City of Hamilton
Volunteer Advisory Committee Review: Engagement Report

April 2024

Report prepared by:

City of Hamilton Volunteer Advisory Committee Review: Engagement Report

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that the land on which we work this work is situated upon the traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron-Wendat, Haudenosaunee, and Mississaugas. This land is covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, which was an agreement between the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabek to share and care for the resources around the Great Lakes. We further acknowledge that this land is covered by the Between the Lakes Purchase, 1792, between the Crown and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. We hope to honour the spirit of the Dish With One Spoon agreement by working to build a nation-to-nation relationship with Indigenous communities in Hamilton.

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Executive summary & Recommendations

Under the direction of the Hamilton City Council, the City's Government Relations and Community Engagement Division is conducting a review of Volunteer Advisory Committees to provide recommendations around engagement to fulfill the priorities of the 2022-2026 Term of Council. As part of this review, the Government Relations and Community Engagement Division engaged the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (SPRC) to collect feedback from key community partners including VAC members, staff liaisons, and council members.

Overall, there was a high level of engagement across all participant groups, with 56 of 112 VAC members completing the VAC member survey, 10 of 10 staff liaisons completing the staff liaison survey, 29 VAC members participating in the focus groups, and 10 of 16 council members participating in an interview.

Across all engagements, there was recognition of the immense opportunity VACs provide in leveraging both the enthusiasm and expertise of community members in Hamilton. The diversity of experiences and opinions on VACs was highlighted as a critical asset that allows the City to tap into and engage with a critical knowledge base, as well as provide the opportunity to foster more equitable solutions that meet community needs.

Council members, staff liaisons, and VAC members also spoke to a desire for an improved process that enables meaningful participation of volunteers through improved structure and supports for VACs. Challenges consistently raised among all three participant groups spoke to the unfulfilled potential and underutilization of VACs. Lack of clarity with respect to scope and mandate, as well as misalignment in the understanding of the role VACs, were commonly identified as unmet needs by the participant groups. The need for a clearly articulated, accessible, and transparent process for communicating with council was also commonly raised, both in relation to how VAC recommendations are brought forward, but also in how council receives, reviews, and responds to VAC recommendations. The need for more consistent and comprehensive training for both VAC members and staff liaisons, as well as the need for improved transparency in the VAC member selection and decision-making process, were also frequently raised as areas for improvement.

The recommendations brought forward in this report are based on and suggest remedy for the challenges and opportunities raised throughout the report.

Recommendations:

1. As the City looks to potentially amend the VAC model considering the outcomes of this review, it is imperative that the City continue to involve and consult VAC members with respect to potential changes moving forward. VAC members have tremendous knowledge on what has

been working well and what has not with respect to VAC function. Their involvement will only strengthen remedies to the challenges identified in this report, as well as provide an opportunity to rebuild trust lost with VAC members.

2. Given the sentiments of disregard and confusion communicated by VAC members with respect to how the VAC Review was initiated, we encourage the City to proactively inform and engage VAC members in the next steps of the review.

3. Overall, there is a need for greater clarity and consistent understanding of the role of VACs, their expected outcomes, and how each participant group (i.e. VAC members, staff liaisons and council members) participate in and contribute to the work of VACs. As this was a need identified by all three groups, it is recommended that the scope, mandate, role and intended outcomes of VACs be clearly defined in VAC governing document.

4. In addition to clear objectives, there is a need to develop ongoing feedback mechanisms and an evaluation plan for VACs. Evaluation of VACs needs to capture both the effectiveness of the VACs in fulfilling their mandates as well as volunteer experiences on the committees, necessitating feedback from council, staff liaisons and VAC members on their effectiveness. Additionally, implementing a process for ongoing feedback would create opportunities to address challenges with VACs as they arise.

5. It should be recognized that all challenges brought forward in this report and the associated recommendations for remedy have direct implications on the effectiveness and impact VACs can have. As a result, it is recommended that careful consideration is given to how all recommendations could be implemented.

6. The City should look to implement processes and engagement opportunities that support improved collaboration and a more intersectional approach to VAC work, including vehicles that enable VAC engagement with the broader community as well as means for VACs to collaborate with each other on intersecting issues.

7. Implement VAC Terms of Reference (TOR) reviews at regularly scheduled intervals to ensure governing documents continue to meet the needs of VAC members and council.

8. Given that the importance of community expertise was highlighted as a key asset by all three participant groups, it is recommended that VACs be provided the latitude necessary to raise concerns identified at the community level. Additionally, there was an identified need for better alignment between council and City priorities and the work of VACs; therefore, it is recommended that the City review existing VACs for alignment with strategic priorities and refocus VAC work as needed.

9. There is also need for consideration of the diverse mandates and functions of current VACs, therefore, a one-size-fits-all approach to VAC governance and supports would likely not support the success of current VACs.

10. As the rigidity of the current VAC structure was raised as a barrier to VAC's ability to fulfill their role by all three participant groups, it is recommended that the City consider less structured formats/processes for VACs. While it was recognized that some structure is required for meaningful participation, procedures around quorum and how discussions are held were generally viewed as inhibiting the important advisory and engagement function of VACs.

11. To fully utilize the expertise on VACs, proactive and ongoing engagement with VACs should be embedded into existing consultation processes that inform council priorities and departmental work as they relate to VAC scope and mandate (e.g. in the development and implementation of City action plans). This consultation should be done as part of departmental work on strategic initiatives and before staff reports are put to council for consideration.

12. VAC governance documents should clearly articulate the role of council members on VACs, including the expected level of participation from council members (e.g. frequency of meeting attendance, availability for consultation to VAC outside of meetings) to support consistent understanding across all VAC participants.

13. Governance documents should also provide clear direction on the role of staff liaisons in facilitating and supporting VAC work. VACs also require ongoing support from staff content experts as well as procedural experts. Delineation of these roles, and consistent access to both competencies, would better support VACs as well as the staff supporting their work.

14. Ensure a clear and transparent process, with expected timelines, is provided to VAC members with respect to communicating and making recommendations to council. The process should identify how recommendations are put forward, how and by whom recommendations are received, and deliberated. It should also clearly outline how council will respond to the recommendations, and if/how they have been actioned, focusing on ensuring a clear feedback loop to VACs.

15. There is a need for improved, consistent, and accessible training for VAC members. More comprehensive training on council structure and process, VAC scope and responsibilities, meeting procedure and VAC decision making, report-writing, and role-specific training for VAC chairs were identified needs.

16. Steps should also be taken to develop and implement consistent training for staff liaisons that clearly outlines the role of staff liaisons, as well as VAC purpose, function, and structure.

Consistent onboarding and handoff planning should also be developed to better support transitions between staff liaisons. A centralized location for all VAC documents/work accessible to staff liaisons and all VAC members would also support these transitions.

17. Involve community stakeholders in the VAC member selection and decision-making process.

18. Working with citizen representatives supporting VAC selection work, develop selection criteria for VAC members, inclusive of how equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility are accounted for in decision-making. Communicate selection criteria to applicants/public during the call for applications. Where a VAC applicant is unsuccessful, communicate the outcome to the applicant and provide a brief explanation of the decision to further support transparency of the process.

19. Established term limits for VAC membership. Clearly communicate term limits in VAC Terms of Reference.

20. Greater attention needs to be given to the timely transition between VAC members in the event a VAC member resigns. Maintaining a list of applicants who met the application criteria but were not selected for the role would assist with this transition.

21. Provide robust, consistent training to all VAC members, including those brought on mid-term.

1.0 Introduction

Under the direction of Hamilton City Council, the City's Government Relations and Community Engagement Division was assigned to lead a review of Volunteer Advisory Committees (VACs), in July 2023. As part of the review, the Government Relations and Community Engagement Division partnered with the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (SPRC) to collect and analyze feedback from Volunteer Advisory Committee (VAC) members, VAC staff liaisons, and council, through a series of surveys, focus groups, and interviews. The objective of the broader review is to provide recommendations around engagement methods inclusive of the Volunteer Advisory Committees to fulfill the priorities of Council aligned with the Term of Council priorities 2022 – 2026.

This report highlights key feedback received throughout engagement efforts with current advisory committee members, council members, and VAC staff liaisons to map the challenges and identify the unmet needs resulting from the current advisory committee structure.

The second key element of this review includes a scan of community advisory tables that the City actively consults with for advice and feedback, including community-based task forces, grassroots organizations doing aligned work, steering committees, and working groups. This includes preparing a list of the external community-based tables and organizations that support work similar to that of advisory committees.

1.1 About Volunteer Advisory Committees

According to the City, VACs in Hamilton are established by Council and consist of volunteer members from the local community. The City of Hamilton has 14 VACs. All VACs operate under a Terms of Reference (TOR) document that outlines the scope of their work. In the City of Hamilton, VACs typically provide recommendations to Council through reports on their area of expertise to an assigned Standing Committee. Currently, members of VACs are selected by the Interview Sub-Committee of the appropriate Standing Committee and are appointed by Council[1]. VACs, with the exception of the Climate Change Advisory Committee, Veterans Affairs Committee, and Seniors Advisory Committee, were mandated to pause, beginning October 1, 2023, in light of this review.

[1] City of Hamilton (2022). Committee Listings. Accessed https://www.hamilton.ca/city-council/council-committee/council-committee-meetings/committee-listing#sub-committees

2.0 Scope

The scope of the SPRC's engagements was limited to current VAC members, current staff liaisons, and current council members. The scope included a broad analysis of VACs, therefore data and analysis on the challenges and unmet needs of individual VACs is not part of the review.

The following volunteer advisory committees and key informants were included within the scope of this work:

a. Committee Against Racism
b. Women and Gender Equity Committee
c. Advisory Committee for Immigrants and Refugees
d. Indigenous Advisory Committee
e. Mundialization Committee
f. Food Advisory Committee
g. Hamilton Veterans Advisory
h. Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee
i. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Advisory Committee
j. Seniors Advisory Committee
k. Arts Advisory Committee
l. Hamilton Cycling Committee
m. Keep Hamilton Clean and Green Committee
n. Staff Liaisons (10)
o. Members of Council (16)

The Climate Change Advisory Committee (CCAC) and CCAC Staff Liaison were not included in the scope of SCPR's engagements with VACs.

3.0 Methodology

Figure 1. VAC review engagement timeline

The information presented in this review was obtained through surveys, key informant interviews, and focus groups with current VAC members, staff liaisons, and Hamilton City Council members.

Over the course of the project, the SPRC met bi-weekly with the Project Manager in the City of Hamilton's Government Relations and Community Engagement Division. These meetings were used as an opportunity to establish and review the workplan, and review and approve distribution materials.

Given their intimate knowledge of VACs, SPRC consulted with VAC chairs and vice chairs in December of 2023 to help develop appropriate research questions that would inform the breadth of information captured throughout the data collection process. The SPRC received feedback from 11 chairs/vice-chairs. Key research questions were established focusing on four central themes:

1) What is working well with respect to how VACs currently operate?
2) What are the unmet needs resulting from the current structure?
3) Ideally, what would the role and structure of VACs look like in the future?
4) What (if any) changes would be needed to fulfill this role?

The City provided a list of VAC members, chairs, vice-chairs, and staff liaisons from which the SPRC was able to engage for the purpose of this review. Recruitment and data collection began in January 2024. Data collection for focus groups and interviews occurred in both virtual and in-person settings.

The SPRC hosted a validation session in March 2024 open to all VAC members to present preliminary findings and engage in further discussions to ensure that themes and ideas were wholistic and representative of the information captured in the VAC member survey and VAC member focus groups. The one-hour validation session occurred on a weekday evening to encourage equitable member participation. Eight VAC members participated in the session, representing six VACs. The main themes uncovered during data analysis were presented to VAC members and polling was utilized throughout the presentation to capture members' sentiments. Overall, polling indicated that those in attendance felt the themes presented aligned with the data.

3.1 Surveys

The SPRC consulted with VAC co-chairs to broadly identify key research areas that would inform the survey questions administered to both VAC members and staff liaisons. The surveys consisted of five main categories:

1) Application, selection, and appointment of VAC members
2) VAC mandate and role
3) Member training and materials
4) Effectiveness in fulfilling mandate
5) Opportunities.

The survey included closed-ended questions that asked participants to rate their agreement with a statement provided as well as open-ended questions. All surveys were administered virtually.

a. VAC member survey

The SPRC contacted all current committee members via email providing a link to the anonymous survey. Participants were given approximately two weeks to complete the survey. Surveys were administered to 112 committee members with an overall response rate of 56 out of 112 (50%).

b. Staff liaison survey

The SPRC contacted all staff liaisons via email with a link to an amended version of the VAC member survey. Amendments were made in consultation with the Project Manager to ensure applicability to the staff liaison role. Staff Liaisons were initially provided just over a week to

complete the survey. A short extension was provided at the end of the survey period. Surveys were administered to ten staff liaisons and all staff liaisons completed the survey (overall response rate of 100%).

3.2 Council member interviews

The SPRC contacted council members via email to participate in key informant interviews. Additionally, follow-up emails were sent to council members to provide multiple opportunities to engage with the review. Each interview was scheduled for approximately 20 minutes. The interviews were attended by both an interviewer and a notetaker from the research team alongside the key informant. Interviews were not recorded and were conducted either virtually or in person based on the Council member's preference.

All interviews featured four questions that addressed central themes regarding VACs:

1) What is going well with respect to VACs?
2) What are the unmet needs?
3) What could the role of VACs look like in the future?
4) What changes are necessary to fulfill this role?

