, staff will continue to collaborate with the Youth Steering Committee on identified priorities and designing an evaluation.

3. HAMONTYOUTH



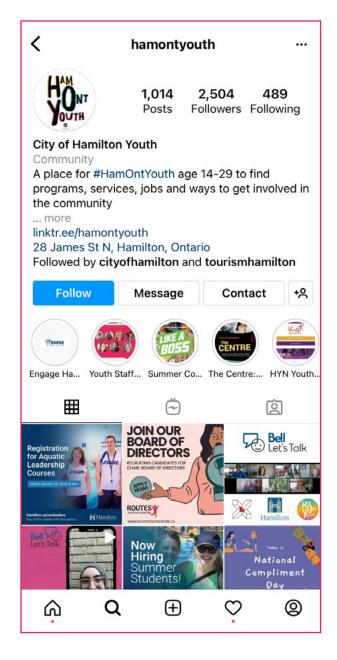
Youth Steering Committee members identified Instagram as the best platform to share information with youth. To support the development of this online channel, it was suggested that a youth-dedicated brand be created. City staff consulted with the City's Communications section who supported the concept of a youth-dedicated brand. This brand also informs the Youth Strategy's promotional materials, is youth-friendly and provides an identity for youth work in the City.

The HamOntYouth brand and guidelines were created by a member of the Youth Steering Committee and have been utilized across all promotional materials. Moving forward, this brand can be used by other City departments when planning youth initiatives.

The HamOntYouth Instagram page currently has over 2,500 followers. It highlights youth opportunities, services, programs and achievements.

The Social Media Committee works with City staff to support @HamOntYouth. This subcommittee of the Youth Steering Committee has the following objectives:

- 1. Provide advice on effective promotion for community initiatives.
- 2. Determine @HamOntYouth social media campaigns, i.e. Vaccine Confidence for Youth, Black History Month.
- **3.** Set target goals for number of followers, reach and interactions.



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1. WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT YOUTH



104,565

RESIDENTS AGE 15-29

(Census Data 2016)



25% of 338

INDIVIDUALS SURVEYED
WERE YOUTH AGE 16-30
EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

(2018 Point in Time Count Homeless Survey)



PATIENTS SEEN BY

Hamilton Health Sciences Mental Health Outpatient Services Hamilton

(2020 Mental Health Outpatient)



AS OF NOVEMBER 15, 2021
(Workforce Planning Hamilton)



39

NUMBER OF YOUTH COUNCILS AND COMMITTEES IDENTIFIED IN YOUTH STRATEGY ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN 344

YOUTH 12-17
INVOLVED IN VIOLENT CRIMES

(2020 Youth Crime Report -Hamilton Police)





Top 3 things

YOUTH RANKED THAT THEY LOVED ABOUT HAMILTON

- Parks, Trails and Waterfalls
- Sports and Recreation
- Multi-Cultural Festivals and Events





2. WHAT RESEARCH DID WE DO?

To help inform the Youth Strategy, a literature review was completed. This was conducted to give staff a better understanding of how other municipalities and government agencies work with youth.

Youth Engagement Best Practices

- · Reviewed Hamilton's Public Engagement Charter
- As identified by "Roger Hart's Ladder to Youth Participation" shared decision-making
 with adults is best practice. City staff implemented this model by working alongside
 61 individual youth within the Youth Steering Committee. This best practice informs
 the recommendation for continuing the Youth Steering Committee as an engagement
 advisory committee.
- Parks and Recreation Ontario: **Positive Youth Development Training** ² states that the most effective way to engage youth is "peer-to-peer".
- The Federation of Canadian Municipalities "Youth Engagement Handbook" ³ identifies best practices for local government to connect youth to public service. It recommends having a Youth Advisory Council to give youth a better understanding on how local government works while developing their skills for future careers.
- Reviewed Ontario Stepping Up Strategic Framework for Youth ⁴, Canada's National Youth Policy ⁵ and 10 Municipal Youth Strategies to understand how to collaborate with youth on civic issues.
- Reviewed "Hamilton Millennials and Community Belonging-Preliminary findings from the 2017 Hamilton Millennial Survey" ⁶ to inform precarious employment within Millennials

Retrieved from www.canada.ca

¹⁻ Hart, R. A. (1992). Children's Participation: from tokenism to citizenship. Florence: UNICEF International Child Development Centre.

