

Our Future Downtown: 10-Year Downtown Revitalization Strategy Interim Engage Hamilton Summary Findings Report



HAMILTON'S 10-YEAR DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION STRATEGY

A call to action to envision a strong Downtown for all Hamiltonians

Interim Engage Hamilton Findings (April 2-June 30, 2025)

July 2025

(updated August 2025)

Introduction

This document provides an overview of the findings of the Engage Hamilton Survey that ran from April 2 to June 30, 2025. More than 250 individuals contributed to the Engage Survey. City Staff have reviewed these findings and categorized the responses to the survey's open-ended questions to provide a summary of the visions, opportunities, and challenges identified by participants.

Question 1: What is a Big Idea for Downtown?

The Engage Survey's first question asked Hamiltonians "What's your Big Idea? How can we make your vision for the downtown a reality?" There were 257 individual responses to this question. From those 257 responses, 897 specific insights were gleaned. Those insights were then categorized into 52 unique themes. The most prevailing theme identified by more than one-quarter (25.3%) of respondents to this question was to prioritize pedestrians and walkability in the Downtown.

Figure 1 captures the ten most common themes based on the number of individual respondents who identified that theme. These top-ten themes are then grouped into public realm/people movement priorities, societal priorities, and economic priorities. Figure 2 is a wordcloud of commonly occurring words excluding common points of grammar and sentence structure. Table 1 ranks the themes that were identified by at least 5% of respondents.

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Figure 1: Top 10 Themes Identified for Downtown's Vision