Council members were also asked to provide any additional commentary or feedback on VACs outside of the four main themes and had the opportunity to provide additional feedback via email following the interview. Each interview concluded with a read-back of notes to ensure that information was captured in full and with accuracy. The data collected through interviews is representative of engagement, with 10 out of 16 council members, representing a 63% response rate.

3.3 VAC member focus groups

The SPRC contacted all current VAC members via email to participate in focus groups to expand upon feedback received through survey implementation. Four focus groups were offered (one in-person and three virtual via Zoom) to accommodate the needs of interested participants. Each focus group was attended by six to ten participants, as well as one moderator and one to two notetakers. Overall, 29 VAC members from 11 VACs participated in a focus group. VAC members who expressed interest in participating in a focus group but were unavailable on the scheduled dates were offered a brief key-informant interview utilizing the focus group questions.

Focus groups lasted approximately one hour and occurred during weekday evenings to provide an equitable time frame for participation. The in-person focus group occurred at City Hall and participants were provided with bus fare as required. All focus group participants were provided with a $25.00 gift card as an honourarium for participating. This amount was selected to avoid

undue influence on whether VAC members chose to participate in a focus group, and in consideration of the living wage in Hamilton.

Focus group questions consisted of an identical set of research questions used during key informant interviews with Council, with additional prompts informed by VAC member survey feedback. Each focus group began with a discussion of the review, group norms, and accessibility considerations, followed by the main discussion, and concluded with a review of the next steps. Participants were also provided with the option to offer additional feedback via email for up to three days following the focus group.

An individual interview was conducted with one VAC member who was unable to attend a focus group. Feedback gathered from this interview was anonymized and integrated into the data received from focus groups.

4.0 Limitations

As with all research, this report is subject to several limitations:

a. General limitations

Due to the scope of this review, this research captures a broad understanding of what is currently working well and the unmet needs of Volunteer Advisory Committees (VACs) and does not examine specific VACs. We acknowledge that VACs have diverse purposes and support needs, and a detailed analysis of the role and function of each committee falls outside the scope of this research.

Additionally, meta-data on VAC membership was not collected in the survey, such as the gender or age of participants, length of time they had been VAC members, and committee membership. This was done to ensure VAC members felt that they were able to share freely and candidly about their experiences. As a result, the data may be skewed due to possible over-representation of responses from participants who are members of particular committees. Although not all VACs may have been represented equally in the review, the review captured a diversity of experiences across VACs and within individual VACs. The themes drawn out from the review process were consistent overall. In the future, individual consultation with each VAC would illuminate the unique needs based on their role and mandate.

Given participation in the engagements was optional for VAC members, staff liaisons and council members, this review is subject to *non-response bias*. For example, the VAC members who did not participate may have more negative experiences and may have been less likely to answer the

survey or attend a focus group if they felt the process was flawed and would not be a good use of their time.

Additionally, given the scope only included current VAC members, current staff liaisons, and current council members, the feedback contained in this report is subject to *survivorship bias*. This type of bias reflects a possible positive skew in the data, as VAC members who may have previously resigned their VAC membership due to frustrations with one or more aspects of the VAC process were not included in this review, and only those whose level of satisfaction with the VAC process was greater (evidenced by their continued participation) were invited to participate. Excluding the perspectives of those who have previously been engaged with VACs represents a significant gap in understanding the experiences of those who may have disengaged for a variety of reasons. These perspectives would be helpful to frame a more inclusive understanding of the unmet needs of VACs and the barriers they present for citizen participation.

b. Survey limitations

The research team, in consultation with the City Project Manager, decided not to include a neutral response option to the survey questions to account for neutral response bias. However, this may have encouraged respondents to select an answer that did not completely align with their beliefs. This highlights possible *acquiescence bias* (the tendency for survey participants to agree with the presented research statement, even if it does not truly reflect their opinion[2]) within the quantitative survey data. There is also a possibility that *social desirability bias* (providing a response the participant feels is the more socially desirable when asked a sensitive question[3]) may influence the quantitative data obtained from the surveys, as some respondents expressed agreement with the statements in the survey yet made recommendations for change when answering the corresponding open-ended question.

c. Focus group and interview limitations

The research team made an intentional decision not to record focus groups and interviews to solicit frank and candid feedback from participants and ensure anonymity. In place of recording, there was a designated note taker in addition to the facilitator for each focus group as well as each key informant interview. Not recording and transcribing the focus groups and interviews limited our ability to include direct quotes from these feedback sessions.

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[2] Toor, M. (2020). What is acquiescence bias and how can you stop it? Accessed https://www.qualtrics.com/blog/avoiding-the-yes-bias/

[3] Qualtrics. (2024). What is response bias and how can you avoid it? Accessed https://www.qualtrics.com/experience-management/research/response-bias/#:~:text=Social%20desirability%20bias%20often%20occurs,and%20underreport%20'bad%20behavior

d. Limitations of the analysis

As the qualitative component of this research relies on a thematic analysis (a process of identifying key themes and coding collected qualitative data based on the themes that arose to identify trends), there is a possibility that data interpretation may have been influenced by *researcher bias*. To help mitigate this risk, the research team incorporated both a deductive and inductive approach to data analysis. Initially, qualitative data was reviewed and coded using the main research questions and survey themes. In this preliminary analysis, several additional themes emerged and were subsequently incorporated. The data was then re-coded to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the feedback and major themes. Additionally, a validation session was held with VAC member participants to evaluate the accuracy of data collected and subsequent findings from surveys and focus groups.

5.0 Key Findings

The key findings are broken down by the three groups engagements were conducted with: VAC members, staff liaisons, and council members. We received a greater volume of feedback from VAC members based on a larger number of possible participants (112) in comparison to the staff liaisons (10) and council members (16). Additionally, several staff liaisons and council members expressed less familiarity with VACs because they were new to their roles, and therefore, were unable to provide the same level of feedback. The feedback from VAC members was coded and analyzed based on the frequency of a theme, whereas data from the staff liaison survey and council interviews was primarily analyzed based on the number of participants that raised a theme due to the smaller number of participants.

Although the data and analysis presented below are broken down into thematic sections for each group, it is imperative to acknowledge that in reviewing and analyzing the data, the research team identified patterns suggesting a strong likelihood that the many benefits and challenges raised intersect and influence each other. For example, when issues of quorum were raised, VAC members noted that issues with quorum were likely a direct result of volunteers not feeling valued. Not feeling valued, in turn, could be a result of not being adequately trained and, therefore, not having a clear understanding of the scope, mandate, and process related to VACs. As a result, VAC members may have become frustrated by the process and their inability to have a broader impact, which may have contributed to their decision to stop attending meetings.

5.1 VAC members

Key findings from engagements with VAC members are separated into sections based on subject areas in the survey. Quantitative data from the VAC surveys is presented first and contextualized within the open-ended qualitative survey responses and focus group results. Focus groups were

not transcribed to encourage open dialogue, therefore, all quotes included in the following sections were captured in the open-ended survey responses. The quotes used are a direct transcription from the survey responses.

In the survey, VAC members were asked to indicate agreement or disagreement with statements about specific subject areas related to overall VAC function. These subject areas were identified by VAC Chairs as requiring notable improvement. In the open-ended survey questions and in the VAC member focus groups, several other aspects related to VACs were consistently identified as areas for significant improvement. These are also highlighted in the sections below.

It is important to consider and analyze the closed survey questions in the context of the open-ended responses. Although there were relatively high levels of agreement generally expressed by VAC members who participated in the survey, when looking at the sentiments expressed in the open-ended response box that pertained to the same survey section, over 60% of responses identified a need for change, even among those who expressed agreement to the survey statements. This highlights that although there may have been a general agreement, there were still significant areas for improvement noted amongst participants.

Overall, sentiment analysis was done by comment, with each comment being tagged as positive, neutral, or identifying a need for change. Each comment was then coded based on the themes, as well as specific benefits and challenges identified in the comment. Some comments contained multiple themes or identified both benefits and challenges, and these were coded accordingly.

Table 1. VAC member survey and focus group code areas

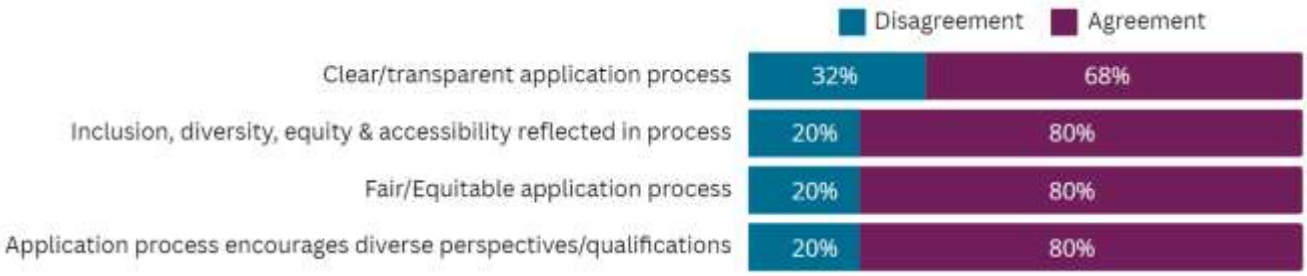
Theme code	Survey Responses (by code application)*	Focus Groups (by code application)*
Application, Selection & Appointment	Total: 34 Challenges: 29 Benefits: 4	Total: 12 Challenges: 11
Mandate & Role	Total: 43 Challenges: 28 Benefits: 15	Total: 37 Challenges: 29 Benefits: 8
Training & Materials	Total: 25 Challenges: 20 Benefits: 5	Total: 12 Challenges: 12
City Staff	Total: 43 Challenges: 33 Benefits: 10	Total: 52 Challenges: 24 Benefits: 28
VAC Membership	Total: 57 Challenges: 41 Benefits: 16	Total: 36 Challenges: 24 Benefits: 11
VAC Process/Structure	Total: 55 Challenges: 53 Benefits: 2	Total: 50 Challenges: 44 Benefits: 4
Councillor Involvement	Total: 20 Challenges: 20	Total: 27 Challenges: 17 Benefits: 9
Effectiveness in Fulfilling Mandate	Total:143 Challenges: 99 Benefits: 44	Total: 75 Challenges: 58 Benefits: 17

*Code application refers to the number of times a theme was identified in the responses. In some responses, more than one theme, or specific aspects of a theme, was identified as a challenge or benefit. For example, with respect to VAC process/structure, one response could highlight the benefits of the processes in place generally, while also noting challenges that this creates when quorum is not able to be met. These were coded separately as benefits and challenges.

5.1.1 Application, selection, and appointment process

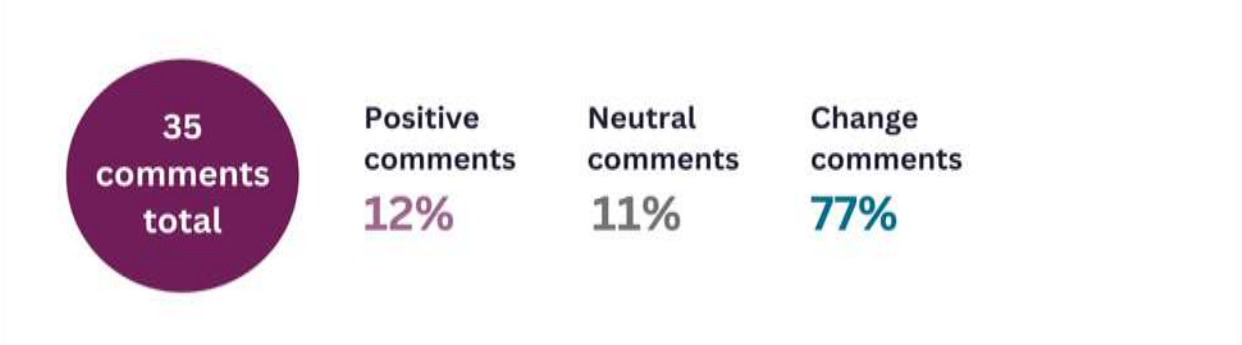
As seen in the Figure 2., when asked to express agreement or disagreement with statements related to the application, selection, and appointment process, approximately one in three survey respondents expressed disagreement with the statement, “The application, selection, and appointment process is clear and transparent.” When looking at the other three statements, one in five respondents expressed disagreement.

Figure 2. VAC member survey: Application, selection, and appointment process



The survey asked participants about their experience with the application, selection, and appointment process. In the additional feedback we received in this section of the survey, there were a total of 35 comments. When looking at the broad sentiment of these comments, 12% were positive comments about the application process, 11% were generally neutral, and 77% of comments reflected a need for change. Further thematic analysis using the coding method detailed above was also carried out as explored below.

Sentiment analysis of responses in application, selection, and appointment process:



VAC survey responses:

In analyzing the open-ended survey responses related to the VAC Application, Selection, and Appointment process, approximately 80% of responses identifying a need for change spoke to challenges with the **selection/decision-making process.** Comments related to the selection/decision-making process were made second most frequently when looking at the total

number of survey responses identifying a need for change. Only comments with respect to VAC impact were made more frequently.

Most of these responses identified issues related to **transparency** in the decision-making process (this represents nearly 40% of the comments that identified a need for change with respect to the selection/decision-making process) or a lack of **representation and diversity** (over 20% of responses that identified a need for change related to the selection/decision-making process).

