

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats SWOT Analysis for Events in Hamilton (Draft)

In order to help set a formal direction for the Events Strategy, Tourism and Culture Division Staff have begun a SWOT analysis of events in Hamilton. This SWOT analysis provides information and statistics that will guide further internal and external consultations. The discoveries from these consultations will form part of the final Events Strategy.

STRENGTHS

Corporate Alignment

The City of Hamilton has a cultural and corporate framework to which the Events Strategy will align. The Cultural Policy was approved through PED12117 in June, 2012 and the Cultural Plan was approved through PED12117(b) in October, 2013.

The Council-approved Cultural Plan (October, 2013) contains the Events Strategy as Action 10.2 under the recommendation “develop and facilitate cultural programming”.

Culture Matters

Local citizens believe that culture is important to life in Hamilton – 92% percent stated that “culture contributes to the quality of life in Hamilton” (Hendershot Research, 2011).

Events Matter

Festivals are a top cultural activity in Hamilton – 91% of Hamiltonians attend at least one festival annually and 60% attend a local festival “a few times per year”.

In addition, one-third of Hamiltonians state that attending a festival is their top or second favourite cultural activity (Hendershot Research, 2011).

Neighbourhoods Matter

Events take place across the city and the majority (78%) of Hamiltonians want to see festivals throughout Hamilton and not limited to “major parks or spaces” (Hendershot Research, 2011).

Community Leadership

When asked the extent to which they agree with statement “festivals and events should be planned and delivered by the community and not by City staff”, the majority of Hamiltonians (45%) were neutral.

However, more people (38%) agreed that leadership rested with the community versus 17% who view the City as the appropriate producer. The findings support a model with a mix of “who leads”: the community or the City, depending on the event (Hendershot Research, 2011).

Legacy of Excellence

Hamilton has a legacy of supporting and delivering quality events for its citizens and visitors. In the past, the City has received numerous awards for its events such as “Best Special Event” for RBC Aquafest (Economic Developers Council of Ontario, 2000), “Award of Excellence” for Tourism Marketing (Festivals Ontario Prix Awards, 1993) among others.

Excellence Today

Hamilton events continue to be recognized as quality experiences. For example, Supercrawl has won several awards including “Festival of the Year” (Hamilton Music Awards, 2013) and “Best Festival” (Tourism Hamilton, 2009 & 2010).

Tall Ships® Hamilton won “New Port of the Year” (Tall Ships America, 2013) and the Re-enactment of the Battle of Stoney Creek has been declared a “Top 100 Event” in Ontario every year since 2006 (Festivals and Events Ontario).

Tourism Successes

Hamilton has attracted events with a significant tourism draw such as the JUNO Awards (2015), the Canadian Country Music Awards (2011) and the upcoming International Skating Union Synchronized Skating Championship (2015).

Tourism Infrastructure

Hamilton has a number of facilities which enable tourism efforts such as, the David Braley Athletics Centre and the upcoming Tim Horton’s Stadium (former Ivor Wynne Stadium).

WEAKNESSES

Limited Resource Capacity	<p>There are limited public resources to service events in Hamilton. The City’s events servicing capacity is limited by its operating budgets and the number of events staff. Event organizers report the City’s facilitation role has been limited and that more pre and post event facilitation would help event organizers (Events Sector Survey, 2013).</p>
Coordination and Communication	<p>Event organizers do not always know which City Department to approach for help with events. Some have not heard of SEAT (Special Event Advisory Team) and are not aware of its purpose and function.</p> <p>Organizers request a “one stop shop” to make the event approval process more efficient and to reduce the amount of “red tape”. Event organizers request centralized information on user fees and a “formula for equitable access to funds and services” (Events Sector Survey, 2013). The City has many departments with responsibilities relating to events, but lacks a strategic coordination of events efforts and communication related to events.</p>
Lack of Neighbourhood Event Focus	<p>Neighbourhood event organizers feel particularly challenged by the event services offered. Some neighbourhood event organizers feel the SEAT process does not cater to smaller, neighbourhood events. Others feel that the City should waive more user fees and provide more support for local events which may not be “money makers” but build neighbourhood cohesion (Events Sector Survey, 2013).</p>
Diminishing Supports	<p>Over the last eight years, the City has phased out supports that were once offered to events “free of charge” through the “Services In Kind” Stream of the Community Partnership Program. The phase out of supports is as follows: Fire (2006); Transit/HSR (2010); Traffic (2011); Roads (2012); Police (2013).</p> <p>With the phase out of these supports, event organizers are now left to source and fund police services, traffic warning boards, transit-related costs and road closure services. Some members of the events community have expressed frustration by the loss of supports and have stated that user fees are “barriers to usage that undermine potential benefits of community assets”. User fees</p>

threaten the viability of some community events (Events Sector Survey, 2013).

Promotion of Events

Hamiltonians believe the City should do more to promote culture in Hamilton – 88% agreed with the statement “the City should promote more of its cultural facilities and events” (Hendershot Research, 2011). The City lacks a unified master list or calendar of events and more help with promotion would be welcomed (Events Sector Survey, 2013).

