DOWNTOWN SAFETY SUMMIT REPORT

June 1, 2026 Report
on Findings from
May 19, 2026 Summit

Hamilton Police Service Downtown Safety Summit Report: June 1, 2026 Report on Findings from May 19, 2026 Summit

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Acknowledgements

The Hamilton Police Service extends its deepest gratitude to the participants of the Downtown Safety Summit. While compiled by HPS, the findings in this report are a direct reflection of their active participation and shared commitment to actionable change. This report represents a collective effort to build a safer, stronger, and more vibrant downtown Hamilton for everyone who lives, works, and visits here.

The Downtown Safety Summit was made possible by the many people working behind the scenes. We extend sincere thanks to the table facilitators and scribes who kept conversations focused, inclusive, and productive; the graphics team who shaped the look and feel of the day; the IT support team who kept the technology running seamlessly; the analytics team who supported insights; and the support staff whose coordination and planning made everything else possible.

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HAMILTON POLICE SERVICE
DOWNTOWN SAFETY SUMMIT

Downtown Hamilton is an important part of the city's civic, economic, social, and cultural life. It is home to residents, businesses, schools, services, public spaces, and major community events, and it is used every day by people from across Hamilton and the region. Supporting safety in the downtown is a responsibility that the Hamilton Police Service takes seriously. At the same time, the issues affecting safety and well-being are complex, and meaningful progress requires coordinated action with community organizations, businesses, social services, educators, health care providers, municipal partners, and all levels of government.

With that shared commitment in mind, on **May 19, 2026**, the Hamilton Police Service hosted a **Downtown Safety Summit** with representatives from sectors that live, work, serve, study, invest, and operate downtown. Participants took part in a half-day working session focused on identifying actions that could support a safer, more vibrant, and more welcoming downtown. The goal of the summit was to hear directly from community partners, better understand the issues they are seeing, and identify a shared focus area for collective action.

The summit was intentionally designed to be participant-driven. The Hamilton Police Service convened the session, provided some opening context and crime data, and created space for participants to speak openly about their priorities, concerns, and ideas. The discussion recognized that police have an important and active role in downtown safety, while also acknowledging that many of the challenges involve broader issues, including health, housing, addictions, space, business confidence, youth supports, and community wellbeing.

For that reason, the session focused on identifying a common priority that could help align the efforts of multiple sectors toward a shared goal. The intent was not only to discuss the challenges facing downtown, but to begin translating those discussions into some practical actions, clearer roles, and stronger coordination among the organizations working to support a safe and thriving downtown Hamilton.

The Summit at a Glance

The Downtown Safety Summit brought together a broad cross-section of downtown partners, including representatives from social services, healthcare, education, business, property management, financial institutions, municipal government, elected offices, community organizations, and the Hamilton Police Service. A table of participating organizations is presented on the following page.

Participants were seated at sector-based discussion tables, allowing groups with similar roles and experiences to speak directly to the issues they were seeing while contributing to a broader cross-sector conversation. Each table was supported by a facilitator and scribe.

Participating Organizations	
Canada Revenue Agency	Markland Property Management
CIBC	Mayor's Office
Catholic Children's Aid Society	McMaster University
Hamilton Chamber of Commerce	Metrolinx
Mission Services	Munar Learning Centre
Denninger's	Refuge: Newcomer Health
Downtown BIA	Regional Supervising Coroner
Effort Trust	Ontario Disability Support Program
Gowlings WLG	Ontario Probation and Parole
Good Shepherd	RBC
Hamilton Anti-Racism Resource Centre	Salvation Army
Hamilton Centre for Civil Inclusion	Scotiabank
Hamilton Child and Family Supports	Sheraton Hamilton Hotel
Hamilton Community Foundation	St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton
Hamilton Health Sciences	St. Matthew's House
Hamilton Police Services Board	The City of Hamilton
Hamilton Public Library	The Hub
Hamilton-Wentworth Catholic District School Board	G W Thompson Jeweller and Pawnbroker
Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board	TD Bank
Hamilton Urban Precinct Entertainment Group	LIUNA
International Village BIA	Ward 2 City Councillor
Jackson Square	Ward 2 HWDSB Trustee
Jackson Square – Loggix Security	Wesley Urban Ministries
John Howard Society	TD Coliseum
KPMG	YWCA
Lawrie Insurance	YMCA

The day began with a land acknowledgement and opening remarks from Hamilton Police Service Chief Frank Bergen. Superintendent Will Mason then outlined the purpose of the summit, its structure, and the expectations for respectful dialogue, collaboration, and accountability. Participants were encouraged to speak openly about what they were seeing downtown, what was working, what barriers remained, and what actions could be taken collectively.

Following the opening remarks, Dr. Daniel Mosannef and Dr. Samantha Henderson from the Hamilton Police Service's Crime Information Analysis Unit provided a downtown safety and

crime data presentation. The presentation was intended to provide a shared starting point for the conversations that followed, using the best data available to the Service. It recognized that crime data is important, but that it is not the whole story. While the data can show what has been reported, where incidents occur, and how patterns change over time, it cannot fully capture how people experience downtown day to day or how safe they feel walking down the street, waiting for transit, operating a business, accessing services, or using public spaces. The presentation therefore used crime data as one source of insight, while emphasizing that community experience is essential to understanding what the numbers mean.

Participants then moved into facilitated breakout discussions. The discussion questions were tailored to each sector, allowing groups to focus on issues most relevant to their experience and expertise while still working through a common structure. Across the tables, participants were asked to describe their vision for downtown, identify what is currently working well, discuss where their sector is having the greatest impact, name barriers or system pressures affecting downtown safety, and identify shared priorities for the next 6 to 12 months.

The sector-specific questions allowed each table to bring forward a distinct perspective. Community organizations and social service providers were asked to consider service gaps, access barriers, system pressures, and what a more coordinated downtown service response could look like. Business and BIA participants were asked to discuss what practices or partnerships help staff, customers, and property owners feel supported, as well as what actions businesses and other sectors could take together to improve safety and reduce violence in the core. Government and municipal partners were asked to identify examples of coordinated action, policy support, service alignment, and the policy, funding, or structural changes needed to support longer-term progress. School board participants were asked to consider how students, staff, and families are affected by downtown safety concerns, and what joint actions schools, the board, and law enforcement could take to strengthen prevention and intervention for youth.

This approach helped ensure that the summit captured different perspectives from across the downtown while still building toward a shared understanding of common challenges, opportunities, and priorities for action.

During the breakout discussions, Sgt. Jim Clayton and Dr. Samantha Henderson reviewed scribe notes in real time to identify recurring themes across the tables. This allowed the summit to move from individual table discussions toward a broader understanding of the issues being raised across sectors. Following the break, these recurring themes were organized into five priority areas for participants to consider. Superintendent Mason then led a report-back and prioritization discussion, where the room reviewed the themes and identified which priority should serve as the starting point for collective action.