> *"The process for how the applications are reviewed, screened and shortlisted was not at all clear to me - from what information I saw it seemed fairly random or arbitrary, especially in terms of which incumbent committee members were selected for a second term."*

> *"The process is flawed and is not inclusive of marginalized identities. It also keeps members on for too many terms and should have an end date. The selection committee needs to be aware of how unconscious bias is playing a role in selecting and appointing members. They need to have an equity lens when selecting candidates."*

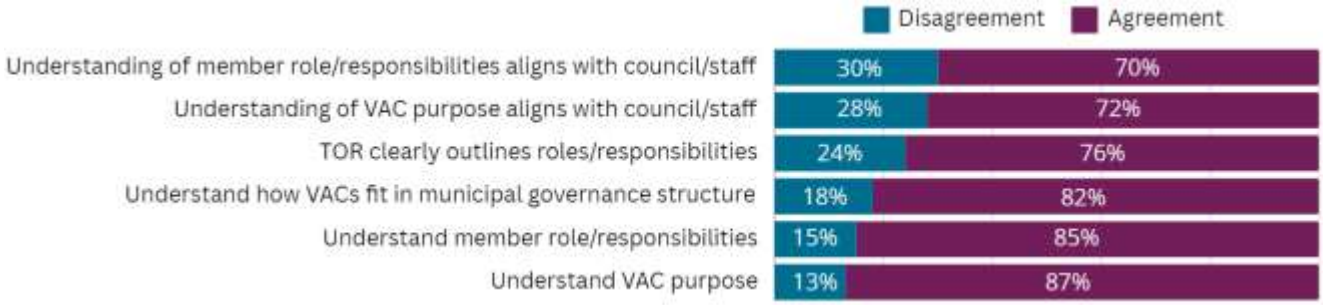
VAC focus groups:

While not mentioned as frequently, VAC members raised transparency and representation/diversity as areas in need of improvement. However, more frequently, focus group participants identified issues related to **timelines for onboarding new members** after a VAC member has stepped down as an area for improvement. This represents approximately 35% of comments that identified a need for change with respect to the selection /decision-making process and the impact this has on VAC work.

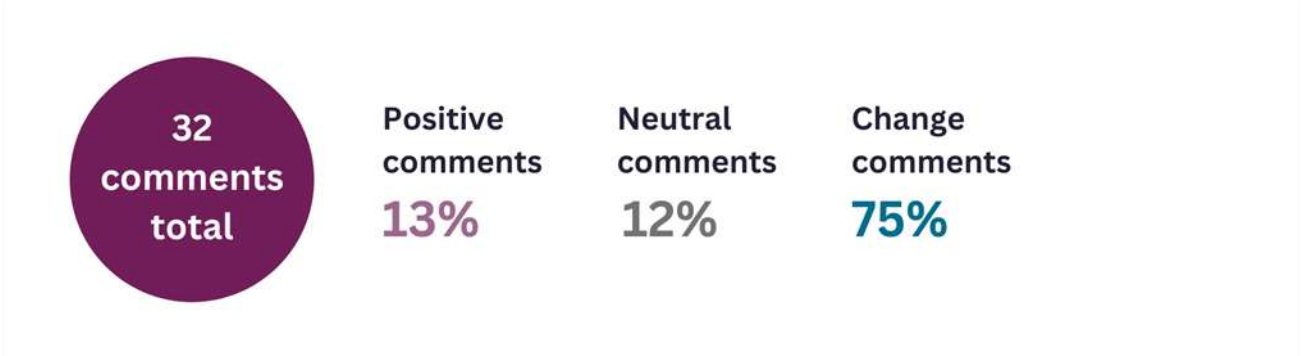
5.1.2 Mandate and role

When asked to express agreement or disagreement with statements related to the mandate and role of VACs (Figure 3), 30% of survey respondents expressed disagreement with the statement, "My understanding of the role and responsibilities of VAC members aligns with that our council and staff liaisons," followed by 28% of respondents indicating disagreement with the statement "My understanding of the purpose and mandate of VACs aligns with that of council and staff liaisons. Interestingly, when looking at where most of the agreement was expressed pertaining to mandate and role, VAC members expressed agreement with "I understand the purpose of VACs" and "I understand the roles and responsibilities of VAC members." This is further explored in the qualitative analysis below.

Figure 3. VAC member survey: mandate and role



Sentiment analysis of responses in the mandate and role section of the survey:



Overall, approximately 75% of the VAC member comments made in the role and mandate section of the survey identified a need for change.

<u>VAC survey responses</u>:

When analyzing the open-ended survey responses specific to the scope and mandate broadly, all comments identified a need for change, with 50% identifying a need for improved **clarity**. Both **alignment with community need** and **engagement with the broader community** were frequently raised in comments in relation to the mandate and role of VACs, with comments indicating almost equally these areas as benefits and working well, and areas for improvement.

> *"It was not very clear what we were expected to do and how it would be relayed to the city or impact it would have on our communities"*

> *"The committee that I was a part was greatly impactful. We often challenged city council to be better and accountable to their community. We also offered the community another option to be heard and access city council which is a very important role!"*

"I am sure if Volunteer Advisory Committees are given more leeway, and bring in suggestions from other stakeholders and boundary partners, they could impact more change and influence for the benefit of the public."

VAC focus groups:

In the focus groups, the lack of **clarity** on the VACs scope and mandate was also raised by participants as a challenge. Additionally, the need for **broader community engagement** was also raised as a challenge, along with the need for **improved collaboration among VACs.** Participants highlighted the intersectional nature of the scope of many VACs and noted challenges that the currently siloed model of VACs presents, for example, seniors intersecting with immigrants and refugees and LGTBQ).

5.1.3 Training and materials

When asked to express agreement or disagreement with statements related to VAC training and materials made available to members (Figure 4), 49% of respondents expressed disagreement with the statement, "I was provided adequate training to fulfill the responsibilities of a VAC member." Additionally, 29% of respondents expressed disagreement with the statement "I understand the VAC member structure and process to provide feedback to council," and one in four respondents expressed disagreement with the statement "I understand the decision-making process and how my voice can be heard within a VAC." These sentiments are explored further in the qualitative sections below, as many comments in the survey and focus groups centered around challenges with respect to training.

Figure 4. VAC member survey: training and materials

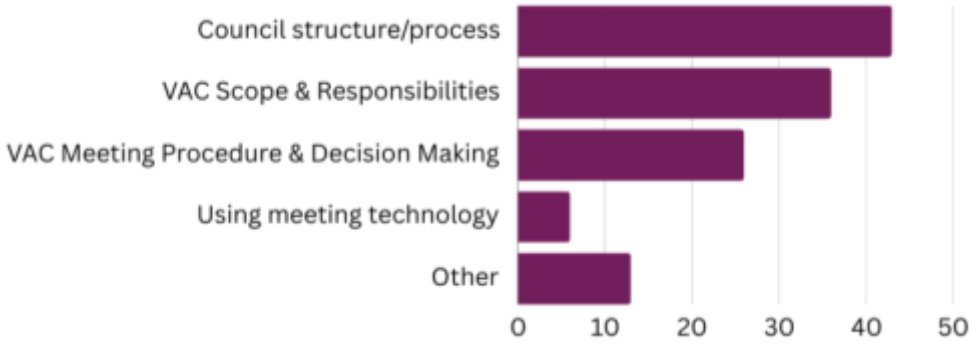
Sentiment analysis of responses in the training and materials section of the survey:

Overall, approximately 72% of the broad sentiments in the comments in this section identified a need for change.

VAC survey responses:

In addition to the questions above, survey respondents were also asked to identify areas where further training would be beneficial. The chart below is a breakdown of responses (Figure 5):

Figure 5. VAC members survey: Where additional training would be beneficial:



Responses to "Other" included: communication procedures, role specific training for VAC Chairs, Vice-Chairs, and Secretaries, writing committee reports/motions, budget process, and community engagement.

Approximately 80% of open-ended survey responses related to VAC Training and Materials identified a need to improve VAC member training, and approximately one-third of the responses spoke to the need for better training related to process/procedure (both with respect to internal VAC processes and interfacing with Council).

> *"I have served on a committee for 8 years and am still not 100% clear about the process of communications and decisions between Committee and Council. I feel*

there was regular confusion about this and it really hindered our meetings and effectiveness. I think training and support for meeting process and decision making could be significantly improved and would make the whole experience much more enjoyable, meaningful and productive for everyone involved."

"It will be of great help for volunteers to be trained, advised of the expected outcome of their meetings/discussions, and how this will fit into the bigger picture and future planning of the Council, and how this will benefit the citizens in Hamilton. I suggest the training to be done on first meeting."

There were several accounts of VAC members receiving no training in the survey responses.

VAC focus groups:

Focus group participants were not specifically asked about VAC training, and concerns with training were not raised as frequently in focus groups as they were in the survey. However, when training was raised, comments largely echoed those made in the survey, identifying a need for improved training related to interfacing with council as well as better training consistency. This also included accounts of no or minimal training when VAC members were onboarded, notably when brought on part way through the term. Training related to interpersonal skills, self-confidence and self-improvement, and motivational speaking were also suggested.

5.1.4 Additional thematic areas

In reviewing the feedback from both the open-ended survey responses and focus groups, several themes emerged that were not previously captured by the broader areas of inquiry in the survey or focus groups. These themes are explored in the below sections.

City staff

VAC survey responses:

In the open-ended survey responses, working with **staff** was raised frequently. Three-quarters of the comments identified this as an area that needs improvement. **Staff involvement** in VACs and **clerks** were identified as the most significant areas for improvement, with around 40% of the challenges raised indicating sentiments of **staff influence/gatekeeping**.

"... we were told that we couldn't say certain things and we were told to change how we said things. In the meetings, the clerks would dissuade us from making certain motions or create certain committee reports. [...] The staff liaison weren't as bad, but they still tried to

dissuade us by preventing us from raising systemic issues because there was no "process" for it."

Concerns around staff knowledge of VAC processes and lack of specific content expertise relating to the mandate of the VACs were both raised as challenges that likely impacted staff involvement with VACs. When clerks were raised in comments, the comments identified working with clerks as an area of improvement.

"While I might understand how the process works, it is not effective. The city liaison person makes a big difference in what is allowed to be put forth and how the mandate of the committee is interpreted."

VAC focus groups:

The analysis of the focus group responses pertaining to staff highlights an almost equal split between comments identifying benefits and those identifying areas for improvement. Similar to the survey responses, sentiments of **staff influence/gatekeeping** were identified as challenges, and more commonly, the impact of **staff turnover** was identified as a challenge (30% of challenges identified). Many participants noted disruption of work plans and inconsistencies in the level of staff training and knowledge about VAC processes as challenges resulting from frequent turnover in the staff liaison position. Additionally, where benefits of staff involvement were identified, the **content expertise** of staff was noted most frequently.

VAC membership

VAC survey responses:

Comments related to VAC Membership (both positive and those indicating a need for change), including those concerning quorum, committee make-up, and VAC member skills, were raised second most often in the open-ended survey responses (coded nearly 60 times). Over 70% of these comments identified a need for change, and of these comments, lack of **quorum** was raised as the most frequent issue (approximately 30% of challenges with respect to VAC Membership).

"We had huge quorum issues and it's not fair to the people devoting their time, we couldn't get anything done and missed many opportunities because of participation"

However, as noted previously, VAC members raised the importance of considering issues related to quorum in the larger context of VAC effectiveness/impact, remarking during the Validation Session that member participation rates were likely reflective of feeling devalued since their

contributions were not resulting in meaningful impact. This is explored further in the "VAC Effectiveness" section of this report.

Community expertise came up most frequently in comments related to VAC Membership and was raised almost equally as a current benefit and as an area that required improvement.

Positive comments with respect to community expertise highlighted VAC members' function/potential to provide a diversity of insights and knowledge that may be outside of the expertise of staff and Council. Most comments identifying a need for improvement highlighted the need to better utilize the community expertise within VACs or the need for a diversity of skills/viewpoints within the VAC member selection/decision-making process.

> *"It lets community members share their expertise to help their community in a non-intimidating way (ex. the budget process while open for community comments, can be daunting to be involved in). In many cases the volunteers have more expertise that staff and Council, so it provides reliable advice from experts who want the best for the City."*

> *"The committee members have valid opinions about issues and we are not taking advantage of this. There is a lot of talent in these groups. If they are given proper support and training, the advisory committees can be the best source of true community opinion."*

<u>VAC focus groups</u>:

Quorum was raised most frequently in comments related to VAC Membership during the focus groups, and all but one of these comments identified quorum as a current challenge, representing approximately 50% of comments identifying a need for change related to VAC Membership in focus group feedback.

Comments related to **community expertise** were raised almost as frequently as quorum in the focus groups, though they were raised more frequently as a current benefit of VACs (nearly 65% of focus group comments related to community expertise) as opposed to an area that needs improvement (approximately 35% of comments) when compared to the survey responses. Comments echoed those made in the open-ended survey responses, underscoring the role/potential for VACs to bring forward community perspectives.

VAC process and structure

VAC survey responses:

VAC processes and structure were frequently brought up in open-ended survey group responses, with 95% of comments identifying a challenge or area for improvement. The structure/process for **communication with council** was identified as the most common challenge by survey respondents. Around 30% of comments pertaining to challenges resulting from the current VAC process/structure spoke to the **rigidity/bureaucracy** of the VAC structure, with respondents noting the barriers this created to being able to provide meaningful participation and impact.

