



December 2, 2025

From: **West End Home Builders' Association**  
1112 Rymal Road East  
Hamilton, Ontario L8W 3N7

To: **Members of General Issues Committee**  
City of Hamilton  
71 Main Street West L8P 1P9

## **Hamilton's Ten-Year Downtown Revitalization Strategy**

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The West End Home Builders' Association ("WE HBA") is the voice of the land development, new housing and professional renovation industries in Hamilton, Burlington, and Grimsby. WE HBA represents 300 member companies made up of all disciplines involved in land development and residential construction. In the Hamilton CMA in 2024, residential construction contributed over \$4.6 billion in investment value and provided over 21,000 jobs paying about \$1.6 billion in wages<sup>1</sup>. These jobs and investments are now at serious risk as the residential construction industry across the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTAH) experiences one of the sharpest downturns in decades.

WE HBA members have invested tremendously in Hamilton's downtown core, literally building this city and envisioning—and believing in—a prosperous future. Our members employ thousands of Hamiltonians in the downtown core. We are partners in prosperity and by the very risk-based nature of our industry, our members are heavily leveraged and invested in downtown revitalization. WE HBA therefore appreciates the City's honest acknowledgement that the post-COVID downtown is struggling. This clarity is essential, and the recommendations outlined in the strategy, if implemented effectively, have the potential to restore the momentum our downtown once enjoyed and help us move closer to the shared vision of a vibrant, prosperous, and people-focused core.

While public safety concerns and perceptions of safety must be addressed, we believe the most effective long-term solution is a thriving and well-populated downtown. Encouraging new residential development will bring more activity, vibrancy, and the "eyes on the street" that Jane Jacobs famously described as critical to building a safe, welcoming urban environment. A prosperous, safe, and secure downtown environment is in part predicated on bringing more people and residents into the core.

To ensure the strategy's success, continued commitment to key investment-enabling programs is vital. The City's Community Improvement Project Areas (CIPA) program, particularly development charge (DC) discounts, remains critical to the financial viability of new residential projects in the downtown. WE HBA would contend that in the current economic environment, the existing CIPA DC discounts are not enough to stimulate investment and that the City should consider temporarily expanding (beyond the 20% implemented in September). The math does not currently work for new residential investment. Likewise, the ERASE program continues to play a significant role in supporting brownfield redevelopment and unlocking underused sites. These types of targeted incentive programs are and will continue to be essential to attracting private capital and stimulating the level of development envisioned in the revitalization strategy.

We all acknowledge that a strong downtown is fundamental to the economic and social health of the entire city. To truly revitalize the core, we must work together to create the conditions needed for sustained private-sector investment. Our members are ready to do their part to build the downtown;

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<sup>1</sup> CHBA Economic Impacts 2024 Fact Sheet, Hamilton CMA.



however, in current market conditions, it is financially unfeasible to deliver new housing, especially medium-to-high density housing in the downtown without incentives nor without broader improvements to the planning process. When incentives are in place, they generate strong returns for the City. For example, an empty lot today may contribute \$20,000 in annual property taxes, whereas a post development high-density residential site could contribute upwards of \$2 million annually. Incentives and discounted development charges are profitable public investments that increase tax revenue, intensify the downtown, and strengthen the local economy. These incentives help to secure a more prosperous future for our downtown and pay financial dividends over time back to the city.

WE HBA is strongly supportive of the LRT and other major critical housing enabling infrastructure projects to support downtown revitalization. We will continue to work in partnership with our provincial and national associations to advocate for provincial and federal investment in large scale critical infrastructure projects including transit, water, wastewater, and energy. It is important that despite current tough economic conditions and concerns with the health of our downtown, that the city core be “investment ready” to private sector capital.

The Draft Strategy (Appendix A PED24163d) notes that “A streamlined, transparent, and flexible development framework can unlock private investment and accelerate transformation”. WE HBA strongly supports language in the draft strategy that a positive development environment includes “the policies, approvals, incentives, and partnerships that shape what gets built and how.” WE HBA strongly encourages the City of Hamilton to take stock of both the current state of downtown and the current economic environment and to act with sense of urgency to reduce risk and uncertainty, that will help to attract the kind of long-term, quality investment that strengthens Downtown’s foundation for generations. Our West End Home Builders’ Association members are the City’s local partners for prosperity that want to work with the City to unlock the true potential of our downtown.

With the right tools in place, we can bring more jobs downtown, attract new restaurants and entertainment, and, most importantly, enable more people to live in the core, whether through ownership or rental housing.

WE HBA and our members stand ready to work alongside the City to help build a downtown that is vibrant, resilient, and full of opportunity. With the right policy environment, we can collectively deliver the new homes, jobs, and amenities that will define Hamilton’s future.

Sincerely,

**Mike Collins-Williams, MCIP, RPP**  
Chief Executive Officer  
West End Home Builders’ Association