The five priority areas put to vote were:

1. Work together to obtain reliable and consistent funding to make sustained prevention efforts possible.
2. Better communication and coordination between organizations to limit duplication of efforts, improve referral pipelines, and ensure 24/7 support.
3. Draw people and businesses downtown to increase engagement with the space; including events but also long-term tenants and businesses.
4. Work together to develop a plan to address social disorder and open public drug use.
5. Provide oversight to coordinate further efforts on the things that are working well.

A Mentimeter link was provided so participants could anonymously vote on which area they wanted the room to collectively prioritize. Hamilton Police Service members were instructed not to participate to ensure that the results were reflective of participant priorities. Participants ranked the choices from one to five. The table below provides an overview of the rankings each priority area received.

Priority Area	Ranking				
	1	2	3	4	5
Work together to obtain reliable and consistent funding to make sustained prevention efforts possible.	10	20	19	6	4
Better communication and coordination between organizations to limit duplication of efforts, improve referral pipelines, and ensure 24/7 support.	17	11	10	12	6
Draw people and businesses downtown to increase engagement with the space; Including events but also long-term tenants and businesses.	7	9	7	13	20
Work together to develop a plan to address social disorder and open public drug use.	32	10	8	5	3
Provide oversight to coordinate further efforts on the things that are working well.	0	7	11	18	18

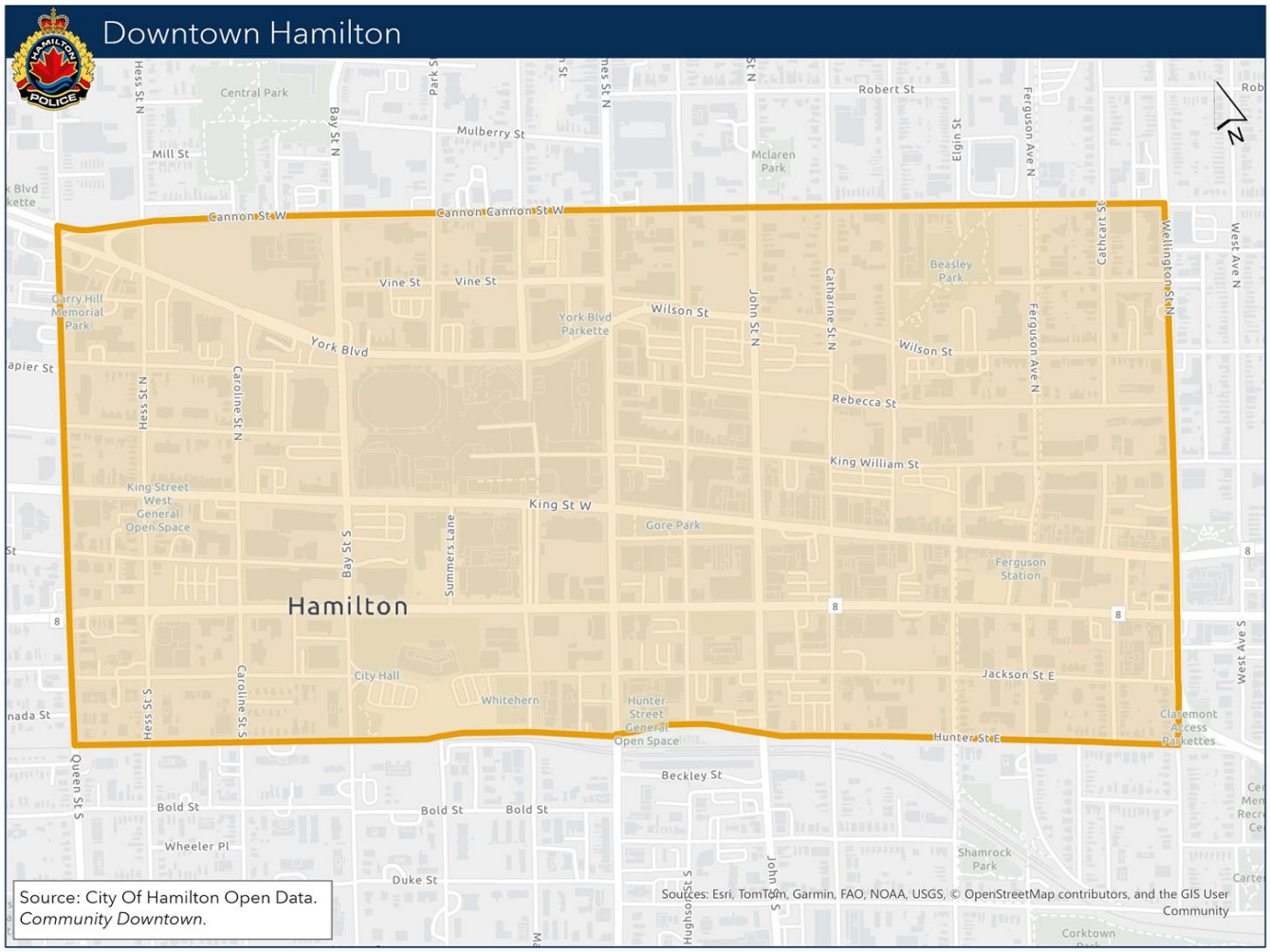
Based on the voting results, ***work together to develop a plan to address social disorder and open public drug use*** was selected as the focal priority area for the action discussion at each table. Participants identified this as the strongest priority area, with the option receiving the highest number of first-place rankings by a significant margin.

During the action discussions, participants at each table were asked to identify practical next steps they could contribute to in support of the shared priority. This included identifying (1) an organization or individual to lead the selected action steps, (2) supporting partners that could aid in completing the actions, (3) early actions that could be taken within the next 30 days, and (4)

any barriers or resources that would need to be addressed in order for the action steps to be achieved. This portion of the session was designed to move the discussion beyond identifying concerns and toward next steps, shared responsibility, clear roles, and a plan for follow-up.

Downtown Crime Statistics and Trends

As noted above, the crime data presentation was intended to provide participants with a shared starting point for discussion. To ensure participants were using a common geographic frame of reference, the presentation began with a map of the City of Hamilton-defined Downtown area.



Downtown can mean different things to different people. For some, it may refer to a few blocks around Gore Park; for others, it may refer more broadly to the full downtown core or even much of Ward 2. For this presentation, the City-defined Downtown boundary was used to ensure consistency. The downtown area extends from Wellington Street to Queen Street, east to west, and from Cannon Street to Hunter Street, north to south. This represents approximately 1.4

square kilometres, or 0.13% of the city's geographic area, and contains approximately 5% of Hamilton's residential population.

During the presentation, participants heard that both violent and property crime concentrate in multiple areas of the city and are not an exclusively downtown issue. However, both types of crime disproportionately concentrate downtown. This means that more crime occurs downtown than would be expected if it were randomly distributed throughout the city or if it were reflective of the residential population.