> *"I would like to think that Volunteer Advisory Committees are places where change, impact, and influence can happen but in my time serving on a Committee, I haven't ever felt this. It often feels that the formalities and structures preclude meaningful impact."*

Lastly, the lack of **proactive consultation** or simply being **outside of the consultation process** was raised in approximately 20% of the comments by survey respondents. VAC members raised concerns around not being consulted on issues that directly pertained to the mandate/scope of the VACs they are a part of.

> *"Also relevant items/projects that city staff are requesting advise for, should be noted BEFORE the work is done, and not afterwards"*

> *"To have a committee with citizen volunteers to be able to check off a box by saying we have a committee and then not bringing issues to it, makes it a waste of time for both citizen reps and staff."*

VAC focus groups:

The comments from VAC members in focus groups around the VAC process/structure echoed the open-ended responses in the survey, centering around the same three themes. **Communication with council** was again raised as the most common issue and will be explored in the following section around council involvement.

In the focus groups, **rigidity/bureaucracy** was frequently raised (representing approximately 25% of challenges identified in relation to VAC process and structure) in the context of VACs not being able to meet, even informally, if quorum was not met. Participants identified that the bureaucracy is challenging to navigate and, as a result, can limit the voices that are heard. They identified the process itself as intimidating and associated this with contributing to issues around not achieving quorum.

Focus group participants also spoke to a lack of **proactive consultation** or being **outside of the consultation process** (representing around 20% of challenges raised around VAC process and structure). VAC members who participated in the focus groups spoke to a desire to be more formally integrated into the City's engagement process, and to be able to provide advice and input prior to council decisions.

Council involvement

While not directly addressed in either the survey or focus group questions, comments related to councillor involvement in VAC, including both attendance and participation in VAC meetings, were raised frequently in both VAC member engagements.

VAC survey responses:

All responses in the open-ended survey questions related to council involvement in VACs identified a need for improvement. Most frequently, these comments raised concerns about the lack of **councillor attendance** at VAC meetings.

> *"I was profoundly disappointed that the Council rep on my advisory committee never attended, not once. Spoke volumes about respect for the Committee."*

> *"We are supposed to have two Council members assigned to our committee. One of them never shows up and the other is an ocassional show. How our progress gets transmitted to Council is not known to me"*

VAC focus groups:

Comments made during the focus groups more often reflected a positive sentiment towards councillor involvement; however, 60% of survey responses identified a need for improvement with respect to councillor participation. Comments related to lack of **councillor attendance** made up most of the feedback received (representing approximately 75% of comments indicating a need for change within the VAC process and structure).

5.1.4 Effectiveness in fulfilling mandate

The second largest area of disagreement noted in the survey was in regard to the statement, "The VAC(s) I am a member of operates effectively to fulfill its mandate," with 40% of respondents indicating disagreement (Figure 6). Furthermore, 35% of survey respondents expressed disagreement with the statement, "My contributions through the VAC(s) make a meaningful

impact in the City of Hamilton," and 25% (one in four respondents) expressed disagreement with the statement, "VACs are a place where change, impact, and/or influence can happen".

Figure 6. VAC member survey: Effectiveness in fulfilling mandate

Interestingly, only 15% of survey respondents expressed disagreement with the statement, "The staff liaison(s) effectively supports the work of the VAC(s)." As noted in the section on City Staff, this was not fully echoed in the open-ended survey responses and focus groups and became a significant theme relating to areas for improvement in the broader analysis.

Sentiment analysis of responses in the effectiveness in fulfilling mandate section of the survey:

Overall, approximately 61% of the comments made in this section identified a need for change.

In a preliminary analysis of the survey responses and feedback received through focus groups, it became evident that the challenges discussed in the previous sections of the report intersect with and impact the effectiveness of VACs and their ability to fulfill their mandates. For example, lack of transparency in communicating with council left VACs unclear if and how their recommendations had been received and deliberated by council. Therefore, while effectiveness of fulfilling the mandate was a section of the survey, a broader thematic approach was taken to analyzing feedback with respect to VAC effectiveness to better reflect the interplay between this and other themes. For this reason, some themes already considered in this analysis will be highlighted again.

The major themes related to VAC effectiveness identified in VAC member feedback in the open-ended survey question and focus groups were:

1. Impact (including sentiment of fulfilling mandate/role; having wider community impact; value/regard for VAC work)
2. Transparency
3. Clarity
4. Timelines (general timeliness of VAC processes, e.g. selection process, communications with council, training etc.)
5. VAC Culture

Overall, VAC Effectiveness was by far the most common theme raised in VAC member feedback in the open-ended survey questions and was also the most common theme raised in focus group comments, though by a smaller margin.

1. Impact

<u>VAC survey responses</u>:

Out of all open-ended survey responses identifying a need for change, impact was the theme most commonly raised and made up approximately 40% of comments identifying current challenges related to VAC Effectiveness. Impact was also the most common theme raised in comments that spoke to aspects of VACs that are currently working well, and approximately 40% of comments raised with respect to impact conveyed a current benefit.

In the survey, comments identifying challenges related to impact intersected most with **communicating with council** (approximately 25% of negative comments related to impact) and **rigid/bureaucratic process** (also about 25% of impact comments identifying a need for improvement).

> *"The lasting impression gained from [my years on VAC] is that the city doesn't listen to these committees or care about enacting policies it creates. This is truly demoralizing and causes citizens to feel actively ignored. The city needs to do better and let citizens take an active role vs. placating them with seats in an ignored room."*

<u>VAC focus groups</u>:

Impact was also the overall most common theme that arose in feedback from the focus groups, though by a smaller margin. Comments related to impact made up approximately 35% of total comments related to VAC effectiveness, though positive comments with respect to impact were

made far more infrequently in comparison to the open-ended survey responses (just over 15% of comments related to impact).

When analyzing the focus group feedback, comments suggesting improvements with respect to **impact** most often intersected with **communicating with council**. These comments made up approximately 30% of all comments identifying a need for change related to impact. These comments echoed the sentiments that VACs are disregarded or devalued by council, and encouraged council and the City to more proactively seek out VAC advice on matters related to their mandates.

2. Transparency

<u>VAC survey responses</u>:

Transparency and VAC Culture were raised second most frequently in open-ended survey comments related to VAC Effectiveness. Almost all comments raised in the open-ended survey questions related to transparency identified a need for change. Transparency also made up approximately 20% of comments identifying a need for change related to VAC Effectiveness. Comments identifying current challenges related to transparency most frequently raised the **selection/decision-making process** for VAC membership (just over 40%) and **communicating with council** (approximately 30%).

> *"Our recommendations have to travel up through a bureaucratic structure and then it seems they get lost. Very few recommendations if any result in Council or City action"*

> *"In terms of the everyday issues our community faces, that would potentially need to be communicated to our council, there seems to be a disconnect in communicating these things. Somehow this information often gets lost and/or is misinterpreted at times."*

<u>VAC focus groups</u>:

Comments related to transparency made up a smaller portion of total comments related to VAC Effectiveness (approximately 15% of total comments related to VAC Effectiveness, and 20% of challenges raised with respect to VAC Effectiveness). All comments concerning transparency in the focus groups conveyed a need for improvement, and most again related to **communicating with council** (approximately 45) and the **selection/decision-making process** (nearly 30%).

3. Clarity

VAC survey results:

Feedback related to clarity in the open-ended survey questions made up approximately 20% of comments identifying a need for change related to VAC Effectiveness and almost approximately 90% related to clarity identified a need for improvement.

In the survey responses, the need for improved clarity was most commonly raised in relation to **scope and mandate** (approximately 30% of comments) and **communication with council** (approximately 25% of comments). The need for improved clarity with respect to the VAC role as part of training/onboarding was also referenced several comments.

> *"I never got a proper explanation of the expectations of the role, as it aligns to Staff Liaison and Council, hence I was actually confused for the most part. I felt that we did not make any marked difference or served any purpose, besides fulfilling a need for Council."*

VAC focus groups:

Feedback with respect to clarity in the focus groups made up approximately 25% of comments reflecting need for improvement related to VAC Effectiveness, and almost all comments related to clarity identified a current challenge.

Similar to the survey responses, comments that identified a need for change related to clarity most often intersected with **scope and mandate** (approximately 25% of comments), as well as **VAC structure/process** (approximately 20% of comments).

4. Timelines

VAC survey responses:

Feedback related to the timelines of VAC processes was least common in comments related to VAC Effectiveness (approximately 6% of all comments related to VAC Effectiveness, and 10% of those that identified a need for improvement), and all comments raised with respect to timelines identified this as a current challenge. Several of these comments were raised about VAC/Council processes more broadly as well as in relation to the VAC member and **selection/decision-making process**.

> *"The speed and flexibility of the process is lacking. At times, we needed to recruit members part way through the cycle to fill any expertise gaps or replacing members*

and it can take a very long to find new members. This is especially challenging when working within the 4 year committee term."

"You submit a report and they just vote to receive it and everything is so SLOW. People need to be prepared for how SLOW politics are and how long it takes for ideas to come to fruition."

VAC focus groups:

Comments related to timelines were more frequently raised in the focus groups, making up approximately 20% of comments that identified a need for change related to VAC Effectiveness. Most of these comments related to the timeliness of bringing on new VAC members when someone had stepped down, though timeliness related to the feedback loop with council when recommendations have been put forward was also raised.

5. VAC culture

VAC survey responses:

In the open-ended survey responses, VAC Culture was raised in approximately 15% of comments about VAC Effectiveness and was raised fairly equally as both something currently working well with respect to VACs (approximately 55% of comments) as well as an area that needs improvement (approximately 45% of comments).

Many of these comments highlighted camaraderie among VAC members and members' dedication to VAC work.

"I enjoyed my participation in the committee and meet wonderful Hamilton members. We were able to advance some change for our community."

"[VAC] is a hard working committee, well attended at committee meetings and working groups. We have kept [type of] issue in the forefront"

"Some members use the experience on the committee as a line in their CV and some try to bring their own personal agendas in front of the city council not understanding that committees advise, not decide on issues."

VAC focus groups:

Comments related to VAC Culture made up a larger portion of comments raised about VAC Effectiveness (over 15%) and were also raised more frequently as an aspect of VACs that is

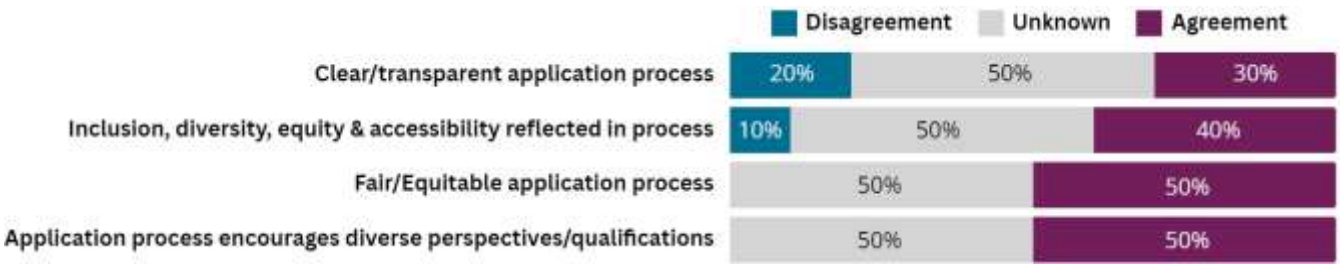
currently working well (approximately 75%), again highlighting member's commitment to VAC's and their goals.

5.2 Staff liaisons

5.2.1 Staff liaison survey

a. Application, selection, and appointment process

Figure 7. Staff liaison survey: application, selection, and appointment process



When looking at staff liaison responses to statements around the application, selection, and appointment process, 50% of staff answered unknown to the statements, with the majority indicating in the comment box that they were not with the committee during the VAC member selection process. Otherwise, staff liaisons generally expressed agreement with statements in this section, apart from the statement "The Application, selection, and appointment process is clear and transparent," where 20% expressed disagreement. This was also the statement with the highest level of disagreement among VAC members who completed the survey.

b. Mandate and role

Figure 8. Staff liaison survey: mandate and role

When looking at staff liaison responses to the mandate and role of VACs, the statement "I understand how VACs fit within the municipal governance structure" has the highest

disagreement, with 40% of respondents indicating disagreement. The statements “The Terms of Reference for the VAC I am a staff liaison for clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities of the members, staff liaisons and council,” as well as “My understanding of the scope and responsibilities of the VAC aligns with that of council and VAC members,” both had 30% of staff liaisons indicate disagreement.