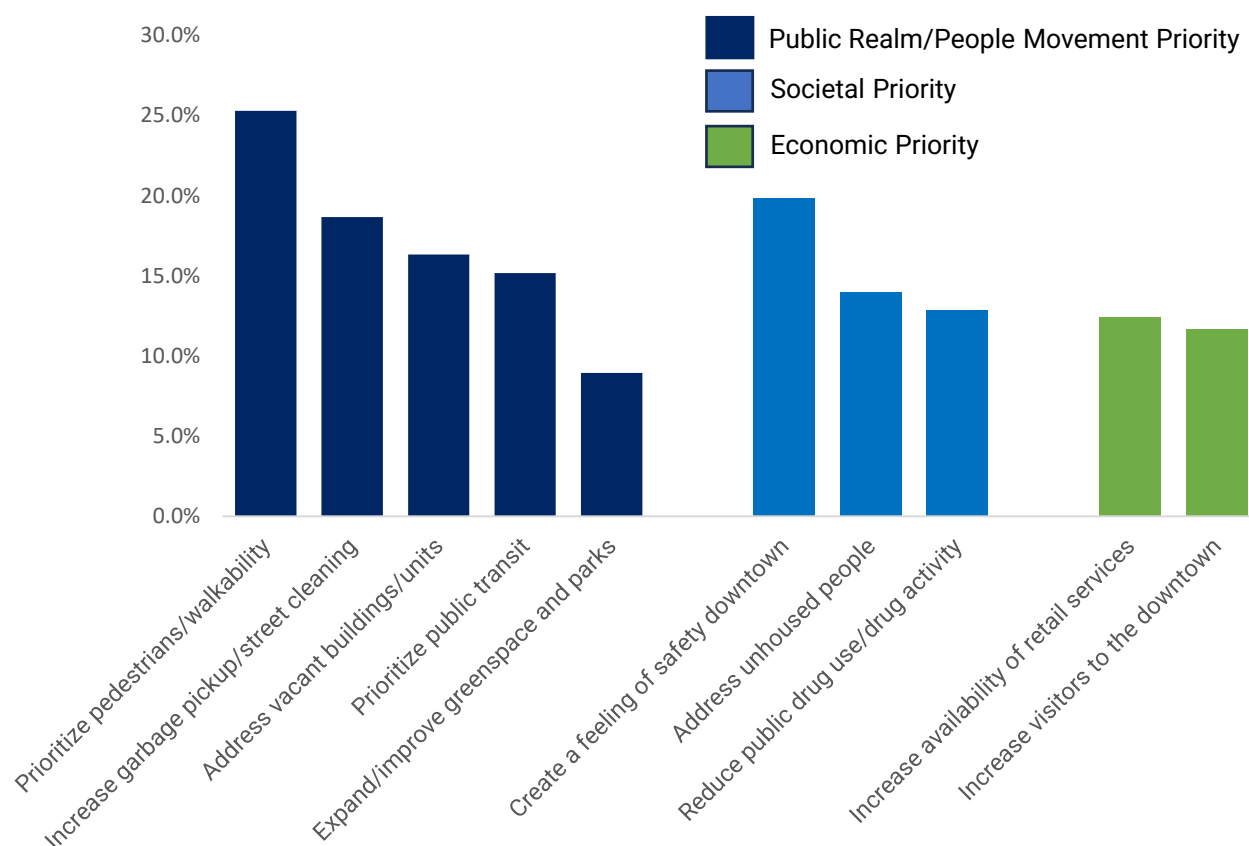


Figure 2: Big Idea Wordcloud



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Table 1: Themes Identified by at Least 5% of Respondents

Theme	Percentage of Responses
Prioritize pedestrians/walkability	25.3%
Create a feeling of safety Downtown	19.8%
Increase garbage pickup/street cleaning	18.7%
Address vacant buildings/units	16.3%
Prioritize public transit	15.2%
Address concerns related to unhoused people	14.0%
Reduce public drug use/drug activity	12.8%
Increase availability of retail services	12.5%
Increase visitors to the Downtown	11.7%
Expand/improve greenspace and parks	8.9%
Increase tree canopy/street plantings	8.6%
Disperse existing services	8.6%
Prioritize cycling infrastructure	8.2%
Increase events and activations	8.2%
Increase business attraction efforts	7.8%
Expand mixed-use environments	7.8%
Increase housing affordability	7.4%
Add more community spaces	7.4%
Increase business supports	6.2%
Improve processes at City Hall	6.2%
Improve Jackson Square	5.8%
Increase public amenities	5.8%
Increase police presence	5.8%
Increase access to services	5.8%
Increase availability of parking	5.4%
Improve building upkeep	5.1%
Repurpose surface parking lots	5.1%

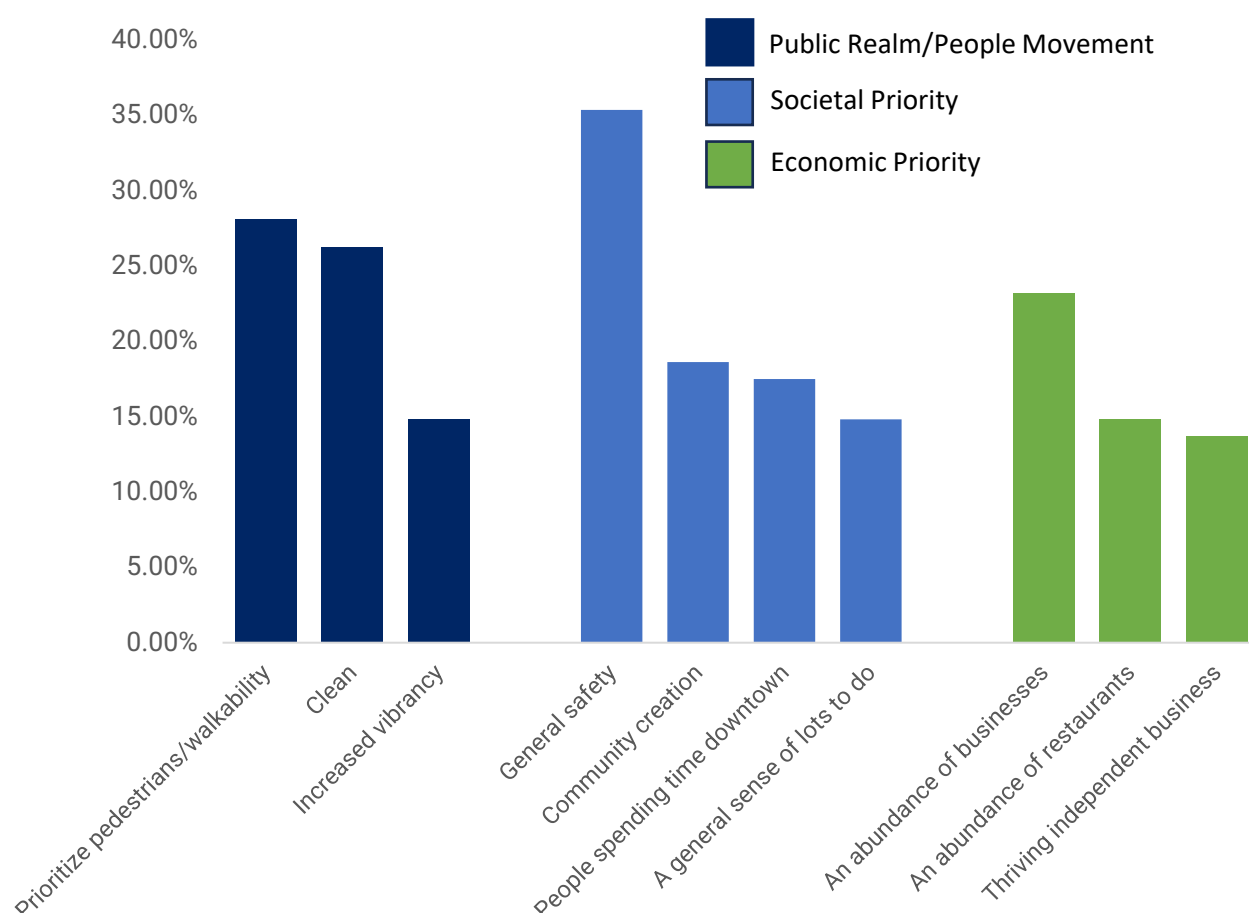
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Question 2: What is the Vision for the Downtown Core?