The observation that crime disproportionately concentrated downtown was consistent whether crime was assessed using category counts (e.g., all property crime, all violent crime), counts of crime by individual crime type (e.g., shootings, homicides), or crime harm score.[1] Research tells us that some concentration of crime in a downtown area is to be expected.[2] This is because crime opportunities[3] tend to increase wherever there are more people and downtowns tend to have large ambient population of workers, shoppers, tourists, and transit commuters that are not captured in residential population data. That being said, concentrations of crime and disorder can reduce people's feelings of safety, which in turn can impact their health and well-being, as well as their willingness to spend time in areas they perceive to be unsafe.[4]

Following the presentation of general crime trends downtown, participants also heard information about youth criminal involvement and youth victimization. These figures reflect youth aged 12 to 17 linked to occurrences in the Hamilton Police Service's records management system. Youth criminal involvement differs from a count of offenses involving youth (where each *offense* is counted only once, regardless of the number of youth involved) and from a count of the unique youth involved in crime (where each *youth* is counted only once, regardless of how many offenses they perpetrate). Instead, youth criminal involvement counts the *number of times any youth is involved in any occurrence*. With this metric, a single occurrence involving five youth would count as five youth criminal involvements, and ten occurrences involving a single youth would be counted as ten youth criminal involvements. This measure enables us to account for

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[1] Crime Harm is Hamilton Police Service's internal measure of crime seriousness. Rather than treating every incident as equal, the Crime Harm measure assigns different weights to each type of crime based on the impact they have on society. For example, more serious crimes, like robbery, will receive a much higher harm score than a shoplifting. Like Statistics Canada's Crime Severity Index, Hamilton Police Service's Crime Harm measure is calculated based on sentencing. Offences that typically receive more serious sentences receive higher harm values, while offenses that typically get lower sentences receive lower harm values. This allows for a more nuanced analysis of crime across Hamilton that better accounts for the societal impact of highly violent offences, which is missed when assessing crime counts alone.

[2] Kitchen, P. (2006). Exploring the link between crime and socio-economic status in Ottawa and Saskatoon: A small-area geographical analysis (Research Report No. RR06-6). Department of Justice Canada.

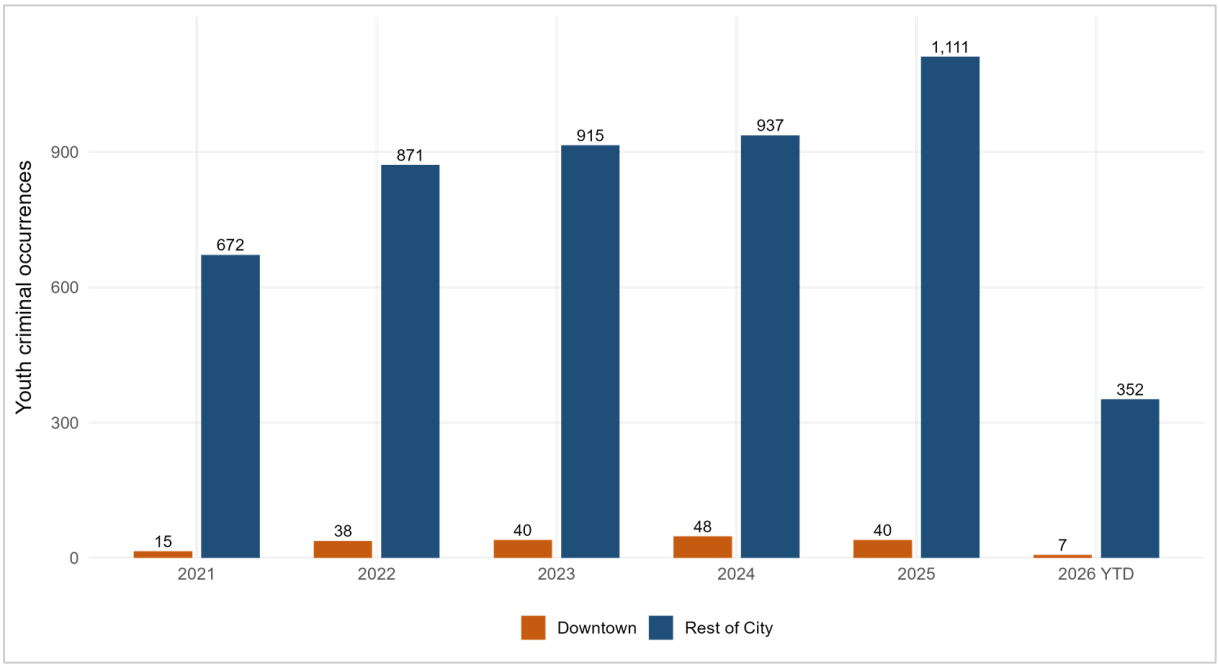
[3] Farrell, G., & Tilley, N. (2026) Crime opportunity theory: the state of the art. *Crime Science* 15, Article 12. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40163-026-00275-z

[4] Lorenc, T., Clayton, S., Neary, D., Whitehead, M., Petticrew, M., Thomson, H., Cummins, S., Sowden, A., & Renton, A. (2012). *Crime, fear of crime, environment, and mental health and wellbeing: Mapping review of theories and causal pathways*. *Health & Place, 18*(4), 757–765. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthplace.2012.04.001

any changes in youth criminality, whether it comes by way of a change in the number of offenders, the number of offenses occurring, or a combination of the two.

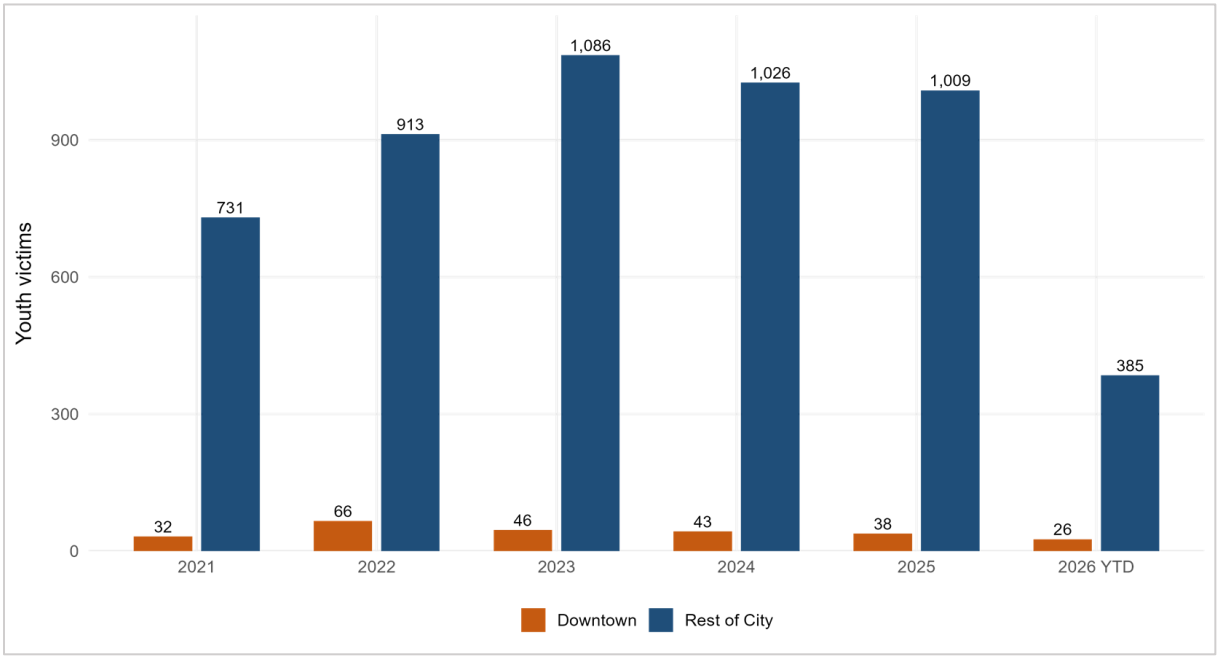
From 2024 to 2025, citywide youth criminal involvement increased from 985 to 1,151, a 16.9% increase. However, downtown accounts for a relatively small share of youth criminal involvement. From 2021 to 2025, downtown represented less than 5% of citywide youth criminal involvement each year. In 2025, downtown accounted for 3.5% of the citywide total. The downtown trend also differed from the rest of the city. Youth criminal involvement downtown decreased from 48 in 2024 to 40 in 2025, while the rest of the city saw a sizeable increase. Similarly, youth victimization measures do not tend to be concentrated downtown. Between 2021 and 2025, only one year (2022) had greater than 5% of youth criminal victimization occurring downtown, at 6.7%. Otherwise, each year fell below 5%.