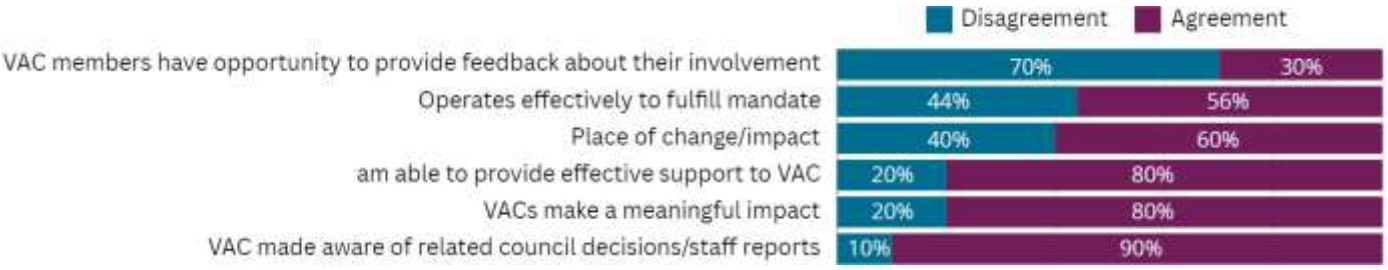
c. Member training and materials

Figure 9. Staff liaison survey: Member training and materials

The statement “I was provided adequate training to fulfill the responsibilities of a Staff Liaison” had the largest indication of disagreement, with 80% of staff liaisons indicating disagreement. Regarding whether VAC members received adequate training, 50% of staff liaisons expressed disagreement. 40% of staff liaisons expressed disagreement with the statement, “I understand the VAC structure and the process by which VAC members can provide feedback to council.” Staff liaisons all expressed VAC members are provided with materials that they need to participate in VAC meetings in a timely manner, and that, as staff liaisons, they have access to the equipment and resources needed to fulfill their role.

d. Effectiveness in fulfilling mandate

Figure 10. Staff liaison survey: effectiveness in fulfilling mandate



70% of staff liaisons expressed disagreement with the statement, “VAC members have adequate opportunity to provide feedback about their involvement in a VAC.” Over half of the staff liaisons (55%) expressed disagreement with the statement “The VAC I am a staff liaison for operated

effectively to fulfill its mandate." Half of the staff liaisons expressed disagreement with the statement, "VACs are a place where change impact, and/or influence can happen;" however, 70% of staff liaisons expressed agreement with the statement, "VACs make a meaningful impact in the City of Hamilton."

Staff liaison open-ended survey responses:

Table 2. Staff Liaisons: Theme areas of open-ended responses

Theme	# Staff Liaisons who discussed theme (out of 10)	Frequency of theme in responses*
Scope and mandate	5	Total: 9 Challenges: 8 Benefits: 1
Staff Liaison training	5	Total: 5 Challenges: 5
Rigidity/bureaucracy	4	Total: 5 Challenges: 5
Impact	4	Total: 8 Challenges: 5 Benefits: 3
Member training	4	Total: 5 Challenges: 5
Involvement of staff	3	Total: 3 Challenges: 3
VAC Culture	2	Total: 8 Challenges: 8
Engagement with broader community	2	Total: 5 Challenges: 4 Benefits: 1
Councillor attendance	2	Total: 3 Challenges: 3

*themes may have come up multiple times in one staff liaison survey

When looking at the open-ended survey responses from staff liaisons, challenges pertaining to the **scope/mandate** of VACs were brought up most frequently, and by the greatest number of staff liaisons (five staff). The lack of **clarity** around the scope/mandate for VAC was the challenge raised most frequently, specifically with respect to the role of VACs. It was raised that VACs ought

to play more of an advisory role rather than program delivery or budget administration. Comments also raised confusion among both staff and VAC members about the advocacy capacity of VACs. One staff liaison also noted that developing priorities and work plan was a challenge for the VAC they worked with.

> *"There were challenges with staying in scope and knowing what they could [do] with a small budget. For example, it was difficult for them to know what was their role vs. staff's role vs. council's role."*

Staff liaison training was also raised by five staff as a challenge, with two staff indicating that they did not receive any onboarding or training before starting in their role. Staff indicated a need for specific training for the staff liaison role.

> *"When I started in this role there was no cross-over and no formal staff liaison training provided at the corporate level, which I expected given the weight of the role."*

> *"I think a well developed training for volunteers and staff liaisons that included information on the structure, function, roles, examples of activities etc. could be helpful and might address these changes."*

The **rigidity/bureaucracy** of the VACs and associated processes, **impact,** and **member training**, were all raised as challenges in the comments made by four staff liaisons. In reference to rigidity/bureaucracy, staff spoke to the formality of VACs inhibiting committee work, along with lengthy timelines of moving things forward presenting challenges for VACs. Staff liaisons also noted training for VAC members as an area for improvement, indicating that training for VAC members should include orientation and training specific to: role, structure, function, and report writing. It was also suggested that newly formed committees have a senior clerk at an early meeting, or a pre-made video, outlining the reporting process, code of conduct etc. to make processes clearer. One comment also noted that the introduction of the citizen committee report in the middle of the term was confusing and that staff liaisons and VAC members were not adequately trained on this. In regard to impact, three staff liaisons noted that the current structure of VACs is not working effectively to allow VACs to fulfill their purpose, underscoring the importance of soliciting advice from citizen experts while speaking to the inefficiencies and ineffectiveness of the current structure for doing this.

Impact:

> *"I feel like the advisory committee model is ineffective in what I think their purpose is; to provide guidance to council. Our Committee doesn't do that. People on our committee actually interact more with council outside of the committee [...] because it is easier."*

> *"I think it is a challenge for people to understand how council and committees function and the various ways in which they fit within this structure. A challenge of this structure for the committee I worked with is the timelines associated with moving things forward. It can be a slow process which can be frustrating for people."*

> *"We also need to shift the culture of the committee to make them less formal / bureaucratic so that we can inspire and encourage genuine contributions. This may mean having less formal & less public meetings & staff can remit formal minutes as needed."*

Three staff liaisons identified challenges around **involvement of staff** liaisons in VACs in the open-ended responses. Staff noted challenges with being required to run meetings when they had content expertise, but no knowledge of the processes pertaining to VACs, not having a clear understanding of their role in directing the committee, and the over-emphasis on administrative work.

Additionally, although only raised by two staff liaisons, challenges pertaining to **VAC culture** are important to highlight as concerns of bullying towards VAC members and staff liaisons, as well as concerns of broader toxicity within the VAC were raised.

> *"I had my intentions, work ethic, and performance attacked regularly. I had comments from Committee members that they felt bullied and that they would never come back to the committee because of the toxicity. As staff, I can take it, but committee members shouldn't have to."*

Engagement with broader community and lack of **councillor attendance** at meetings were also raised by two staff liaisons as challenges. A staff liaison noted that VAC membership is not necessarily reflective of the community and highlighted the need for feedback mechanisms to increase broader community engagement and input at the grassroots level. Comments with respect to councillor attendance underscored the importance of having a councillor attached to each VAC as well as the importance of their attendance at meetings.

5.3 City Council members

5.3.1 City Council interviews

Given that Council Interviews were a comparatively smaller data set, the data was analyzed by the number of Council Members that raised a particular theme (Table 4).

Table 3. Council member interview theme areas

Theme	# Council Members who discussed theme (out of 10)	Frequency of theme in responses*
Communication with council	9	Total: 19 Challenges: 14 Benefits: 5
Scope and mandate	8	Total: 32 Challenges: 26 Benefits: 5
Impact	7	Total: 30 Challenges: 19 Benefits: 11
VAC member selection process	7	Total: 7 Challenges: 7
VAC structure/process	7	Total: 11 Challenges: 11
Clarity	6	Total: 14 Challenges: 13 Benefits: 1
Alignment with Council priorities	4	Total: 7 Challenges: 6 Benefits: 1
Timelines and effort required to meet them	4	Total: 6 Challenges: 6
Value of community expertise in VAC	4	Total: 14 Challenges: 5 Benefits: 9
Alignment with community need	4	Total: 5 Challenges: 4 Benefits: 1
Transparency	4	Total: 4 Challenges: 4

*themes may have come up more than once in each council member interview

Council members conveyed the general sentiment that VACs play an important role in providing community feedback. Council members also raised a number of areas of suggested improvements to the VAC function and process. Many of the themes raised coincided with the

feedback provided by VAC members and staff liaisons, although there was some divergence both thematically and in terms of the recommendations put forward. These are explored below.

In terms of the themes most frequently raised as areas of improvement, **communication with council** was raised most frequently by Council members. Comments by Council members generally suggested improvement to the process related to VAC recommendations (both how they are put forward as well as how they are received/actioned by Council). A need for a clear, transparent process of receiving, deliberating on, and communicating back to VACs was an identified need. Also, proactively engaging VACs to inform departmental reports and policy initiatives from the outset rather than reviewing reports that have already been put forward to council was raised. One comment raised that the City has enacted several new action plans that could align with existing VACs, though is unclear if they have been consulted as part of the process. Alternatively, it was also suggested that VACs should be able to request a meeting with the committee they report to with respect to work they have taken on. Some comments raised issues related to the clarity of the work being undertaken by VACs, for example, improved clarity on how VACs fit into City policy-making as well as the relationship between council, staff liaisons, and VACs. Other comments suggested a need for uniformity in VAC reporting, and some suggested that the reports be provided to the whole of Council for review instead of going to committees.

Issues related to **scope and mandate** were raised in eight of ten Council interviews. Similar to feedback received in the VAC Member engagements and the Staff Liaison survey, lack of **clarity** of scope and mandate was raised most frequently and by the majority of Council Members that raised challenges related to scope and mandate. Comments by Council members identified the need to provide greater clarity to VACs on the expected outcomes of their work. Related to this, several council comments spoke to the need for clear terms of reference that are reviewed at regular intervals to ensure their currency. Though not raised as frequently in the VAC engagements, consideration of the **relevance** of VAC's scope and mandate in the current climate was raised by a majority of Council members that spoke to scope and mandate.

Impact (sentiment of VAC fulfilling mandate/role, having wider community impact, being valued/regarded) was raised by seven of ten Council members. Some comments made expressed that VAC members feel devalued or are underutilized (most frequently raised) and others spoke to the lack of proactive consultation with VACs on issues related to their mandate. Council members noted that VACs ought to be providing policy recommendations related to council's strategic priorities and should carry the same weight as consultant feedback. A desire to bring back the passion and commitment of community members who have otherwise joined advocacy groups into the formal VAC process was identified. To support this work, Council members identified a need for robust and consistent staff support, as well as a need for VACs to access financial resources and additional expertise as needed. There was divergence on the role of Clerks in VACs. Further training for VAC Chairs to effectively facilitate meetings to allow for meaningful

participation among all VAC members was also raised, along with improved training for staff on meaningful engagement with VACs.

Seven of ten Council Members also spoke to VAC member **selection/decision-making process** as an area that needs improvement. Most commonly, council members identified a need for increased **community involvement** in the selection and decision-making process. Creating a process for greater **transparency** in decision-making, for example, by using of a skills matrix, was seen as one way to improve the selection/ decision-making process. Adding transparency with respect to how inclusion, diversity, equity, and accessibility are factored into member selection was also suggested. Some Council members commented on the importance of establishing clear membership requirements in the selection process to avoid VACs being used to push personal agendas.

The **VAC Structure/Process** was also referenced by seven of ten Council Members. These comments largely identified that the over-structuring of VACs impedes their function and spoke to the need for some flexibility, less formality, and a balance between structure and overall purpose to allow VACs to carry out their work as intended. One council member suggested that VACs should be restructured as working groups rather than a local board to allow for greater flexibility. It was identified that committees that serve different purposes may require different structures and supports.

There was notable divergence among council members with respect to restructuring. One suggestion made was to only have VACs with specific mandates related to council priorities, while another spoke to the importance that all VACs can have if provided the opportunity and adequate support. It was noted that council may need to consider the creation of additional VACs to support their work. There was also a suggestion that VACs representing equity-deserving communities could be amalgamated as a potential means of supporting a more intersectional approach.

Several comments focussed on the need for a diversity of voices and expertise in each VAC to provide comprehensive advice to Council on Council priorities. One comment pointed to how the Climate Change Advisory Committee has been structured in that it is linked to a strategic priority of council, has membership that complements and enhances the capacity of the City and reflects diverse backgrounds that intersect with climate change, and suggested all VACs should be structured this way.

The need for greater clarity was also a notable theme, raised by six of ten Council Members. Like the feedback received through the engagements with VAC Members and Staff Liaisons, comments with respect to clarity were most often raised with respect to VAC **scope and mandate**. The need for greater clarity was also brought up more generally with respect to VAC processes and how information is shared between Council and VACs.

Mis**alignment with Council Priorities** was brought forward as an area of improvement by four Council Members. Comments spoke to the desire for clear delineation between the mandate of VACs and current council priorities. It was also suggested that VAC terms align with those of council.

The **timelines** with respect to VAC processes were also raised as a current challenge by four Council Members, both with respect to the need for timely recommendations from VACs, the considerable time it takes to put recommendations forward given the current VAC structure, and the timelines for feedback. Time constraints related to recruitment was also identified as a concern.

The value of the **community expertise** brought forward by VACs was brought forward by five Council Members as an aspect of VACs that is currently working well. Most highlighted the value of citizen input and the importance of leveraging community knowledge and expertise. Community expertise was also raised as an area that needs improvement by four Council Members, and reflected sentiments that **community expertise in VACs could be better utilized**.

Alignment with community needs was raised by four Council Members, with respect to the importance of balancing/incorporating feedback from the broader community in addition to or as part of the VAC through VAC engagement with the wider community. One comment suggested that VACs ought to be able to use the Engage Hamilton platform or host town halls to seek advice from residents on initiatives and recommendations being considered by the VAC.

Transparency was also raised by four Council Members, with respect to VAC's relationship to Council, noting a lack of transparency with respect to Council expectations of VACs and receiving/actioning VAC reports.

5.4 Additional considerations

Although the themes below were not raised with the same level of frequency as the previous sections in the VAC member, staff liaison and council member engagements, issues around accessibility, the VAC review, and measuring success were raised among VAC members, staff liaisons, and councillors.