² Parks and Recreation Ontario. (2014). Positive Youth Development Training. Toronto, Ontario: Parks and Recreation Ontario.

^{3.} Federation of Canadian Municipalities. (2016). – Youth Engagement Handbook https://data.fcm.ca/documents/reports/FCM/Municipal_Youth_Engagement_Handbook_EN.pdf.

Retrieved from www.fcm.ca: https://data.fcm.ca/documents/reports/FCM/Municipal_Youth_Engagement_Handbook_EN.pdf

⁴ Province of Ontario (2014). Stepping Up - A Strategic Framework to Help Ontario's Youth Succeed

http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/documents/youthopportunities/steppingup/steppingup.pdf
Retrieved from www.gov.on.ca

http://www.children.gov.on.ca/htdocs/English/documents/youthopportunities/steppingup/steppingup.pdf

^{5.} Government of Canada (2020). Canada's Youth Policy

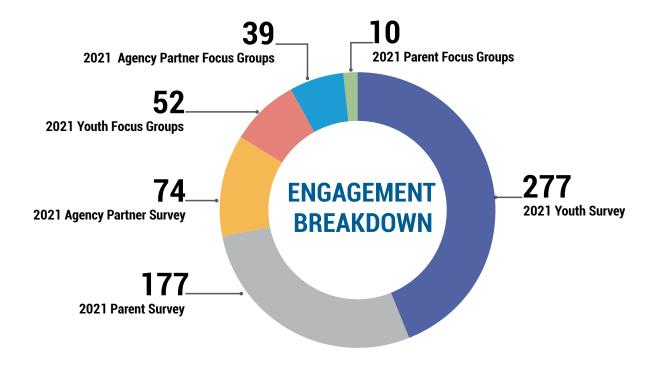
https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/y-j/documents/YP-ENG.pdf

https://www.canada.ca/content/dam/y-j/documents/YP-ENG.pdf

⁶ Martin, Jeffrey (2017) Hamilton Millennials and Community Belonging: Preliminary findings from the 2017 Hamilton Millennial Survey – Hamilton Community Foundation

3. WHAT ENGAGEMENT DID WE DO?

As part of the 2021 youth re-engagement, surveys and focus groups were developed to collect feedback from youth, parents and community stakeholders about youth-related issues in Hamilton. The engagement collected some information about what people love about Hamilton, how they like to receive information and challenges faced by youth, parents and agency partners. In total, 629 youth, parents and agency partners participated in the process.



The 2021 Youth Re-engagement Survey Summary can be found as **Appendix "B" to Report CES15056(d)**.

There were 74 youth-serving agency partners that were engaged. These 74 agencies offer more than 900 programs for youth 14-29. Services are provided to a range of different populations including 2SLGBTQIA+, Indigenous, Black, newcomers and those needing mental health supports. For more information on youth-serving agency partners programs and services, see **Appendix "D" to Report CES15056(d))** – Agency Partners Programs and Services.



4. WHAT WE LEARNED ABOUT YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Benefits to Engagement

- Peer-to-peer engagement allows youth to be more comfortable, which leads to open and honest dialogue.
- Youth want to engage their peers and to be engaged by their peers.
- Offering youth leadership opportunities builds confidence, new interests, helps them develop skills, enables career exploration and assists in enhancing their resumes.
- Using youth-friendly language provides greater appeal to young people when promoting programs, services and promotional materials.
- Ease of access to committees, hosting either virtual or in-person allows young people to participate when their schedule permits.
- The Youth Steering Committee provides an opportunity for them to collaborate with internal departments on youth-targeted events and initiatives.
- Youth learn from staff and staff learn from the youth.

Barriers to Engagement

- Young people have many responsibilities including school, work, self-care, family responsibilities and extracurricular activities.
- Many times, youth are expected to lend their talents for free, and lack the tools needed to engage peer-to-peer.
- A generational gap in how technology is used exists. e.g. Youth prefer text and service providers favour email.
- The size of the City creates an obstacle for accessing youth services.
- Large turnover rates in staff supporting youth can lead to fragmented relationships and having to tell their stories multiple times.
- Virtual burn-out due to COVID-19.
- Not everyone has access to the technology or the digital literacy skills needed to engage virtually.