Youth Criminal Involvement, 2021 – 2025 and 2026 Year-to-Date



* Youth aged 12–17 who are linked in the records management system as Youth Criminal Offence or Youth Criminal Diverted. Figures are based on youth involvement links, not unique individuals. A single occurrence may involve more than one youth, and the same youth may appear in more than one occurrence over time.

Youth Victimization, 2021 – 2025 and 2026 Year-to-Date



* Youth aged 12–17 who are linked in the records management system as victims of crime against the person or property crime. Figures are based on youth victimization links, not unique individuals. A single occurrence may involve more than one youth victim, and the same youth may appear in more than one occurrence over time.

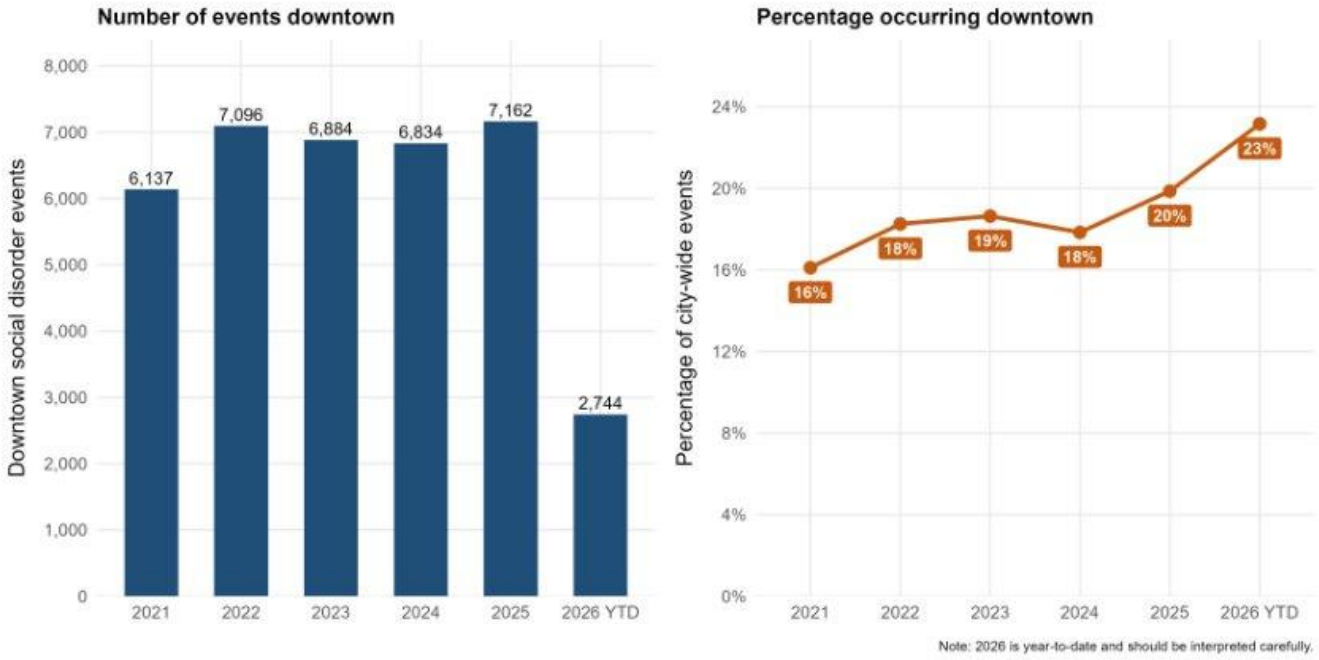
The data showed some important differences between crime types. The highest-volume property crime areas of the city lie outside of the downtown, while the highest concentrations of violence citywide are located within the downtown boundary. The average harm associated with downtown occurrences also tends to be more violent than elsewhere in the city. At the same time, youth criminal involvement and youth victimization do not appear to be the primary drivers of downtown crime trends.

Overall, the presentation highlighted that downtown crime concerns are not explained by one issue alone. Neither property crime nor violent crime is exclusively a downtown issue; both occur across Hamilton and concentrate in several areas of the city. However, downtown accounts for a disproportionate share of both property and violent crime relative to its geographic size and residential population.

In addition to crime, the presentation also addressed social disorder because of the operational demand it places on the Service and the impact it has on how people experience downtown. Social disorder events are different from homicides, shootings, robberies, and other serious violent crimes. However, they matter because they are frequent, visible, resource intensive, and have an impact on perceptions of safety. For this analysis, “social disorder events” refers to an operational grouping of event types used by the Hamilton Police Service to understand frequent disorder-related demand. This includes calls such as disturbances, intoxicated persons,

suspicious persons or circumstances, trespassing, unwanted guests, mischief, and similar public-space concerns.

Social Disorder Events: Operational Demand in Public Spaces



From 2021 to 2025, downtown social disorder events remained consistently high, ranging from approximately 6,100 to just over 7,100 events per year. Over the same period, downtown's share of citywide social disorder events increased. Downtown accounted for approximately 16% of these events in 2021, 20% in 2025, and 23% in 2026 year-to-date. The 2026 figure should be interpreted cautiously because it reflects partial-year data and may change as the year progresses. However, the percentage of citywide events occurring downtown is useful for understanding the concentration of disorder-related demand so far this year. Taken together, these trends suggest that social disorder is not only a matter of perception. It is also reflected in police call-for-service demand and helps explain why downtown safety requires more than a response to serious violent crime alone.