5.4.1 Accessibility

Several challenges regarding accessibility were raised. Most frequently, the suggestion to offer **hybrid** VAC meetings was raised, both in terms of making VACs more accessible for a broader audience, as well as a means to address issues with quorum.

Storage of relevant documents for VAC members (past meeting minutes, presentations, working documents) in an accessible manner was raised second most frequently. VAC members voiced challenges with the lack of infrastructure available to VACs to store documents currently, with VAC members having to store items on personal computers and drives. For those who do not have access to personal storage, this presents a significant barrier to meaningful participation in VACs; members also voiced concern that the lack of availability of documents in an accessible format affects the continuity of work, especially when there is turnover among VAC members.

Stipends and Meeting supports for VAC members was raised third most frequently. Staff and VAC members noted that offering stipends would enable more diverse representation and experience on committees. The availability of childcare and more disability-related supports were also raised as areas for improvement, as well as parking and having food available at VAC meetings. Council member feedback included that VAC members take time away from their families to participate and should at least get a meal as a token of the City's thanks for their time and efforts.

5.4.2 VAC review

Although not necessarily part of the scope of this review, VAC members raised several questions and concerns around the current VAC review. These comments highlight the lack of **clarity** and **transparency** VAC members have felt around the review process and timelines.

VAC members expressed concerns about the lack of clarity regarding the purpose of the review process. In the absence of clear and transparent communication, members were left to speculate about the intended outcome of the review, with some noting they were told their committees might not exist after the review.

As VACs played a role in facilitating feedback from the broader community related to their mandates to council, VAC members also noted concerns around this "missing link" that exists with regards to council consultation and engagement with community expertise while the review is being undertaken.

5.4.3 Measuring success

Measuring success was raised in three of the focus groups and by a few council members. VAC members highlighted that having ongoing feedback methods (e.g. and annual survey on VAC functioning) would be beneficial to address challenges as they arise, and gauge what VAC members feel is working well, and provide opportunities to suggest areas for improvement. Others suggested that where possible, VACs have work plans or strategic plans that include indicators of success.

Overall, measuring the success of VACs is an area that needs significant consideration, specifically around how success is defined, and who defines the success of VACs.

> *"On measuring success, One suggestion would be that if the City establishes a new approach to Advisory Committees, there should definitely be an evaluation plan to go with it e.g. annual survey to measure 'how's it going? for both the committee members and the staff liaison, and a measure of Councillor participation too"*

> *"valuable if each committee had a stat plan and committee workplan – when there is turn over there is an agreed up plan that the committee could continue working towards (Clean Air Hamilton provided as an example), renewed every year or term of council/committee, provided measurement and indicators to know if work has been successful"*

6.0 Discussion and recommendations

The high level of participation from VAC members, staff liaisons and council members speaks to dedication and desire to ensure VACs can operate in a way that affects meaningful change in the City of Hamilton. Council members, staff liaisons, and VAC members spoke to a desire for an improved process that enables meaningful participation of volunteers, recognizing that VAC members have a wealth of knowledge and expertise based on their lived and professional experiences that can be utilized for the greater good of Hamilton.

Important for consideration in both the discussion and recommendations, is the intersecting nature of the challenges and benefits brought forward in participant feedback. As previously noted, areas requiring improvement cannot be looked at in isolation and must be situated in the broader context of VAC function, particularly in considering recommendations for change moving forward. Moreover, steps taken to remedy areas that were identified as needing improvement should strive to understand and work to address the root causes of issues to avoid the reoccurrence of challenges. For example, while improved training may address some issues related to lack of clarity with respect to VAC process and structure and would likely have other positive implications for VAC participation, comments in the engagements with VAC members, staff liaisons, and council demonstrated misalignment in the understanding of the purpose and role of VACs. This incongruence would likely not be addressed by training alone and requires intentional work to establish a common understanding of the purpose and intended outcomes of VACs.

6.1 Summary of aspects currently working well and opportunities

Across our engagements with all participants, there was recognition of the immense opportunity VACs provide in leveraging both the enthusiasm and expertise of community members in Hamilton. The diversity of experiences and opinions on VACs was highlighted as a critical asset that allows the City to tap into and engage with a knowledge-base they may otherwise not have access to, as well as provide the opportunity to foster more equitable solutions that meet community needs. This is demonstrated in the below staff liaison quotes:

> *"…having a group of diverse folks that can bring an array of ideas to the table is really amazing. There's so many things that other people can think of."*

> *"A focussed, involved advisory committee can bring relevant issues to Council's attention and suggest ways to deal with these issues. The citizen view of Hamilton, as a place to live and work, raise a family and age successfully, is not necessarily the same as that of an employee who may live elsewhere. These committees have the opportunity to suggest events and ways to generate more equitable involvement in the city by marginalized groups."*

All participant groups also highlighted the importance of VACs as a vehicle for community involvement and engagement. In particular, VAC members noted the importance of the connections built through VACs and the role VACs can play in fostering a sense of community, breaking down barriers to civic engagement, and providing opportunities to contribute to the creation of a thriving Hamilton.

There was also a strong desire by VAC members, staff liaison, and council to establish appropriate structure and supports that would enable meaningful integration of VACs into City processes as a means of identifying issues from the community as well as providing advice on strategic initiatives being undertaken by council and the City.

6.2 Summary of areas for improvement

Similar to the above-noted opportunities, several challenges were also consistently raised among the three participant groups. Challenges pertaining to impact were most commonly raised among the engagements. These comments spoke to the unfulfilled potential and underutilization of VACs and the community expertise held within them. Lack of clarity with respect to the scope and mandate of VACs was also frequently raised among all three participant groups. Notably, there was both a lack of clarity around scope and misalignment between the three participant groups with respect to the role of VACs in Hamilton. The current structure and processes of VACs were also consistently raised as an area for improvement among VAC members, staff liaisons and

council. All three participant groups identified over-structuring VACs as an impediment to their function and ability to take on meaningful work. The need for a clearly articulated, accessible and transparent process for communicating with council was also identified, both in relation to how VAC recommendations are brought forward, but also in how council receives, reviews, and responds to VAC recommendations. While not raised as frequently as council, the need for more consistent and comprehensive training for both VAC members and staff liaisons was commonly raised by the two groups. The need for improved transparency with respect to the VAC member selection and decision-making process, including clear selection criteria, was also raised frequently by both VAC members and council.

6.3 Recommendations

Overall:

1. As the City looks to potentially amend the VAC model considering the outcomes of this review, it is imperative that the City continue to involve and consult VAC members with respect to potential changes moving forward. VAC members have tremendous knowledge on what has been working well and what has not with respect to VAC function. Their involvement will only strengthen remedies to the challenges identified in this report, as well as provide an opportunity to rebuild trust lost with VAC members.

2. Given the sentiments of disregard and confusion communicated by VAC members with respect to how the VAC Review was initiated, we encourage the City to proactively inform and engage VAC members in the next steps of the review.

3. Overall, there is a need for greater clarity and consistent understanding of the role of VACs, their expected outcomes, and how each participant group (i.e. VAC members, staff liaisons and council members) participate in and contribute to the work of VACs. As this was a need identified by all three groups, it is recommended that the scope, mandate, role and intended outcomes of VACs be clearly defined in VAC governing document.

4. In addition to clear objectives, there is a need to develop ongoing feedback mechanisms and an evaluation plan for VACs. Evaluation of VACs needs to capture both the effectiveness of the VACs in fulfilling their mandates as well as volunteer experiences on the committees, necessitating feedback from council, staff liaisons and VAC members on their effectiveness. Additionally, implementing a process for ongoing feedback would create opportunities to address challenges with VACs as they arise.

Impact:

5. It should be recognized that all challenges brought forward in this report and the associated recommendations for remedy have direct implications on the effectiveness and impact VACs can have. As a result, it is recommended that careful consideration is given to how all recommendations could be implemented.

6. The City should look to implement processes and engagement opportunities that support improved collaboration and a more intersectional approach to VAC work, including vehicles that enable VAC engagement with the broader community as well as means for VACs to collaborate with each other on intersecting issues.

Scope/Mandate:

7. Implement VAC Terms of Reference (TOR) reviews at regularly scheduled intervals to ensure governing documents continue to meet the needs of VAC members and council.

8. Given that the importance of community expertise was highlighted as a key asset by all three participant groups, it is recommended that VACs be provided the latitude necessary to raise concerns identified at the community level. Additionally, there was an identified need for better alignment between council and City priorities and the work of VACs; therefore, it is recommended that the City review existing VACs for alignment with strategic priorities and refocus VAC work as needed.

9. There is also need for consideration of the diverse mandates and functions of current VACs, therefore, a one-size-fits-all approach to VAC governance and supports would likely not support the success of current VACs.

VAC Structure/Processes:

10. As the rigidity of the current VAC structure was raised as a barrier to VAC's ability to fulfill their role by all three participant groups, it is recommended that the City consider less structured formats/processes for VACs. While it was recognized that some structure is required for meaningful participation, procedures around quorum and how discussions are held were generally viewed as inhibiting the important advisory and engagement function of VACs.

11. To fully utilize the expertise on VACs, proactive and ongoing engagement with VACs should be embedded into existing consultation processes that inform council priorities and departmental work as they relate to VAC scope and mandate (e.g. in the development and implementation of City action plans). This consultation should be done as part of

departmental work on strategic initiatives and before staff reports are put to council for consideration.

12. VAC governance documents should clearly articulate the role of council members on VACs, including the expected level of participation from council members (e.g. frequency of meeting attendance, availability for consultation to VAC outside of meetings) to support consistent understanding across all VAC participants.

13. Governance documents should also provide clear direction on the role of staff liaisons in facilitating and supporting VAC work. VACs also require ongoing support from staff content experts as well as procedural experts. Delineation of these roles, and consistent access to both competencies, would better support VACs as well as the staff supporting their work.

Council Communication:

14. Ensure a clear and transparent process, with expected timelines, is provided to VAC members with respect to communicating and making recommendations to council. The process should identify how recommendations are put forward, how and by whom recommendations are received, and deliberated. It should also clearly outline how council will respond to the recommendations, and if/how they have been actioned, focusing on ensuring a clear feedback loop to VACs.

Training:

15. There is a need for improved, consistent, and accessible training for VAC members. More comprehensive training on council structure and process, VAC scope and responsibilities, meeting procedure and VAC decision making, report-writing, and role-specific training for VAC chairs were identified needs.

16. Steps should also be taken to develop and implement consistent training for staff liaisons that clearly outlines the role of staff liaisons, as well as VAC purpose, function, and structure. Consistent onboarding and handoff planning should also be developed to better support transitions between staff liaisons. A centralized location for all VAC documents/work accessible to staff liaisons and all VAC members would also support these transitions.

Selection/Decision Making:

17. Involve community stakeholders in the VAC member selection and decision-making process.

18. Working with citizen representatives supporting VAC selection work, develop selection criteria for VAC members, inclusive of how equity, diversity, inclusion and accessibility are accounted

for in decision-making. Communicate selection criteria to applicants/public during the call for applications. Where a VAC applicant is unsuccessful, communicate the outcome to the applicant and provide a brief explanation of the decision to further support transparency of the process.

19. Established term limits for VAC membership. Clearly communicate term limits in VAC Terms of Reference.

20. Greater attention needs to be given to the timely transition between VAC members in the event a VAC member resigns. Maintaining a list of applicants who met the application criteria but were not selected for the role would assist with this transition.

21. Provide robust, consistent training to all VAC members, including those brought on mid-term.

Appendix

Appendix A – VAC member survey

Under the direction of the Hamilton City Council, the City's Government Relations and Community Engagement Division is currently leading a review of Volunteer Advisory Committees to provide recommendations around engagement to fulfill the priorities of the 2022-2026 Term of Council.

As part of this review, the Government Relations and Community Engagement Division has engaged the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (SPRC) to collect feedback from key community partners. The SPRC is an independent, non-profit organization that conducts program evaluations and community-based research.

This survey collects information about members' experiences on Volunteer Advisory Committees as aligned with the scope of the Volunteer Advisory Committee Review. The survey has 27 questions and takes approximately 10 minutes to complete. It will ask you to reflect on your experience in four areas:

(1) The application, selection, and appointment process
(2) The mandate and roles of your Volunteer Advisory Committee
(3) Member training and materials, and
(4) How effective the Volunteer Advisory Committee is at achieving its mandate

The survey does not ask for any identifying information and the answers provided will be anonymous. Questions can be skipped if you don't have the information or are uncomfortable providing an answer. Information shared through the survey will be reported to the City's Government Relations and Community Engagement Division.

Thank you for your participation. Your feedback is important and will help inform City staff recommendations to Council. If you have any questions or concerns about this survey, please contact SPRC Social Planners, Jen Matthews (jmatthews@sprchamilton.ca) or Alana Westervelt (awestervelt@sprchamilton.ca). To learn more about SPRC, visit sprchamilton.ca.

By clicking next to enter this survey, I indicate that I have read the information provided and agree to participate in the survey.

Application, Selection & Appointment Process

Based on your personal experience with the City of Hamilton's Volunteer Advisory Committees, please respond to the following statements:

1. The application, selection, and appointment process for Volunteer Advisory Committees is fair and equitable.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

2. The application, selection, and appointment process for Volunteer Advisory Committees is clear and transparent.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. The application, selection, and appointment process for Volunteer Advisory Committees reflects the values of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. The application, selection, and appointment process for Volunteer Advisory Committees encourages a diversity of perspectives and qualifications among committee membership.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. Please share any other feedback or examples you have about the Volunteer Advisory Committee application, selection and appointment process.