5. PRIORITIES FOR YOUTH 14-29 IN HAMILTON

Engagement in 2018 and re-engagement in 2021 left staff with two sets of priorities. Per best practice, the priorities were reviewed by both the Youth Steering Committee and the Staff Steering Committee. As a result, a new set of top five priorities are being recommended for implementation.

The top five priority themes in the 2018 engagement were: access to mental health and addiction, youth services predominantly found in the downtown core, coordination of promotion for programs and services, lack of transit for rural and suburban youth and cost of living to high for youth.

As part of the 2021 re-engagement process, mental health and employment remain highpriority areas. The issues of homelessness, affordable housing, addiction supports and fostering safety has emerged as the top five priority themes. While the 2018 priorities are still important, they are no longer within the top five.

For a full breakdown of data see Appendix B to Report CES15056(d)) - 2021 Youth Re-Engagement Summary

The emergence of virtual programs and services has made travel around the community less of a priority for youth. No matter where they are in the city, they can access needed services online. While online services provide convenience, there is still a need for in-person programming and services.

2021 TOP 5 PRIORITY THEMES

- 1 Access to Mental Health and Addiction Supports
- 2 Access to Employment and Training
- 3 Access to Safe and Affordable Housing
- 4 Enhance Safety and Sense of Inclusion
- 5 Enhance Youth Engagement and Leadership



National Youth Policy Consultation

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1. IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

As a result of the environmental scan, the top five priority themes were identified. Objectives and key stakeholders are attached to each priority theme to help inform the implementation process. This implementation plan is dependent on collective ownership across the community. It will require youth, parents, City staff and agency partners working collaboratively to address the priority themes.

Collaboration is a key component for success moving forward, as we are stronger together. Establishing these structures allows for specific priority themes to be discussed, implemented and monitored.

The following action items will assist in the implementation of all the priority themes:

- 1. Continue the development of the Youth Steering Committee
- 2. Continue the Staff Steering Committee to ensure cross-departmental collaboration
- 3. Organize an Agency Partner Steering Committee
- 4. Extend and continue the role of the Youth Engager
- 5. Promote and build capacity for the City of Hamilton Youth team
- 6. Design an evaluation framework
- 7. Complete an annual progress report



Fatima and Daughter -National Youth Week Campaign

2. ADDRESSING PRIORITY THEMES

a. Accessing Mental Health and Addiction Supports

- 92% of total respondents indicated improved access to mental health supports was needed
- 85% of total respondents indicated the need to increase access to addiction supports

b. Accessing Employment and Training

- 85% of total respondents indicated a need to increase employment opportunities for youth
- 77% indicated a need for improved wages for entry-level jobs
- 82% of respondents indicated a need for improved access to financial supports or subsidized training for post-secondary education

c. Access to safe and affordable housing

- 90% of respondents indicated a need to increase supports to youth who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness
- 88% of respondents indicated a need to increase access to safe and affordable housing

d. Enhance safety and a sense of inclusion

- 70% of respondents indicated a need to foster more cultural awareness and sensitivity in the community
- 345 youth aged 12-17 were involved in violent crimes in 2020

e. Youth Engagement and Leadership

- 79% of respondents indicated the need to increase opportunities for youth to voice their ideas and opinions
- 77% of respondents indicated the need for increased opportunities for youth to participate in decision-making

For full data report see Appendix B to Report CES15056(d))

2a. Accessing Mental Health and Addictions Supports

OBJECTIVES



- Improve access to mental health supports
- 2 Increase supports for youth drug and alcohol use
- 3 Prevent youth drug and alcohol abuse

	KEY STAKEHOLDERS		
1	Youth mental health and substance use organizations	5	Public Health nurses in schools
2	Youth 14-29 with lived experience of mental health and addiction challenges	6	School boards
3	Hamilton Drug Strategy	7	Health care providers
4	Public Health	8	Office of the General Manager, Healthy and Safe Communities Department

Next Steps:

- Youth staff team will continue to sit on the Hamilton Drug Strategy Prevention Committee.
- Bring youth to the table to collaborate with staff and provide input.
- Engage youth to identify barriers and challenges to accessing mental health, drug and alcohol supports.
- Identify new programs and existing initiatives that can be enhanced to help youth accessing mental health and substance use support.
- Identify successful models for preventing drug and alcohol use in youth.
- Collaborate with key stakeholders.