The Engage Survey's second question asked Hamiltonians "What is your vision for Hamilton's downtown core?" There were 263 individual responses to this question. From those 263 responses, 1,171 very diverse insights were gleaned. Those insights were then categorized into 67 unique themes. The most prevailing theme identified by more than one-third (35.4%) of respondents to this question was a vision of general safety in the Downtown.

Figure 3 captures the ten most common themes based on the number of individual respondents who identified that theme. These top-ten themes are then grouped into public realm/people movement priorities, societal priorities, and economic priorities. Figure 4 is a wordcloud of commonly occurring words within the themes, excluding common points of grammar and sentence structure. Table 2 ranks the themes that were identified by at least 5% of respondents.

Figure 3: Top 10 Visions Identified for Downtown Hamilton



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Figure 4: Vision for Downtown Wordcloud



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Table 2: Visions Identified by at Least 5% of Respondents

Theme	Percentage of Responses
General safety	35.4%
Prioritize pedestrians/walkability	28.1%
Clean	26.2%
A hub for businesses and shopping	23.2%
Community building	18.6%
People spending time Downtown	17.5%
Increase vibrancy	14.8%
A general sense of lots to do	14.8%
A destination for restaurants	14.8%
Thriving independent business	13.7%
Fewer unhoused people	12.2%
Downtown as a residential community	11.4%
Prioritize public transit	10.6%
Increase cultural events and venues	10.6%
Abundant greenspace and parks	9.9%
Family friendly spaces	8.7%
Prioritize cycling infrastructure	8.7%
Increase tree canopy/street plantings	8.7%
Improve aesthetics	8.7%
Address vacant buildings/units	7.6%
Drugs absent in public spaces	7.2%
Increase public amenities	6.8%
Increase public events/activations	6.5%
Maintain/preserve historic buildings	6.5%
Increase affordable housing	5.7%
General business attraction	5.3%
Increase access to services	5.3%
Increase connection to other parts of the city	5.3%
Downtown as a place to work	5.3%