Mandate & Role

Based on your personal experience with the City of Hamilton's Volunteer Advisory Committees, please respond to the following statements:

6. I understand the purpose of Volunteer Advisory Committees.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

7. My understanding of the purpose and mandate of Volunteer Advisory Committees aligns with that of council and staff liaisons.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. I understand the role and responsibilities of Volunteer Advisory Committee members.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. My understanding of the role and responsibilities of Volunteer Advisory Committee members aligns with that of council and staff liaisons.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

10. The terms of reference for the Volunteer Advisory Committee(s) that I am a member of clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of members, staff liaisons, and council.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

11. I understand how Volunteer Advisory Committees fit within the municipal governance structure.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

12. Please share any other feedback or examples you have about the Volunteer Advisory Committees mandate and role.

Member Training & Materials

Based on your personal experience with the City of Hamilton's Volunteer Advisory Committees, please respond to the following statements:

13. I was provided adequate training to fulfill the responsibilities of a Volunteer Advisory Committee member.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

14. Further training in these areas would benefit me as a Volunteer Advisory Committee member (please select all that apply):

Council structure/procedure

Volunteer Advisory Committee scope and responsibilities

Volunteer Advisory Committee meeting procedure and decision making

Using meeting technology

Other (please specify)

No further training

15. I am provided the information needed to fully participate in Volunteer Advisory Committee meetings in a timely and efficient manner.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

16. I understand the Volunteer Advisory Committee structure and the process to provide feedback to council.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

17. I have access to the equipment and resources needed to fulfill my role on a Volunteer Advisory Committee.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

18. I understand the decision-making process and how my voice can be heard within a Volunteer Advisory Committee.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

19. Please share any other feedback or examples you have about the Volunteer Advisory Committee member training and meeting materials.

Effectiveness in Fulfilling Mandate

Based on your personal experience with the City of Hamilton's Volunteer Advisory Committees, please respond to the following statements:

20. The Volunteer Advisory Committee(s) I am a member of operates effectively to fulfill its mandate.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

21. The staff liaison(s) effectively supports the work of the Volunteer Advisory Committee(s).

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

22. I am made aware of council decisions and staff reports that relate to the mandate of the Volunteer Advisory Committee(s) I am a member of.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

23. My contributions through the Volunteer Advisory Committee(s) make a meaningful impact on the City of Hamilton.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

24. Volunteer Advisory Committees are a place where change, impact, and/or influence can happen.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

25. Please share any other feedback or examples you have about the effectiveness of Volunteer Advisory Committees in fulfilling their mandates.

Opportunities

26. Based on your experience as a Volunteer Advisory Committee member, what do you see as the biggest opportunity for Volunteer Advisory Committees in the City of Hamilton?

27. Please use the space below to share anything else about your experience as a Volunteer Advisory Committee member that has not already been included.

Appendix B: Staff liaison survey

Volunteer Advisory Committee Review - Staff Liaison Survey

Under the direction of the Hamilton City Council, the City's Government Relations and Community Engagement Division is currently leading a review of Volunteer Advisory Committees to provide recommendations around engagement to fulfill the priorities of the 2022-2026 Term of Council.

As part of this review, the Government Relations and Community Engagement Division has engaged the Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (SPRC) to collect feedback from key community partners. The SPRC is an independent, non-profit organization that conducts program evaluations and community-based research.

This survey collects information about Staff Liaisons' experiences on Volunteer Advisory Committees as aligned with the scope of the Volunteer Advisory Committee Review. The survey has 31 questions and takes approximately 10 minutes to complete. It will ask you to reflect on your experience in four areas:

(1) The application, selection, and appointment process
(2) The mandate and roles of your Volunteer Advisory Committee
(3) Member training and materials, and
(4) How effective the Volunteer Advisory Committee is at achieving its mandate

Questions can be skipped if you don't have the information or are uncomfortable providing an answer. Information shared through the survey will be anonymized and reported to the City's Government Relations and Community Engagement Division.

Thank you for your participation. Your feedback is important and will help inform City staff recommendations to Council. If you have any questions or concerns about this survey, please contact SPRC Social Planner, Jen Matthews (jmatthews@sprchamilton.ca). To learn more about SPRC, visit sprchamilton.ca.

By clicking next to enter this survey, I indicate that I have read the information provided and agree to participate in the survey.

1. What Volunteer Advisory Committee(s) are you currently the Staff Liaison for?

Advisory Committee for Immigrants and Refugees

Arts Advisory Committee

Committee Against Racism

Food Advisory Committee

Hamilton Cycling Committee

Hamilton Indigenous Advisory Committee

Hamilton Veterans Advisory Committee

Hamilton Women and Gender Equity Committee

Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee

Keeping Hamilton Green and Clean Committee

LGTBQ Advisory Committee

Mundialization Committee

Seniors Advisory Committee

Application, Selection & Appointment Process

Based on your personal experience as a City of Hamilton Volunteer Advisory Committee (VAC) Staff Liaison, please respond to the following statements:

2. The application, selection, and appointment process for Volunteer Advisory Committees is fair and equitable.

Strongly Agree Agree Unknown Disagree Strongly Disagree

3. The application, selection, and appointment process for Volunteer Advisory Committees is clear and transparent.

Strongly Agree Agree Unknown Disagree Strongly Disagree

4. The application, selection, and appointment process for Volunteer Advisory Committees reflects the values of equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.

Strongly Agree Agree Unknown Disagree Strongly Disagree

5. The application, selection, and appointment process for Volunteer Advisory Committees encourages a diversity of perspectives and qualifications among committee membership.

Strongly Agree Agree Unknown Disagree Strongly Disagree

6. Please share any other feedback or examples you have about the Volunteer Advisory Committee application, selection and appointment process.

Mandate & Role

Based on your personal experience as a City of Hamilton Volunteer Advisory Committee (VAC) Staff Liaison, please respond to the following statements:

7. I understand the purpose of Volunteer Advisory Committees.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

8. My understanding of the purpose and mandate of Volunteer Advisory Committees aligns with that of council and Volunteer Advisory Committee members.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

9. I understand the role and responsibilities of the Staff Liaison role.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

10. My understanding of the scope and responsibilities of the Staff Liaison role aligns with that of council and Volunteer Advisory Committee members.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

11. The terms of reference for the Volunteer Advisory Committee(s) that I am a Staff Liaison for clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of members, staff liaisons, and council.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

12. I understand how Volunteer Advisory Committees fit within the municipal governance structure.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

13. Please share any other feedback or examples you have about the Volunteer Advisory Committees mandate and role.

Member Training & Materials

Based on your personal experience as a City of Hamilton Volunteer Advisory Committee (VAC) Staff Liaison, please respond to the following statements:

14. I was provided adequate training to fulfill the responsibilities of a Staff Liaison.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

15. Volunteer Advisory Committee members receive adequate training to fulfill their role.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

16. In what areas do you feel Volunteer Advisory Committee members require additional training (please select all that apply):

Council structure/procedure

Volunteer Advisory Committee scope and responsibilities

Volunteer Advisory Committee meeting procedure and decision making

Using meeting technology

Other (please specify)

No further training

17. Volunteer Advisory Committee members are provided the information needed to fully participate in VAC meetings in a timely and efficient manner.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

18. I understand the Volunteer Advisory Committee structure and the processes by which Volunteer Advisory Committee Members can provide feedback to council.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

19. I have access to the equipment and resources needed to fulfill my role as a Staff Liaison.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

20. Please share any other feedback or examples you have about the Volunteer Advisory Committee member training and meeting materials.

Effectiveness in Fulfilling Mandate

Based on your personal experience as a City of Hamilton Volunteer Advisory Committee (VAC) Staff Liaison, please respond to the following statements:

21. The Volunteer Advisory Committee(s) I am a Staff Liaison for operates effectively to fulfill its mandate.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

22. As a Staff Liaison, I am able to effectively support the work of Volunteer Advisory Committees to fulfill their mandate.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

23. Volunteer Advisory Committee members are informed of the council decisions and staff reports related to the mandate of their committee

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

24. Volunteer Advisory Committee(s) make a meaningful impact on the City of Hamilton.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

25. Volunteer Advisory Committees are a place where change, impact, and/or influence can happen.

Strongly Agree Agree Disagree Strongly Disagree

26. Volunteer Advisory Committee members have adequate opportunities to provide feedback about their involvement in a Volunteer Advisory Committee.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree

27. Please share any other feedback or examples you have about the effectiveness of Volunteer Advisory Committees in fulfilling their mandates.

Opportunities

28. Based on your experience as a Staff Liaison, what do you see as the biggest opportunity for Volunteer Advisory Committees in the City of Hamilton?

29. Based on your experience as a Staff Liaison, what do you see as the biggest challenge(s) for Volunteer Advisory Committees in the City of Hamilton?

30. Are there changes needed to overcome these challenges? If so, in your opinion, what changes need to be made?

31. Please use the space below to share anything else about Volunteer Advisory Committees that has not already been included.

Appendix C: VAC focus group questions

1. From your perspective, what has been working well with respect to Volunteer Advisory Committees?

   Prompt: Members who filled out the survey shared a number of things that they feel have been working well – are there any key highlights from your experience that you would like to share?

2. From your perspective, what are the unmet needs resulting from how Volunteer Advisory Committees are currently or were operating before being put on hold?

   Prompt: In the survey, volunteer advisory committee members noted some significant challenges that their committees faced, does anyone here tonight have any general challenges or specific examples that they would like to highlight?

3. In an ideal world, what role would Volunteer Advisory Committees play in the City of Hamilton?

4. What, if any, changes would be necessary for Volunteer Advisory Committees to better fulfill this role?

   Prompt: Would changes need to be made to VAC's current structure or processes? What would be the relationship between VACs and council? What role would Staff Liaisons play? What supports would VAC members need to carry out this role?

Appendix D: Council member interview questions

1. From your perspective, what has been working well with respect to Volunteer Advisory Committees?

2. From your perspective, what are the unmet needs resulting from the current Volunteer Advisory Committee structure and process?

3. In an ideal world, what role would Volunteer Advisory Committees play in the City of Hamilton?

4. What, if any, changes would be necessary for Volunteer Advisory Committees to better fulfill this role?

   Prompt: Are there any structural changes to volunteer advisory committees needed to better fulfill this role?

Appendix E: Thematic analysis codes

1) Benefits
2) Challenges
3) Scope/mandate
    - Collaboration with other VACs
    - Alignment with current council priorities
    - Alignment with community need
    - Engaging broader community
4) Councillor Involvement
    - Councillor meeting attendance
    - Council participation at meeting
5) Logistics
6) Measuring success
7) Application process
    - Advertising
    - Selection/decision-making process
8) Staff
    - Process expertise
    - Content expertise
    - Clerk
    - Staff Involvement
    - Turnover
9) Training
    - Staff liaison training
    - Other training
    - Co-chair specific training
    - VAC member training
10) VAC effectiveness
    - Timelines
    - Impact
    - Clarity
    - Transparency
    - VAC culture
11) VAC membership
    - Quorum
    - Community expertise
    - Alternate agenda
    - Representation/diversity
12) VAC process/structure
    - Continuity of work
    - Consultation process/proactive consultation
    - Accessibility
    - Communication with council
    - Structured process (rigidity/bureaucracy)
13) VAC review process

Appendix F: Community scan of advisory tables consulted by the City

(Added June 2024)

As outlined in the Introduction to the broader VAC Review Engagement Report, SPRC was asked to work with the City to generate and analyze a list of the community tables actively consulted by the City as a component of the VAC Review. Appendix F and G fulfill this component of the review.

a. Methodology

SPRC's research team developed a list of survey questions to be circulated among City staff in various departments to identify the tables, groups, and organizations the City consults with in addition to VACs. The questions were reviewed by the City Project Manager and subsequently sent to City staff in a survey distributed by the Government Relations and Community Engagement Office. The survey featured three questions:

1) What City department/division do you work in?
2) Do you seek input from any external community groups, collaboratives, or organizations to inform your work?
3) If so, what community groups, collaboratives, or organizations do you regularly consult with for input? Please list all.

The City Project Manager compiled and alphabetized the responses from City staff and sent the list of responses to SPRC for analysis. SPRC's research team reviewed the provided list, identifying and organizing the entries into the following categories (see Appendix G):

1) Current VAC/Sub-committee
2) City-led/coordinated advisory tables, groups, and other City advisory bodies
3) Community-based/led tables, collaboratives, and other initiatives consulted by the City
4) Single entities (e.g. non-profit organizations, neighbourhood associations, community groups, and corporations) consulted by the City
5) City Strategies and Plans

The re-organized list was subsequently sent to the City to review for accuracy.

The research team conducted a broad-based analysis of the entries, providing general considerations around the role of VACs and consultations with other community groups. This analysis is provided below.

b. Limitations

The timelines for this component of the VAC Review were significantly affected by the cybersecurity incident that has impacted the City's IT systems since February 2024, as well as shifts in departmental capacity within the Government Relations and Community Engagement Division at the City. As a result, the scope and outcomes for this component of the project were amended to accommodate a much larger data-collection timeframe than initially anticipated.

c. Analysis

The list generated through the survey sent to City staff identifies over 200 different tables, community groups, and organizations that staff consult. Of these, roughly

- 8% are VACs or Council sub-committees
- 18% are City-led/coordinated advisory tables, groups, and other City advisory bodies
- 11% are Community-based/led tables, collaboratives, and other initiatives consulted by the City
- 45% are Single entities (e.g. non-profit organizations, neighbourhood associations, community groups, and corporations) consulted by the City
- 3% are City Strategies or Plans
- 15% were unable to be categorized

It is important to note that other community tables and collaboratives exist in the city that were not captured in the list generated by City staff. These groups may provide further opportunities for engagement.