2b. Accessing Employment and Training

OBJECTIVES 1 Increase employment opportunities for youth 2 Improve wages of entry-level jobs 3 Improve access to financial supports for post-secondary education and training

	KEY STAKEHOLDERS		
1	Youth 14-29	7	YouthCan Collaborative
2	Challenge 2025	8	Youth Employment Network
3	Skills Development Flagship	9	Planning and Economic Development Department
4	Ontario Works	10	Hamilton Business Centre
5	Post-secondary Institutions	11	Employment Ontario agencies
6	School boards	12	Hamilton Fire Department

Next Steps:

- Identify barriers and challenges to youth 14-29 accessing employment in Hamilton.
- Identify training needs of youth 14-29 in Hamilton.
- Identify new programs and existing initiatives that can be enhanced to help youth 14-29 access employment and training opportunities.
- Identify successful models, and policies to incentivize businesses for entry-level jobs for youth under 29.
- · Collaborate with key stakeholders.



2c. Access to Safe and Affordable Housing

OBJECTIVES

- 1 Improve youth access to safe and affordable housing
- 2 Increase supports for youth who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness

	KEY STAKEHOLDERS		
1	Youth with lived experience of homelessness	6	Street Youth Planning Collaborative
2	Housing Services Division	7	Emergency shelters and drop-ins
3	Housing Help Centre	8	Ontario Works
4	Subsidized housing providers	9	Landlords
5	Office of the General Manager, Healthy and Safe Communities Department	10	Hamilton Fire Department

Next Steps:

Housing

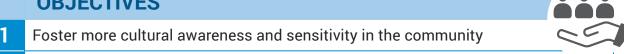
- Identify the number of youth specific housing units.
- Identify the barriers youth 14-29 face accessing safe and affordable housing.
- Explore successful models to provide youth access to safe and affordable housing.

Homelessness

- Youth staff team to continue to sit on the Street Youth Planning Collaborative.
- Understand what causes youth to become homeless in Hamilton.
- Understand what challenges youth face in shelters.
- Explore successful models, initiatives that could be enhanced for supporting youth who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness.
- Support the youth response to the Point in Time Connection Homelessness Survey.
- Collaborate with key stakeholders

2d. Enhance Safety and a Sense of Inclusion

OBJECTIVES



2 Decrease youth involved with crimes associated to guns, gangs and violence

3 Mobilize the community to collaborate on the prevention of youth violence

	KEY STAKEHOLDERS		
1	Black, Indigenous and people of colour (BIPOC), and racialized youth 14-29	11	Hamilton Fire Department
2	Youth 14-29 with a disability	12	Child Protection Services
3	Youth 14-29 who have experience in the justice system	13	City of Hamilton • Government and Community
4	2SLGBTQIA+ youth 14-29		Relations Division
5	Indigenous youth 14-29		 HIPC (Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council)
6	Queer and Trans Youth Collaborative		 Office of the General Manager,
7	Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion		Healthy and Safe Communities Department
8	Street Youth Planning Collaborative		 Strategic Partnerships and Communications Division
9	School boards		 2SLGBTQIA+ Advisory Committee
10	Hamilton Police Services		Indigenous Relations team

Next Steps:

- Collaborate with staff supporting the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan on youth guns, gangs and violence
 - Engage key stakeholders and youth 14-29 with lived experience to understand why
 youth are involved with guns, gangs and violence.
 - Identify models that have been successful in prevention of youth violence.
 - Identify models that have been successful in supporting youth exiting gangs.
- Collaborate with staff supporting the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy
 - Engaging with youth from BIPOC, racialized, Indigenous, 2SLGBTQIA+ and disabled communities.
 - Identify barriers, challenges facing youth from these communities.
 - Create a list of training resources for youth-serving staff to participate in.
 - Identify models that have been successful in creating more inclusive communities for youth.
- Collaborate with key stakeholders



2e. Enhance Youth Engagement and Leadership Opportunities

OBJECTIVES



- 1 Increase opportunities for youth to voice their ideas and opinions
- 2 Increase opportunities for youth to participate in decision making
- 3 Increase opportunities for youth to develop leadership skills