Events Support

When asked the open-ended question “what can the City do to strengthen cultural identity”, 50% of citations referenced events. 38% of the citations referenced increasing advertising of events. Another 12% of citations identified “boosting or increasing unique festivals and diverse events” as a way to strengthen cultural identity (Hendershot Research, 2011).

Venue Listings

The City lacks a detailed amenities listing for its outdoor venues. A complete amenity list, with consideration for the type of event (e.g. music, sports, theatre, etc.) would help event organizers and staff facilitating events (Events Sector Survey, 2013).

Manual Processes

The SEAT program processes a large volume of applications (383 in 2013 alone) on an annual basis, but the process and reporting of statistics (e.g. number and type of events) is still largely manual and time consuming.

Funding Limitations

Event organizers report frustrations with the funding process Community Partnership Program (CPP): that it lacks transparency; it is not clear how funding decisions are made; and there are funding gaps.

The City does not have a dedicated funding stream for “emerging” community events within the grants program (CPP) and event organizers report “that the same events seem to get funded” (Events Sector Survey, 2013).

Maintaining Safe Day to Day

Focus has been placed on maintaining key operational roles in the City such as funder and regulator. As a result, little time remains

Operations to plan for innovative or new civic events or attract signature tourism events.

Negative Image Hamilton suffers from a negative image which impedes its ability to attract tourists. Research in 2013 from the Ontario Tourism Marketing Partnership Corporation and the Regional Tourism Organization stated: “Hamilton’s industrial heritage arguably suppresses positive perceptions”.

Facilities Some event organizers believe the city lacks appropriate event facilities. Some have expressed the need to invest in inner city soccer fields and more indoor facilities and leagues.

OPPORTUNITIES**Economic Growth**

Events have a positive impact on the local and regional economy. Two recent economic impact studies in Hamilton used the provincial standard, the Ontario’s Tourism Regional Economic Impact Model (TREIM), and reported positive economic impacts.

Tall Ships® Hamilton resulted in an estimated economic impact of \$461,000 with local residents spent \$1,357,000 related to the event. Supercrawl 2013 reported an estimated economic impact of \$4,750,858 in Hamilton and total visitor spending was \$8,840,997.

Support for Investment

Public opinion supports funding culture and 82% of Hamiltonians believe that the City should provide financial support / funding for cultural development (Hendershot Research, 2011).

Tourism Potential

Events have the potential to attract tourists and 82% of Hamiltonians believe that culture attracts tourists and visitors (Hendershot Research, 2011).

Social Capital Growth

Events have the capacity to make a community feel more welcoming to residents and visitors (e.g.: new immigrants; new Hamiltonians; transplanted citizens, students at the post-secondary institutions). The Events Strategy has the potential to support the Immigration Action Plan’s *Welcome home Campaign*.

Multi-cultural Experiences

Many events offer diverse cultural programming, celebrating unique cultural heritage and traditions. For example: Viva Hamilton; Grecian Festival; Festitalia Outdoor Film Festival; Ghandi Festival; Soaring Spirit Aboriginal Festival; and It’s Your Festival.

Civic Pride

Events have the potential to grow civic pride and a positive community identity. In addition, events reach a wide range of citizens as most events are senior, family and youth-friendly. Many events are organized by volunteers and civically-minded citizens.

Creative Exposure

Many events offer creative programming which increases exposure to creative arts such as music, crafts, and dance. A recent study from Michigan State University found that childhood participation in arts and crafts leads to innovation, patents, and increases the odds of starting a business as an adult.

Researchers found that people who own businesses or patents received up to eight times more exposure to the arts as children than the general public (Economic Development Quarterly, August 2013, vol. 27 no. 3 221-229, “Arts and Crafts Critical to Economic Innovation”).

Event Attendance Factors

The top factors influencing Hamiltonian’s attendance at festivals are: the weather (75%); when the festival is held (73%) and information about the event (70%). Two of these top three factors can be influenced by planning and promotional efforts (Hendershot Research, 2011).

Website & Mobile Technology Use

Many people use the internet and mobile devices to gather information, which has the ability to provide instant, updated and accurate information about events. 82% of Hamilton residents use the Internet (Statistics Canada, 2009) and 65%-70% of Hamilton residents have Internet at home. The City’s website statistics reveal that the most viewed page on the Tourism Hamilton website after the main page is “what to do”.

Sponsorship

Sponsorship is a potential revenue stream for events, which are a natural sponsorship “vehicle”. Sponsorship funds would lessen the financial burden on tax payers but undertaking sponsorship requires resources (staff time, budget), has its limits and poses risks which must be managed.

THREATS

Legal Risks	Events pose a legal risk to the City. Legal risks can be mitigated with risk assessments, insurance coverage, licences, permits and by-law enforcement.
Environmental Impact	Events produce waste with a potential negative environmental impact.
Asset Vulnerability	Events have the potential to generate large crowds within a limited area, potentially damaging cultural and natural assets.
Mobility Challenges	Events often take place in parks with established paved paths which were not designed to meet diverse mobility needs at an event. Large crowds pull people from paved paths on grassy or bumpy terrain which may difficult for strollers, walkers and wheelchairs to navigate.
Fiscal Responsibility	Many citizens may desire extensive government services at no cost or without an increase in taxes. Growth in municipal services, such as events, will always be limited by public budgets and the need to first meet priority needs or mandatory requirements.