In summary, this segment of the Downtown Safety Summit aimed to provide a shared starting point for the discussions that followed. It did not suggest that downtown safety has a simple answer. Instead, it showed where crime and harm are concentrated, where social disorder creates sustained operational demand, and where reported data intersects with community experience. The data was used to support, not replace, the perspectives shared by participants. The goal was to move from a shared understanding of the problem to practical actions that improve safety, confidence, and the experience of downtown.

Vision for Downtown

Following the data presentation, roundtable discussions began with each table establishing their vision for a safe downtown. This set the groundwork for subsequent conversations to proceed with a shared goal in mind. Several themes emerged across tables. Specifically, participants desire a downtown that is:

- **Vibrant,** with a high volume of pedestrian traffic;
- **Flourishing**, with active engagement from a diverse range of people;
- **Trusting**, where people look out for their neighbours, and their neighbours look out for them;
- **Comfortable**, where people can walk without needing to be vigilant or fearful of victimization;
- **Family-friendly,** where people can raise their children;
- **Lively**, with a variety of events that draw people to the area;
- **Connected**, with police, social services, community organizations, and businesses knowing each other and working together;
- **Accessible**, with public areas and businesses that are welcoming to all community members;
- **Free** of open-air drug use, harassment, and aggressive behaviour;
- **Beautiful**, with sidewalks and public spaces that are clean and free of garbage;
- **Attractive** to investors;
- **Supportive** of business owners;
- **Revitalized**, with occupants in currently vacant spaces; and
- **Sufficiently resourced**, with housing and supports for those that need them, including youth, those with mental health and addiction struggles, and those who need safe spaces to consume drugs.

Things Going Well

After establishing a shared vision for downtown, facilitators asked participants at their tables to reflect on what they see working well in the downtown today. This was deliberate: naming what already exists guards against framing the work ahead as if it is starting from scratch.

Several themes emerged across tables. The first was **partnerships**. Participants pointed to several cross-sector structures that are already in place that work well. The Hamilton CARES table came up in multiple discussions. So did the Community Safety and Well-Being framework, the encampment response, and the everyday working relationships between hospitals, community organizations, outreach teams, and police. The Downtown Safety Summit was also mentioned as an example of the type of forum that works well. Broadly, participants noted that there is a willingness to work together, an enthusiasm for collaboration, and a desire to develop solutions; the question is how this is sustained, resourced, and scaled.

Second, there were **programs serving populations in need** that participants wanted to see protected and expanded. Youth-focused initiatives such as YMCA Back on Track, Wesley Urban Ministries' Special Care Unit, Good Shepherd's housing services, John Howard Society's reintegration work, the school boards' partnerships with community youth organizations, restorative justice programming, online safety education, and the over twenty outreach teams operating across the city were named as examples of services meeting people where they are.

Third, participants from multiple tables expressed that the increase in the visibility of downtown policing and the approachability of **dedicated downtown police officers** was something that they appreciated and would like to see more of. Core Patrol was explicitly named at several tables, along with bike and beat officers who have built personal relationships in the core. Similarly, specialized units, like COAST, RIST, and the Social Navigator program, were also named as positively contributing to a safe downtown. These dedicated resources share a common theme: that policing works best when it is paired with relationship-building and connection to services. Where officers have become familiar faces in the core, businesses, residents, and service workers describe a different kind of safety than is typically achieved through reactive enforcement.

Fourth, participants noted the **excellent food and culture in the downtown core**, emphasizing that these are important strengths to build on. Restaurants, small businesses, cultural spaces, events, and the overall character of downtown were seen as assets that continue to draw people into the area and contribute to its vibrancy.

Finally, participants point to **moments and investments** that suggest what is possible. The reopening of TD Coliseum, the success of the Juno Awards in Hamilton, the seasonal conversion of King William Street to pedestrian only, and recurring events such as Supercrawl, were named as proof that downtown can attract people, sustain energy, and feel welcoming when conditions are right. The work ahead, several participants noted, is to make the conditions that produce those moments the everyday reality rather than the exception to the norm.

Barriers

Following their discussion of things going well, participants were invited to be equally direct about what is making their work harder. The barriers named were not, in most cases, individual programs failing. Instead, they were structural, recurring across sectors. Several themes emerged across tables.

First, participants pointed to the **precariousness and inconsistency of funding** to support programs that do work. Short grant funding cycles, pilot-project models that rarely become sustained, recent provincial reductions to non-profit funding, and the need for targeted funding and dedicated human resources for the Community Safety and Well-Being plan were each referenced by multiple tables. Where good work has been demonstrated, participants believed funding should follow. Instead, they are faced with funding that expires and significant effort is spent reapplying for grants that would otherwise be spent doing the work itself.

Second, participants brought up the **burden of additional costs** related to hiring private security, providing safety training for their staff, and physically modifying their businesses to make them safer.

Third, with respect to **reporting crime and police response**, participants described a cycle in which slow response, a lack of follow-up after an incident is reported, and limited online reporting categories that do not "match" the situations most often encountered downtown, all discourage future reporting. Participants also noted a lack of follow-up and engagement from the city with respect to safety complaints. Both barriers result in data that (potentially) understates the scale of what is happening, making it harder to justify additional resources.

Fourth, participants also noted that there are **gaps in coordination**. Part of this stems from a lack of knowledge about what other community groups and services do. Issues also stem from the exclusion of groups from existing collaborative efforts that should have a seat at the table and from a lack of data and information sharing across organizations. Regardless of the cause, the result is that people end up working in siloes and unnecessarily duplicating efforts, when resources could be used more efficiently if there was better coordination.

Fifth, participants noted there are **gaps in available services**, where programs that are needed are limited or nonexistent. For example, participants noted that:

- Shelters close during the day with no daytime alternatives;
- There has been a reduction of safe consumption services and it has had a visible downstream effect on the street;
- There is a limited, and insufficient, supply of transitional and supportive housing;
- The mental health and addictions system is under significant strain, and service agencies are unable to respond at the scale required;
- There is a lack of employment opportunities and resources for older youth in the 13+ range, and there is a lack of resourcing in general for youth transitioning into adulthood;
- Many services that do exist do not meet the specific and varying needs of different groups of people (e.g., gender, sexuality, ethnicity, etc.);
- There is no 24-hour outreach response team available, resulting in a more punitive policing response being the default in some circumstances where a social service outreach response may be more appropriate.

Finally, participants identified the **limited inclusion of people most directly affected by these discussions as a barrier**. They also noted the demographic composition of the most recent city safety survey, particularly the limited representation of unhoused residents, racialized communities concentrated downtown, youth, and people who use controlled substances in conversations about their own safety. Several participants characterized this as a **critical priority for the next phase of the work.**

Action Plans

The second roundtable session was dedicated to developing action steps for the priority focus area selected during the vote (i.e., ***work together to develop a plan to address social***

disorder and open public drug use). Participants were invited to think through what small actions they could commit to in the immediate short term to help further progress toward this shared goal. The idea behind this approach is that collective small steps focused on achieving a single goal can be more likely to achieve noticeable improvements than many disparate attempts to achieve a variety of different goals. Many of the participants at the Downtown Safety Summit committed to concrete Action Steps that will continue building on the momentum generated on May 19. These are summarized in the table below.