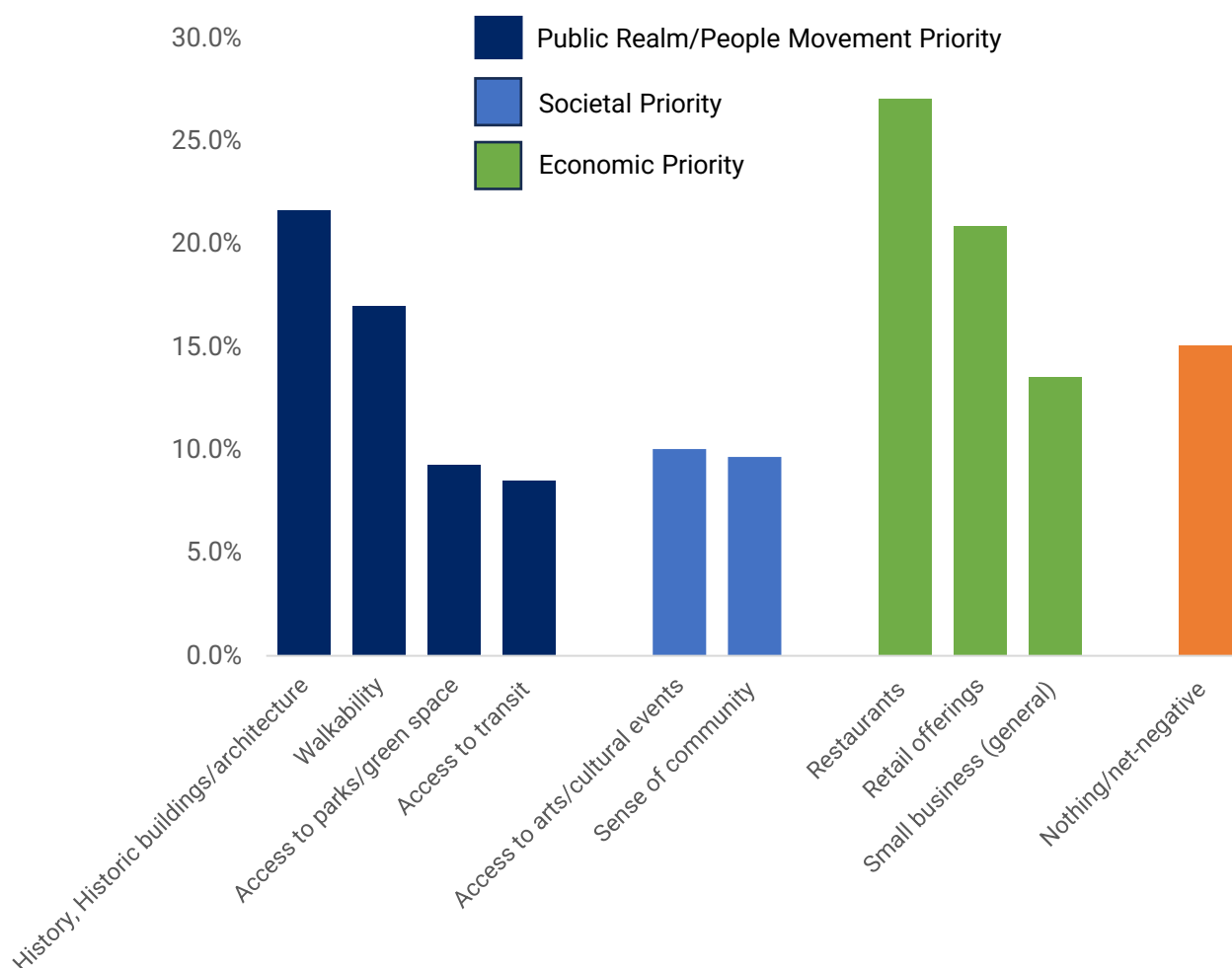
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Question 3: What is Valued About the Downtown?

The Engage Survey’s third question asked Hamiltonians “What do you value about the downtown core?” There were 259 individual responses to this question. From those 259 responses, 644 specific insights were gleaned. Those insights were then categorized into 45 unique themes. The most prevailing theme identified by slightly more than one-quarter (27.0%) of respondents to this question was the Downtown’s restaurant and culinary scene.

Figure 5 captures the ten most common themes based on the number of individual respondents who identified that theme. These top-ten themes are then grouped into public realm/people movement priorities, societal priorities, and economic priorities. Figure 6 is a wordcloud of commonly occurring words excluding common points of grammar and sentence structure. Table 3 ranks the themes that were identified by at least 5% of respondents.