	KEY STAKEHOLDERS		
1	All youth 14-29	5	Elections Office
2	Youth Steering Committee	6	School Boards
3	Model City Hall	7	City of Hamilton Recreation
4	City Manager's Office – Community Initiatives	8	Youth-serving Agency Partners

Next Steps:

- Encourage and recruit youth to join the Youth Steering Committee.
- Provide leadership training for Youth Steering Committee.
- Host an Annual Youth Summit to engage with youth and agency partners.
- Use HamOntYouth brand for all corporate youth initiatives.
- Enhance and promote youth initiatives, encouraging youth voice such as model City Hall and CityLab.
- Collaborate with City staff and agency partners on youth programs and initiatives requiring a youth voice.

RECOMMENDATIONS

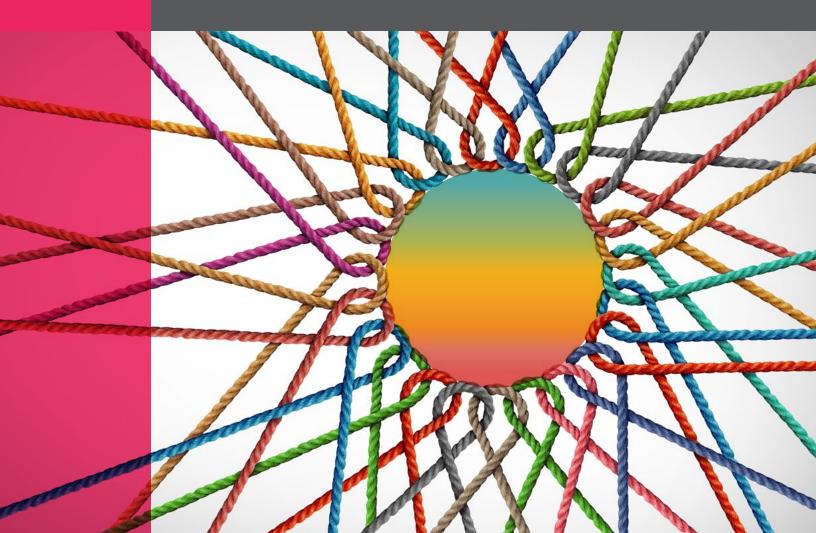


Youth Engagers - January 2020



Youth Engagers - 2019

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CONCLUSION

It has been an exciting journey to create Hamilton's first Youth Strategy. Working with our Youth Steering Committee has helped members build confidence, spark new interests and develop skills to enhance their resumes. The City of Hamilton Youth team embraces their ideas and appreciates their contributions to ensure we are taking a youth-friendly approach. Youth learn from staff and staff learn from the youth.

We look forward to working with all youth, parents, youth-serving agencies and community partners as we develop the implementation work plan and evaluation framework. We are committed to completing an annual progress report back to Council and the community.

"IT TAKES A VILLAGE TO RAISE A CHILD"

JAM NT OUTH Hamilton



THANK YOU TO ALL THOSE YOUTH STEERING COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND ADULT ALLIES WHO HELPED DEVELOP THIS STRATEGY

Youth Members

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Amanda Crocker Lydia Loo Jenny Zhao

Hector Diaz-Sanchez Alexa Luckie Alyssa Zinley Marvel Ekwuribe Ryan Luong Jessica Fitchett

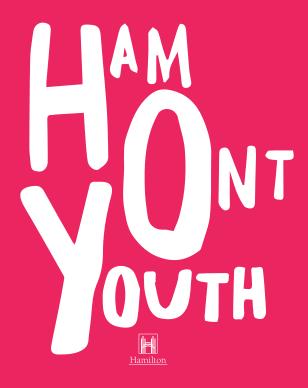
Radu Lupascu

Adult Allies

Nadia Badke Sarah Ghandour Michelle Neuman Erin Goetz Michelle Williams Sonya Baldwin Jesse Williamson Brenda Bax Irene Heffernan Paul Johnson Rob Brown Louisa Wong

Jessica Chase Jo-Anne Kirkwood

Christopher Cutler Grace Mater Al Fletcher **Heather McCully**





For full details on the status of the Youth Strategy, please visit: www.hamilton.ca/youth