Lead Organization	Partnering in Action	Commitment	Source
KPMG	Jackson Square, Effort Trust and Sheraton Hotel	• Provide advisory support to help establish a downtown police substation. • Downtown business community (at table) indicated willingness to support financially.	Table 1
Hamilton Chamber of Commerce	Chamber of Commerce, Downtown BIA's.	• Build a "Downtown 411" reporting and resource page on the Chamber's website. • Consolidate information on how to report social disorder, open drug use, and what supports are available (on Chamber website as well).	Table 2
Markland Property Management	Hamilton Police Service	• Offer ground-floor space to host a downtown police substation.	Table 2
Hamilton Police Service	Note: Action item developed by Table 3 – requesting HPS develop enhanced communication for reporting social disorder.	• Dissemination of reporting information/instructions to business owners (how to report regarding social disorder and open drug use + referral to RAAM clinic). • Development of platform for ease of reporting.	Table 3
TD Bank and RBC	CIBC	• Initiate cross-bank discussion of shared paid-duty model funding sustained HPS presence on King Street near downtown branches.	Table 4
N/A	TD, RBC and CIBC (corporate security teams)	• Provide bank institution contacts/representatives to HPS - support a recurring quarterly meeting with HPS crime managers (Division 1).	Table 4

Lead Organization	Partnering in Action	Commitment	Source
St. Matthew's House (Chair, Men's Emergency Services Committee)	TBD	• Lead collaborative work to align housing-sector services across organizations and reduce duplication and competing grant applications.	Table 5
Hamilton Public Health	St. Joseph's Hospital The Hub John Howard Society City of Hamilton (TBD)	• Lead a public-health-anchored response to social disorder and open public drug use, coordinating across the city's outreach teams.	Table 6
St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton	N/A	• Explore expanding the existing mobile health response van (currently focused on schizophrenia outreach) to function additionally as an addictions response unit; subject to staffing capacity.	Table 6
John Howard Society	N/A	• Bring forward lessons learned from prior safe consumption and harm-reduction work—including the Moncton experience—to inform any future program design.	Table 6
Hamilton Community Foundation	KPMG (potential funding contribution to addiction service mapping)	• Lead the expansion of the existing addiction services mapping initiative.	Table 7
N/A	Wesley Urban Ministries, HARRC, Good Shepherd, John Howard	• Reintroduce a Mobile Outreach for Youth program operating in schools, community centres, and parks, with non-traditional hours of operation; engagement with those downtown.	Table 8
ODSP	Salvation Army – Identify community partners and improve inter-agency coordination	• Communicate issues internally, review data, secure approvals, and return with proposed additional community-facing resources and events for youth.	Table 9

Lead Organization	Partnering in Action	Commitment	Source
Good Shepherd	N/A	• Analyze incident date, time, and location data; continue relationship-building and advocacy; manage ripple effects when social services move into new neighbourhoods; continue the community travel bus.	Table 9
CRA	Provincial and Federal Government representatives (to be determined). Dr. Menezes - Learn community resources more deeply, traverse community groups for shared dialogue, and circulate community-services pamphlets into physicians' offices.	• Lead provincial-level advocacy for the reinstatement of safe injection sites, partnering with doctors who would liaise with MPPs and with senior leaders from the Chamber, BIA, Hamilton Health Sciences, and St. Joseph's.	Table 9
Office of the Mayor	N/A	• Lead public awareness campaigns connected to the chosen community priority.	Table 10
City of Hamilton	N/A	• Develop training modules to support public awareness campaigns; scope subject to resource availability.	Table 10
HWDSB	N/A	• Deliver bear-spray-focused public education campaigns through school channels.	Table 11
HWDSB	N/A	• Expand the role of five dedicated school board staff within the Hamilton CARES table to increase referrals and shift work earlier into the preventative window.	Table 11

Hamilton Police Service Next Steps

The action discussion identified several areas where the Hamilton Police Service has a direct role to play, either as the lead organization or as a partner supporting broader community action. These next steps reflect issues raised across the tables, including the need for clearer reporting pathways, stronger communication with downtown businesses, continued visible police presence, improved information-sharing with institutional partners, and a coordinated response to open public drug use and related social disorder.

Since the summit, the Hamilton Police Service has begun reviewing the action items that fall within its mandate and identifying where immediate follow-up is required. One early area of focus is reporting. Participants described situations where business owners, staff, and community members were unsure which incidents should be reported, which reporting channels should be used, and how recurring concerns such as open drug use and social disorder should be documented. HPS is reviewing opportunities to provide clearer public-facing reporting guidance and to improve reporting mechanisms for recurring public safety concerns in the downtown core.

The Hamilton Police Service is also exploring how to strengthen communication and coordination with key downtown partners. This includes follow-up with corporate security teams from major downtown financial institutions to support recurring meetings with Division 1 Crime Managers. These meetings would provide a forum to share trends, identify recurring concerns, and support more coordinated responses in areas experiencing repeated safety issues.

Participants also identified the importance of visible and approachable police presence downtown. The Hamilton Police Service will continue to support Core Patrol visibility and the deployment of beat and bike officers in the downtown core, as resources permit. This reflects consistent feedback from participants that dedicated downtown officers contribute not only to enforcement, but also to relationship-building, reassurance, and connection to services for those in need.

Several tables also raised the possibility of a downtown police substation. The Hamilton Police Service will investigate the feasibility of this concept. This will include further discussion with interested property owners and business partners, as well as determining the space, equipment, staffing, operational, and other related requirements that would be necessary to make the request a reality.

With respect to open public drug use and social disorder, the Hamilton Police Service will continue to take a balanced approach, focusing on both enforcement and referral pathways. This includes maintaining operational attention on drug trafficking, while also working with health, outreach, and community partners to connect individuals who use drugs to appropriate supports where available. Enforcement alone will not resolve these issues, but it remains one part of a broader response involving public health, housing, outreach, treatment, municipal services, and community partners.

The Hamilton Police Service will also review opportunities to support partner-led work through aggregate data-sharing, where appropriate. Several partners identified the value of better information to help direct limited resources, identify patterns, and understand where supports may be needed most.

Finally, HPS will continue to support follow-up and accountability from the summit. This includes confirming leads and timelines for HPS-related action items, participating in smaller sector-specific discussions where appropriate, and helping maintain momentum with partners who identified commitments during the action-planning portion of the summit. The table below summarizes the HPS action steps identified through the summit.