Figure 5: Top 10 Most Valued Aspects of Downtown Hamilton



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Figure 6: Valued About the Downtown Wordcloud



Table 3: Value Themes Identified by at Least 5% of Respondents

Theme	Percentage of Responses
Restaurants	27.0%
History/historic buildings	21.6%
Retail offerings	20.8%
Walkability	17.0%
Nothing/net-negative	15.1%
Small business	13.5%
Access to arts/cultural events	10.0%
Sense of community	9.7%
Access to parks/green space	9.3%
Access to transit	8.5%
Diversity	8.1%
Sense of uniqueness	6.6%
Entertainment	6.6%
Access to services	6.2%
Hamilton Farmers' Market	5.8%
Population density	5.8%
Aesthetic quality	5.4%
Central Library	5.4%

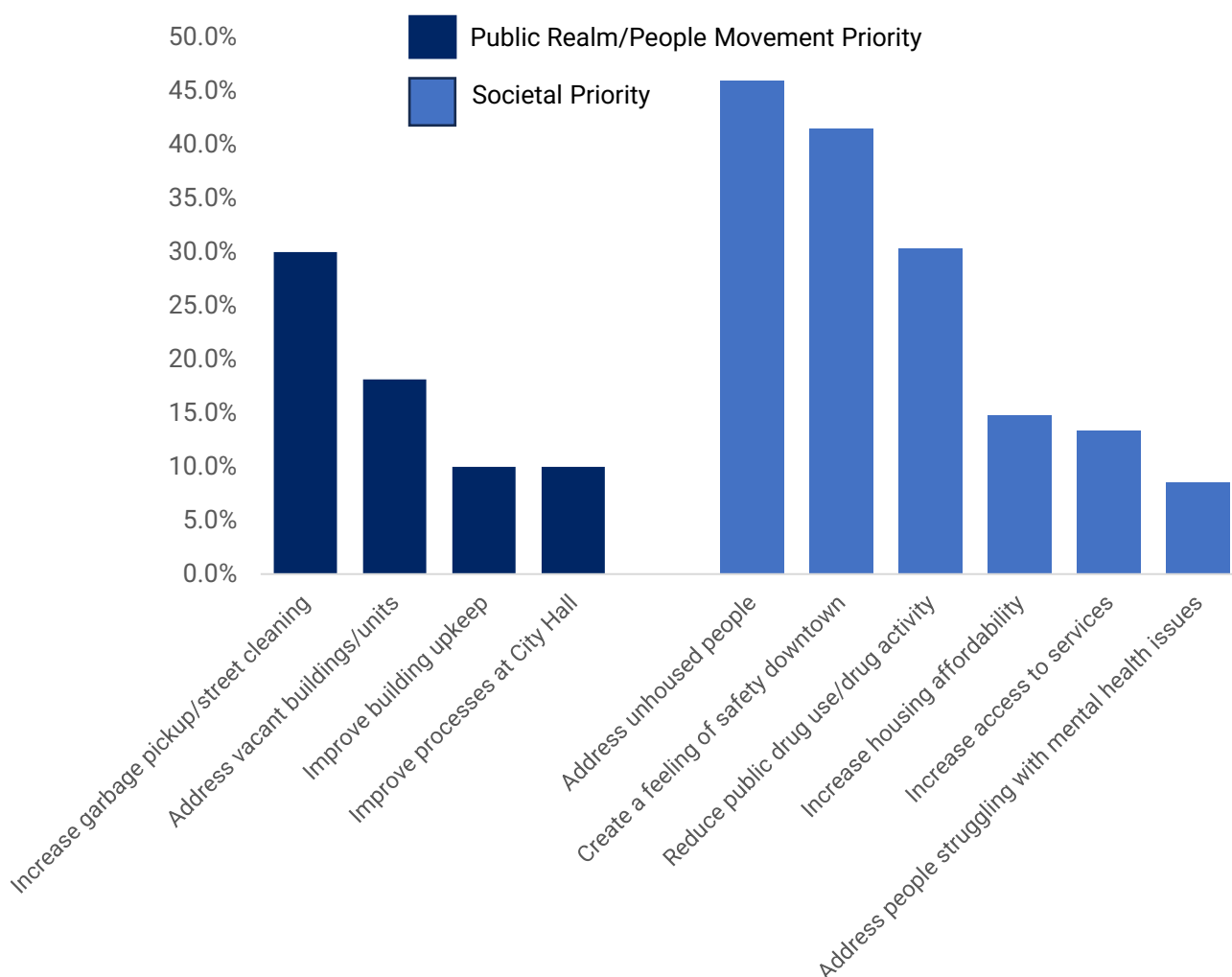
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Question 4: What are the Challenges and Concerns Downtown that Need Attention?

The Engage Survey's fourth question asked Hamiltonians "What are the challenges and concerns you think need attention downtown?" There were 270 individual responses to this question. From those 270 responses, 970 specific insights were gleaned. Those insights were then categorized into 63 unique themes. The most prevailing theme identified by nearly 46% (45.9%) of responses was to address concerns related to unhoused people living Downtown.