Frequent opportunities for engagement are important to ensure City work plans and strategies are informed by community level expertise. As demonstrated in the list generated by City staff, the City currently undertakes many forms of engagement and consultation with various community bodies. While information related to the extent to which these bodies are consulted was not collected, the input provided from these consultations undoubtedly provides the City with important insights related to City plans, policies, and priorities.

Below are important general considerations when exploring the role of VACs and other consultations undertaken by City staff. This analysis is based on SPRC's experience and knowledge due to the limitations described above. Future analysis could further expand on the roles, opportunities, and mechanisms by which community groups, listed or otherwise, can provide input to the City.

- **The makeup of VACs and community tables often differ:** Community members/individual constituents make up a large part of VAC membership, whereas many community tables are made up of organizational representatives. Each offers different perspectives, including on the implementation of City plans and council priorities.

- **VACs often have a different relationship with council compared to community tables:** VACs provide a direct link to council, whereas it is frequent practice for tables/organizations to rely on City staff to bring forward information raised in their engagements, creating an intermediary relationship with council.

- **There are transparent parameters for how the City engages VACs:** There are transparent processes for how VACs should be engaged and consulted by the City. These parameters are available to the public through VAC Terms of Reference, public VAC meetings, agendas, and minutes. Although incredibly important, the City's process for engaging and consulting with community bodies may not have the same degree of transparency for the general public, specifically pertaining to who gets consulted, when, and how frequently, as well as the role and impact of these consultations.

- **VACs provide space for ground-up ideas from community:** Based on their guiding documents, VACs offer space for generative and iterative ideas to be identified and brought forward by participants, in addition to providing engagement on City plans and other strategic areas identified by the City. Other community engagement methods used by the City, for example, Engage Hamilton, offer community members the opportunity to provide feedback on specified projects and initiatives.

- VACs have resources that support their operations including secure funding and support staff. Many community tables have ad-hoc funding that is often less dependable and may change with shifting funder priorities.

Conclusion

In summary, VACs and community tables provide different, but equally important, engagement opportunities on City priorities, strategies, and workplans given their differences in composition, accountability mechanisms, and transparency in how they are engaged by the City. It is suggested that attention is paid to these nuances in enhancing and implementing City engagement strategies.

Appendix G: List of tables and organizations consulted by the City

(Added June 2024)

Please note that italicized entries are the organizations/tables presumed to be referenced and have been categorized on this basis.

Volunteer Advisory Committees and Council Sub-Committees

1. Accessibility Committee for Persons with Disabilities (ACPD)
2. Agricultural and Rural Affairs committee
3. Clean and Green Committee *(Keep Hamilton Clean and Green Committee)*
4. Climate Change Advisory Committee
5. Committee for Immigrants and Refugees (*Advisory Committee for Immigrants and Refugees)*
6. Cross-Melville Heritage Conservation District Advisory Committee *(Cross-Melville District Heritage Committee)*
7. Development Charges Stakeholder Sub-Committee
8. Development Industry Liaison Group (DILG)
9. Glanbrook Landfill Coordinating Committee
10. Hamilton Cycling Advisory Committee *(Hamilton Cycling Committee)*
11. Hamilton Municipal Heritage Committee
12. Hamilton Veterans Committee
13. Hamilton Women and Gender Equity Advisory Committee *(Women and Gender Equity Committee)*
14. Heritage Permit Review Subcommittee
15. Indigenous Advisory Committee
16. LRT Sub-committee
17. LGBTQ Advisory Committee
18. Open for Business Sub-committee
19. Seniors Advisory Group committee *(Seniors Advisory Committee)*

City-led/coordinated advisory tables, groups, and other City advisory bodies

20. Early on Equity and Engagement Advisory Group
21. Adopt A Park Working Groups
22. Age Friendly Hamilton Collaborative Committee
23. Age-Friendly Governance Committee
24. Bayfront Industrial Area Strategy Steering Committee
25. City Housing Hamilton
26. CityLAB (CoH)
27. CityLab Steering Committee
28. Clr. Beattie's student council
29. Club 60 Senior's Club Board
30. Community Partnership Action Table (CPAT)
31. Daily School Routes (*Active and Sustainable School Travel)*
32. Early Years CMSM Advisory
33. Early Years HR Workforce Committee

34. EarlyON Operational Committee
35. EarlyOn, Veteran's Committee
36. Extreme Heat Working Group
37. Fair Wage Ad-Hoc Committee
38. Hamilton Bee City
39. Hamilton Breastfeeding Coalition
40. Hamilton Drug Prevention *(Hamilton Drug Prevention Steering Committee*)
41. Hamilton Early Years Research Network *(Hamilton Early Years Research & Evaluation Network)*
42. Hamilton Food Literacy Network
43. Hamilton Future Fund Board of Governors
44. Hamilton Healthy and Safe Communities Joint Boards of Education Leadership Committee
45. Hamilton Music Advisory Team
46. Hamilton Opiate Action Table
47. Hamilton Prenatal Nutrition Program
48. Hamilton Trillium Awards Committee
49. Hamilton Ukrainian Crisis Response *(Hamilton Ukrainian Crisis Response Working Group Team and Working Groups)*
50. Hamilton's Child and Youth Network
51. HamOnt Youth Steering Committee
52. Housing Focused Outreach
53. HPHS/School board collaboration meetings
54. Infant and Early Years Mental Health Committee
55. Internal Youth Steering Committee
56. Mobility Lab
57. Perinatal Mental Health Workgroup
58. Salam Hamilton Planning Group
59. Smoking Cessation Community of Practice
60. Woodward Avenue Wastewater Treatment Plant Upgrade & Expansion Project Community Liaison Committee
61. Youth Serving Advisory Network (YSAN)
62. Youth Steering Committee (City of Hamilton)
63. Youth Strategy Working Group

Community-based/led tables, collaboratives, and other initiatives consulted by the City

64. Basic Income Hamilton
65. Bay Area Climate Change Council
66. Canadian Wildlife Health Cooperative
67. Circle of Beads (COB)
68. Coalition of Hamilton Indigenous Leadership
69. Community Data Program Data Working Group
70. Community Transitions Network (CTN)
71. Dust and Particulate Matter Working Group
72. Embolden Advisory Group (McMaster)

73. FASD Network
74. GHHN Partnership Council
75. Hamilton Coalition for Refugee Claimants
76. Hamilton Committee for the Collaborative Management of Youth Suicide
77. Hamilton Community Benefits Network
78. Hamilton Community Cat Network
79. Hamilton Employment Resource Network
80. Hamilton For All
81. Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council (HIPC)
82. Hamilton is Home Coalition (HiHC)
83. Hamilton Transit Oriented Affordable Housing Lab
84. McMaster Institute for Research on Aging (MIRA) Community Stakeholder Committee
85. No Hate in the Hammer
86. SCORE! Advisory Team
87. Seniors at Risk Community Collaborative (SaRCC)
88. Street Youth Planning Collaborative
89. Tastebuds Student Nutrition Program Steering Committee
90. Women's Shelter System *(Women's Housing Planning Collaborative)*

Single entities (e.g. non-profit organizations, neighbourhood associations, community groups, and corporations) consulted by the City

91. Aboriginal Health Centre
92. Afro Canadian Caribbean Association
93. Ainslie Wood Community Association (AWCA)
94. Air, Army, Navy Cadets
95. Ancaster Achievement Senior's Club *(Ancaster Achievement Senior's Centre)*
96. Ancaster Horticulture Society
97. Architectural Conservancy of Ontario, Hamilton Branch
98. Architectural Conservatory of Ontario
99. Argyll and Sutherland Highland Light Infantry
100. Bay Area Research Logistics
101. Bay Area Restoration Council
102. Beasley Neighborhood Association
103. Blk Owned
104. Bruce Trail Conservancy
105. Business Improvement Area Groups (BIAs)
106. Canadian Council for the Blind
107. Canadian National Institute for the Blind
108. Centre for Civic Inclusion YWCA
109. Chamber of Commerce
110. Citizens at City Hall (CATCH)
111. Clean Air Hamilton
112. Columbia International College
113. Compass Community Health

114. Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System Alliance
115. Cycle Hamilton
116. Dundas Community Services - Seniors Supports
117. Dundas Senior's Club Board
118. Dundas Turtle Watch
119. Durand Neighborhood Assoc.
120. Empowerment Squared
121. Environment Hamilton
122. Everyone Rides Initiative
123. Flamborough Chamber of Commerce
124. Flamborough Senior's Board
125. Friends of Auchmar
126. Golden Horseshoe Live Steamers
127. Good Shepherd
128. Greater Hamilton Health Network
129. Green Communities Canada
130. Green Venture
131. Hamilton Arts Council
132. Hamilton Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN)
133. Hamilton Bike Share
134. Hamilton Burlington SPCA
135. Hamilton Centre for Civic Inclusion
136. Hamilton Chamber of Commerce
137. Hamilton Council on Aging (HCOA)
138. Hamilton Gardening Network *(Hamilton Community Garden Network)*
139. Hamilton Health Sciences
140. Hamilton Ladies of Film and Television
141. Hamilton Naturalist Club
142. Hamilton Oshawa Port Authority
143. Hamilton Poverty Roundtable *(Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction)*
144. Hamilton Regional Indian Centre
145. Hamilton Seniors Centres
146. Hamilton Urban Core
147. Hamilton Wentworth Heritage Association
148. Hamilton-Burlington Society of Architects (HBSA)
149. Historical Societies
150. Hospital to Homes
151. HWCDSB Operators/Operations Committee
152. Industry Education Council
153. Indwell
154. Innovation Factory
155. Jewish Community Centre
156. Kirkendall Neighbourhood *(Kirkendall Neighbourhood Association)*
157. Lights, Camera, Hamilton

158. McMaster Innovation Park
159. McMaster University
160. Mission Services
161. Mohawk College
162. Mohawk College Challenge 2025 Employment Action Group
163. Municipal Finance Officers Association (MFOA)
164. Neighbour 2 Neighbour
165. Neighbourhood Associations
166. New Hope Community Bikes
167. North End Neighbours
168. Older Adults Centre's Association of Ontario (OACAO)
169. Public Sector Accounting Board (PSAB)
170. Realtors Association of Hamilton-Burlington (RAHB)
171. Redeemer University
172. Regional Heritage Organizations
173. Rosedale Senior's Club Board
174. Royal Botanical Gardens
175. Royal Botanical Gardens (RBG) Working Groups
176. Royal Canadian Legion Branches
177. Royal Hamilton Light Infantry
178. Sackville Senior's Board
179. Salvation Army
180. School Boards
181. School Parent Councils
182. Social Navigation
183. Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton (SPRC)
184. Sports Teams
185. St. Joseph's Healthcare
186. Stoney Creek Chamber of Commerce
187. Sustainability Leadership/Sustainable Hamilton Burlington
188. Synapse Life Science Consortium
189. The Children's Garden Project
190. The Hamilton Hub
191. Twenty Place Resident Committee
192. Warden Senior's Club Board
193. West End Home Builders Association (WEHBA)
194. West Harbour Waterfront Recreational Boating Clubs
195. Winona Senior's Club Board
196. Workforce Planning Hamilton
197. YMCA

City Strategies or Plans

198. Biodiversity Action Plan
199. Digital Access Strategy

200. Hamilton Remedial Action Plan (*Hamilton Harbour Remedial Action Plan)*
201. Hamilton's Age and Dementia Friendly Plan (*Hamilton's Plan for an Age-Friendly Community)*
202. Hamilton's Urban Indigenous Strategy
203. Hamilton's Youth Strategy

Unknown Categorization

204. Accessible Taxi Committee
205. Bennetto/St. Lawrence Community Collaborative
206. Coordinated Service Planning Leadership Table
207. Cootes to Escarpment Management Committee and Stewardship Subcommittee
208. Discovery Centre Project Working Group
209. Downtown West Harbour Committee (*West Harbour Development Sub committee)*
210. Dundurn Gardeners
211. Fieldcote Expansion Committee
212. Golden Horseshoe Aquatic Municipal Group
213. Griffin House Black Heritage Committee
214. Halton and Hamilton Conservation Working Groups
215. Hamilton Disability Employment Network (HDEN)
216. Hamilton Inclusive Professionals Network *(City of Hamilton Inclusive Professionals)*
217. International Day of Older Persons
218. Invasive Species quasi formal
219. Lifesaving Society Area Chair Committee
220. Local Housing Providers Community of Practice
221. McMaster University, Age-Friendly University Collaborative
222. Open Data Champions
223. Professional Learning Committees
224. Public Health Services and Joint Boards of Education Steering Committee
225. Quality Operations Committee
226. School Safety Zone Working Group (regional)
227. Skills Development Flagship
228. Special Needs Resourcing Committee
229. Summer Student Recruitment Committee
230. Traditional Ecological Knowledge Committee
231. Volunteer Park Beautification Groups
232. Waterfront Industrial Heritage Committee
233. Wellness Connect Mohawk College Table
234. West End Women's Network
235. Woodward Ave Community Liaison Committee
236. Young Parent Collaborative Table
237. YWCA Older Women and Homelessness