Hamilton Police Service (HPS) Action Steps	Status	Source
Explore the establishment of a dedicated drug-prosecution office in Hamilton (PPSC)	Ongoing	Table 10
Convene a recurring quarterly meeting structure between HPS crime managers and the corporate security teams of the three major downtown banks (TD, RBC, CIBC), with reciprocal incident-data sharing.	Inaugural meeting target date to be confirmed by HPS	Table 4
Take direct ownership of communications to downtown businesses about what categories of incident are reportable and through which channels, so business staff can be informed accordingly.	Ongoing— vendor discussions and operational coordination with Division 1 underway	Table 3
Strengthen the referral pathway connecting people who use drugs in the downtown to appropriate health and community services.	Ongoing; review milestone date to be confirmed by HPS	Table 3
Sharpen operational focus on drug trafficking in the downtown core.	Ongoing operational priority; reporting milestone to be confirmed by HPS	Table 12
Engage with the named property manager/landlord (Jackson Square) to evaluate space, equipment, and operational requirements for a downtown substation.	Initial engagement target date to be confirmed by HPS	Tables 1, 2, 4
Increase Core Patrol visibility and continue the deployment of beat and bike officers in the downtown core, as resources permit.	Ongoing; review milestone to be confirmed by HPS	Tables 1, 2, 3, 4, 9, 10

Hamilton Police Service Answers to Participant Questions

Throughout the Downtown Safety Summit, participants were invited to anonymously submit questions through a Mentimeter Q&A link, with the understanding that responses would be included in this report. A total of 12 questions were received. The questions are included verbatim in the table below, along with the Hamilton Police Service answer to each.

Q1: Were you able to identify any correlation between the closure of the safe consumption site and the social disorder issues observed?

Participants raised open public drug use, overdoses, discarded drug-use materials, and related social disorder as significant concerns during the meeting. These issues are visible in public spaces and have a direct impact on how people experience safety downtown. HPS has not completed a conclusive analysis that would allow us to directly link observed social disorder downtown to the closure of the Consumption and Treatment Services site.

Social disorder is shaped by several overlapping pressures, including housing instability, mental health and addictions needs, outreach capacity, public space use, reporting patterns, enforcement activity, and changes in the drug supply. No single data source can fully explain what people are seeing or experiencing downtown.

That said, recent public reporting indicates that opioid-related paramedic calls in Hamilton have reached record levels. In February 2026, Hamilton recorded 199 opioid-related paramedic calls, surpassing the previous monthly record of 143 calls set in January 2026. The same reporting noted that Hamilton experienced 1,133 opioid-related paramedic calls between July 2025 and February 2026, more than double the 519 calls recorded during the same period the year before.[5]

This information is relevant to the broader discussion about downtown conditions, particularly where concerns involve overdoses, open public drug use, discarded drug-use materials, and pressure on public spaces. However, paramedic response data speaks most directly to opioid-related health harms. Understanding how those harms relate to broader social disorder requires further shared analysis across the Hamilton Police Service, public health, outreach, housing, social services, and municipal partners.

Q2: All youth, including those being groomed into gangs are looking for summer jobs. Are the businesses in this room willing to give youth employment opportunities?

Youth engagement and prevention are critical components of long-term community safety. While employment programming and hiring decisions fall outside the mandate of policing, the Hamilton Police Service recognizes that access to positive opportunities, mentorship, and meaningful employment can play an important role in reducing vulnerability to gang involvement and criminal activity.

[5] Joanna Frketich, "A Crisis Unfolding: Hamilton Shatters Record with 199 Overdose Calls in 28 Days," *The Hamilton Spectator*, March 11, 2026

HPS supports youth-focused prevention initiatives through programs such as the Youth in Policing Initiative (YIPI), which provides local youth with summer employment opportunities, mentorship, and exposure to positive career pathways within policing and the broader community. Programs like YIPI are intended to help build confidence, skills, and meaningful connections for young people.

The Downtown Safety Summit discussion highlighted that addressing these issues requires a collaborative community response. Businesses, community organizations, schools, social service agencies, and government partners all have a role to play in creating pathways and opportunities for youth.

HPS remains committed to working with partners to support prevention-focused initiatives and ongoing conversations about how the community can better engage and support young people who may be at risk.

Q3: How will HPS measure improvements in public confidence over time?

Hamilton Police Service has taken important steps to better understand how people experience safety in Hamilton, including how residents perceive safety, trust, and confidence in policing. Public confidence cannot be measured through crime statistics alone. It also requires listening to the community, tracking engagement, and working with external partners who can support independent research and evaluation.

One important source of information is the 2025 Hamilton Community Safety Survey, led by Wilfrid Laurier University. Repeating this type of survey over time would allow HPS and its partners to assess changes in residents' perceptions of safety, trust in policing, and priority community concerns. HPS is also working internally to better capture information about community engagement activities, including the types of events attended, the communities and organizations engaged, the issues raised, and the follow-up required. This will help the Service better understand not only how often engagement is happening, but whether it is reaching the right people and informing future action. Longer term, particularly through the implementation of the next HPS Strategic Plan, there is an opportunity to use shorter pulse surveys to more regularly assess how people are feeling about safety, trust, and confidence in their community. These tools can help provide a broader and more current understanding of public sentiment between larger formal surveys.

Ultimately, this work is strongest when it is done collaboratively. Measuring public confidence requires police data, community feedback, and independent research partners working together to understand what is changing, where concerns remain, and how HPS and its partners can respond more effectively.

Q4: Has there been any use of Social Network Analysis to gain a better understanding of the group (gang) landscape and what those dynamics are telling us about where crime hot spots are or might be?

Hamilton Police Service Crime Analysts use link charts to support individual investigations. However, at this time, Hamilton Police Service has not conducted a comprehensive Social Network Analysis of the city's groups and gangs to support analysis of existing or future hot spots.

Social Network Analysis has increasingly been discussed within criminology and policing as a way to better understand how individuals, groups, conflicts, and locations may be connected, particularly in relation to group violence, retaliatory dynamics, co-offending, gang rivalries, and geographic concentrations of crime. Rather than examining incidents in isolation, this method seeks to identify relational patterns that may help explain how violence or criminal activity concentrates within particular networks or places.[6]

At the same time, these methods must be used carefully. Researchers note that network analyses often rely on police-generated records, arrest data, field interview cards, or other investigative information, each of which may reflect enforcement practices, investigative focus, and data limitations in addition to underlying social dynamics. As a result, Social Network Analysis should not be treated as a stand-alone predictive tool. Its value is in helping provide additional context around how people, places, conflicts, and patterns may connect when combined with investigative knowledge, geographic analysis, and appropriate oversight.[7]

Q5: The vacant Sir John A. Macdonald school on York costs HWDSB $135K/year. The province has said it's ready to force release. What aren't HPS and the City pushing to convert it into a low-barrier shelter?

Decisions regarding the use or redevelopment of properties for housing or shelter services fall outside the mandate of the Hamilton Police Service and are matters for the City of Hamilton and other community partners.

HPS did explore the former Sir John A. Macdonald school site as a potential location for a new Central Station headquarters to replace the current aging facility. A new headquarters location could create opportunities for the existing Central Station property to be redeveloped in ways that support broader community needs, including potential social service or shelter uses.

At this time, however, HPS has not been successful in securing the Sir John A. Macdonald site for its operational needs.