Figure 7 captures the ten most common themes based on the number of individual respondents who identified that theme. These top-ten themes are then grouped into public realm/people movement priorities and societal priorities. Figure 8 is a wordcloud of commonly occurring words excluding common points of grammar and sentence structure. Table 4 ranks the themes that were identified by at least 5% of respondents.

Figure 7: Top 10 Challenges Identified for Downtown



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Figure 8: Downtown Challenges Wordcloud



Table 4: Challenge Themes Identified by At Least 5% of Respondents

Theme	Percentage of Responses
Address concerns related to unhoused people	45.9%
Create a feeling of safety Downtown	41.5%
Reduce public drug use/drug activity	30.4%
Increase garbage pickup/street cleaning	30.0%
Address vacant buildings/units	18.1%
Increase housing affordability	14.8%
Increase access to services	13.3%
Improve building upkeep	10.0%
Improve processes at City Hall	10.0%
Address concerns related to people struggling with mental health issues	8.5%
Increase police presence	7.8%
Increase business attraction efforts	7.8%
Reduce traffic congestion	7.0%
Increase business supports	6.7%
Prioritize pedestrians/walkability	6.3%
Increase availability of retail services	6.3%
Improve Jackson Square	5.9%
Disperse existing services	5.9%
Improve roadway safety	5.9%
Prioritize public transit	5.6%
Address City Centre Mall	5.2%
Improve road infrastructure	5.2%

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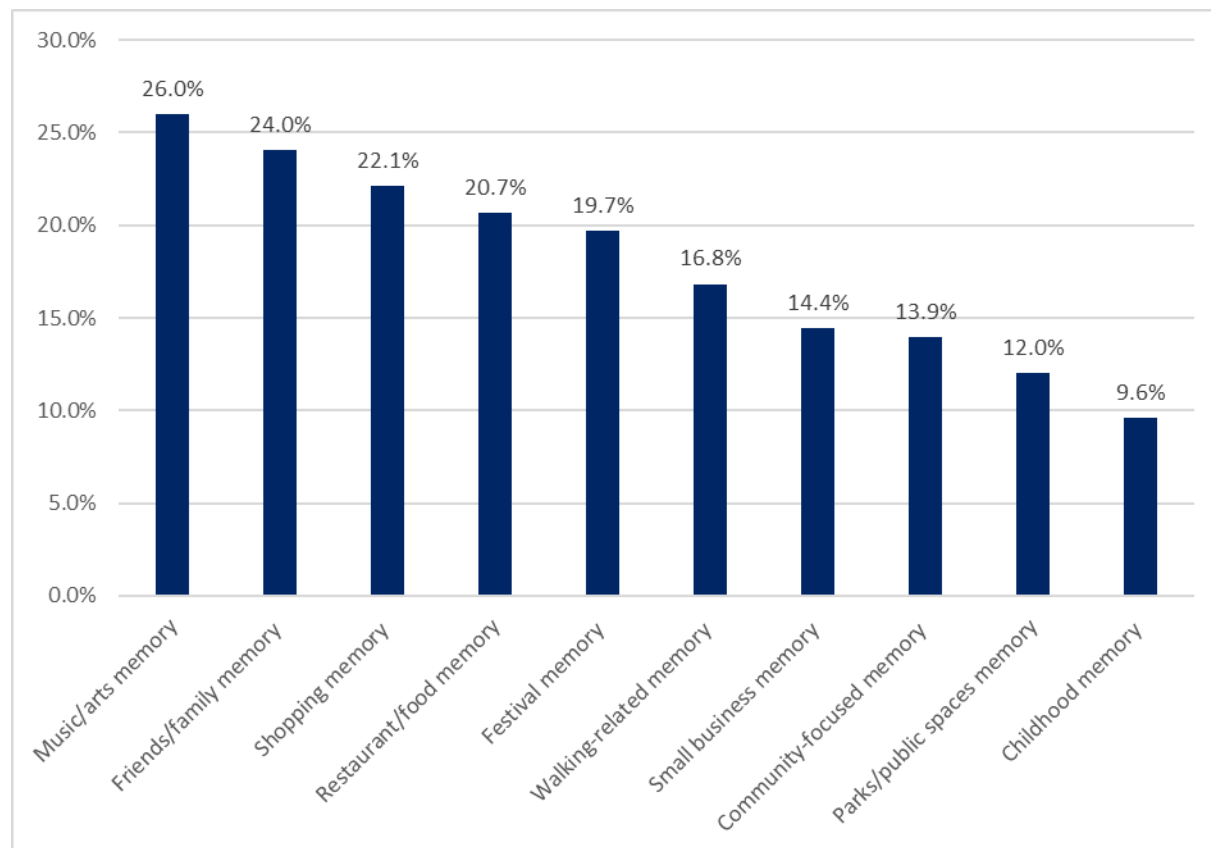
Question 5: Share a Special Memory or Personal Connection to the Downtown to Help Define Its Future

The Engage Survey’s fifth question asked Hamiltonians to “Share your special memory or a personal connection to the downtown core that can help define its future vision.” There were 208 individual responses to this question. From those 208 responses, 588 specific insights were gleaned. Those insights were then categorized into 22 thematic clusters. The most prevailing theme identified by more than one-quarter of responses (26.0%) was a music or arts memory.

However, about 42% (41.8%) of respondents used this section to reiterate their Downtown vision, rather than share a memory, or noted how their past memories are challenged by the present situation in Downtown Hamilton.

Figure 9 captures the ten most common memories based on the number of individual respondents who selected that memory. Figure 10 is a wordcloud of commonly occurring words associated with Downtown memories, excluding common points of grammar and sentence structure. Table 5 ranks the memories that were identified by at least 5% of respondents.

Figure 9: Top 10 Memories of Downtown



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Figure 10: Downtown Memories Wordcloud

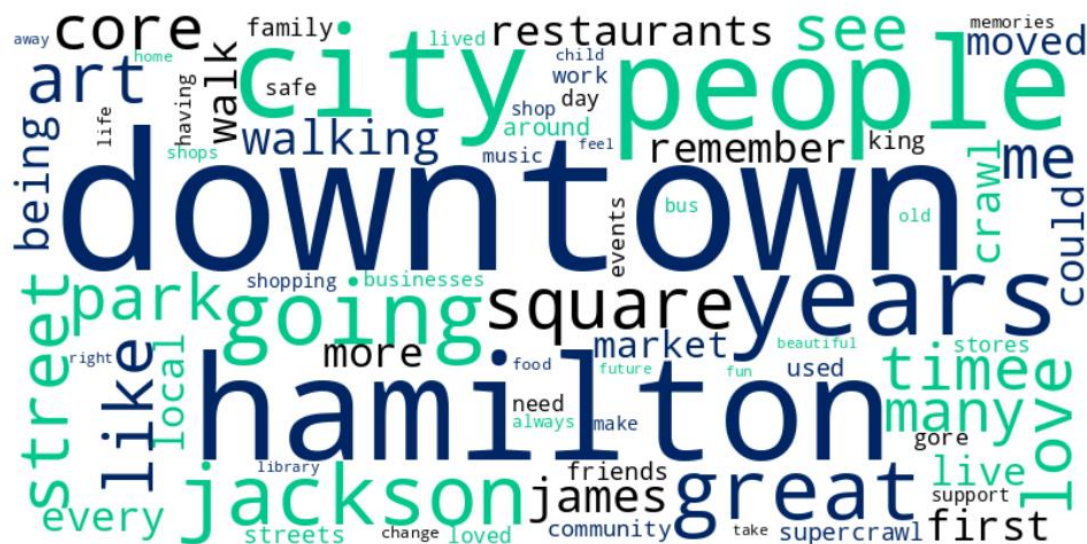


Table 5: Memory Themes Identified by at Least 5% of Respondents

Theme	Percentage of Responses
Music/arts memory	26.0%
Friends/family memory	24.0%
Shopping memory	22.1%
Restaurant/food memory	20.7%
Festival memory	19.7%
Walking-related memory	16.8%
Small business memory	14.4%
Community-focused memory	13.9%
Parks/public spaces memory	12.0%
Childhood memory	9.6%
Jackson Square memory	9.6%
Architectural/aesthetic memory	9.1%
Entertainment memory	8.7%
Farmers' Market memory	7.7%
Gore Park memory	6.3%
Net-negative/improve processes at City Hall	5.3%