Q6: Is there an opportunity for a more formal engagement model between HPS and large employers in the core? This could include establishing dedicated liaison contacts, or real-time alerts for incidents

[6] Faust, K., and Tita, G. E. (2019). Social networks and crime: Pitfalls and promises for advancing the field. *Annual Review of Criminology*, 2, 99–122. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-criminol-011518-024701
[7] *Ibid*

HPS recognizes the importance of ongoing collaboration with large employers and businesses in the downtown core, particularly as they experience the impacts of social disorder, public safety concerns, and quality-of-life issues firsthand.

There is an opportunity to develop a more formal engagement model that would strengthen communication and information sharing between HPS and key stakeholders. This could include dedicated liaison contacts, regular stakeholder meetings, and improved mechanisms for sharing timely information related to significant incidents or emerging concerns.

Moving forward, HPS will look at establishing such a model with large employers and community partners to ensure continuous feedback, strengthen collaboration, and better address ongoing issues impacting the downtown core.

Q7: What is the data on white supremacist organizing in Hamilton and its correlation to safety for impacted communities? We are seeing an increase in organizing happening by yt supremacists in ward 2.

Hamilton Police are aware of an increase in white supremacist activity across Hamilton, including activity associated with NS13. This has included the posting of stickers, distribution of racist flyers, combat or survival-style training in public parks, flash demonstrations, and banner drops.

HPS recognizes that this type of activity has a direct impact on the sense of safety and belonging for targeted and impacted communities, particularly communities that have historically experienced hate, racism, and discrimination. While available data helps identify patterns and emerging concerns, hate-motivated activity is often underreported, meaning the full impact may not be reflected in police statistics alone.

HPS continues to monitor this activity and encourages residents, businesses, and community partners to report incidents to Hamilton Police so they can be investigated, documented, and included in ongoing analysis of hate-motivated activity and community safety trends.

Reports can be made to Hamilton Police here.

Q8: What specific actions are being taken to reduce the feeling of lack of safety downtown beyond reducing crime rates?

Hamilton Police recognize that improving public safety downtown is not solely about reducing crime rates, it is also about improving people's day-to-day experiences, increasing visibility, addressing social disorder, and strengthening confidence in public spaces.

In response to concerns raised by residents, businesses, and community partners, HPS has implemented several initiatives focused specifically on improving perceptions of safety and enhancing community engagement in the downtown core.

A key component of this work has been the expansion of the CORE Patrol Unit. Originally launched as a two-officer foot patrol pilot in 2023 following requests for increased police visibility, the program expanded to six officers in 2024 after consultations with downtown businesses and BIAs identified a strong desire for a more consistent police presence. Statistical reviews found the program was helping reduce crime, divert calls for service from

frontline patrol, improve community engagement, and contribute to improved perceptions of safety. As a result, the Hamilton Police Service Board approved the hiring of eight additional full-time employees in September 2025 to further expand CORE Patrol coverage downtown.

CORE Patrol officers conducted more than 3,500 business visits in 2025 alone, focusing heavily on the downtown commercial corridors and maintaining direct engagement with businesses and community members. Deployment strategies have also concentrated sustained officer presence in areas experiencing the highest levels of social disorder, public complaints, and operational demand, particularly around the King Street corridor and Jackson Square.

HPS has also launched several targeted initiatives aimed at addressing social disorder, open drug use, trespassing, violent crime, and encampment-related concerns downtown. These initiatives include Project Baron, Project Roll Up, Project Scarab, Project Cold Snap, Project Magnolia, and Project Gilles Guy.

Recognizing that many concerns relate to visible social disorder rather than traditional crime alone, HPS continues to balance enforcement with outreach and health-based interventions. This includes partnerships with St. Joseph's Healthcare Hamilton and the Rapid Access Addiction Medicine (RAAM) Clinic to connect individuals struggling with substance use to treatment and support services.

In addition, HPS leadership participates in the Mayor's Roundtable for Downtown Safety and Security alongside City and community leaders to identify both short- and long-term strategies to improve safety, public confidence, and overall quality of life in the downtown core.

Q9: Would HPS commit to sustained, focused enforcement targeting low level drug dealers downtown? Pressure has to be constant to displace them and that hasn't been tried yet.

Hamilton Police recognize that persistent street-level drug trafficking and associated social disorder have a significant impact on public safety and perceptions of safety in the downtown core. Sustained enforcement remains an important component of the Service's overall approach.

HPS has undertaken several focused enforcement initiatives targeting drug trafficking networks operating downtown, including Project Churchill in 2024. Led by the Investigative Services Division, Project Churchill targeted gangs operating in Hamilton's downtown core connected to drug trafficking, robberies, daytime shootings, and homicides.

Additional initiatives, including Project Baron and Project Roll Up in 2025, specifically focused on addressing drug trafficking and preventing dealers and users from re-establishing themselves in key downtown areas following enforcement action. These projects reflect the understanding that enforcement efforts must be sustained and adaptive in order to disrupt ongoing criminal activity and reduce the concentration of social disorder in the core.

At the same time, HPS recognizes that enforcement alone will not resolve the broader issues contributing to open drug use and addiction. The Service continues to balance targeted enforcement with partnerships focused on treatment, outreach, and community safety.

Q10: Why is today's session looking to ultimately lead to one issue as the focus? Please explain

The focus of the session was to move beyond discussion and identify actionable next steps. Given the broad range of issues impacting the downtown core, participants were asked to help prioritize where collective efforts could be most effectively focused in the short term.

The intention was not to minimize other concerns, but rather to ensure the meeting resulted in a clear area of focus that could support coordinated action, measurable outcomes, and ongoing collaboration among participants. The topic ultimately selected reflected the priorities identified by participants through a democratic process during the session.

Q11: Are there stats on youth violence prior to COVID years? How have the trends changed over time?

From 2015 to 2019, annual youth violent crime totals ranged from 433 to 514 occurrences. The highest pre-COVID year shown was 2018, with 514 occurrences, followed by 2016 with 511. The most noticeable change occurred during the pandemic. Youth violent crime dropped to 343 occurrences in 2020 and 358 in 2021, which were the lowest totals in the past decade. Since then, youth violent crime has increased each year: 453 occurrences in 2022, 478 in 2023, 489 in 2024, and 516 in 2025. The 2025 total is slightly above the highest pre-COVID year from 2015 to 2019. In plain terms: youth violent crime declined during the pandemic, then increased year over year from 2022 to 2025, returning to— and now exceeding—pre-COVID levels.

Q12: Is there any stats review from before 2020 to 2026. Look at a base line of 2019 or 2018

HPS does review crime trends over multiple years, including pre-2020 data where available and appropriate. Using a pre-pandemic baseline such as 2018 or 2019 can be informative, particularly because the COVID period affected activity patterns, public space use, reporting behaviour, and some types of crime. For public reporting, historical crime trends are available through HPS annual reports, which provide year-over-year information on crime, calls for service, enforcement activity, and other public safety indicators. Community members can also use the online community crime map to review reported crime.