



EST. 1837  
**HAMILTON FARMERS'  
MARKET**  
OPEN YEAR ROUND

**HFM BOARD  
MEETING**

**April 14, 2025**



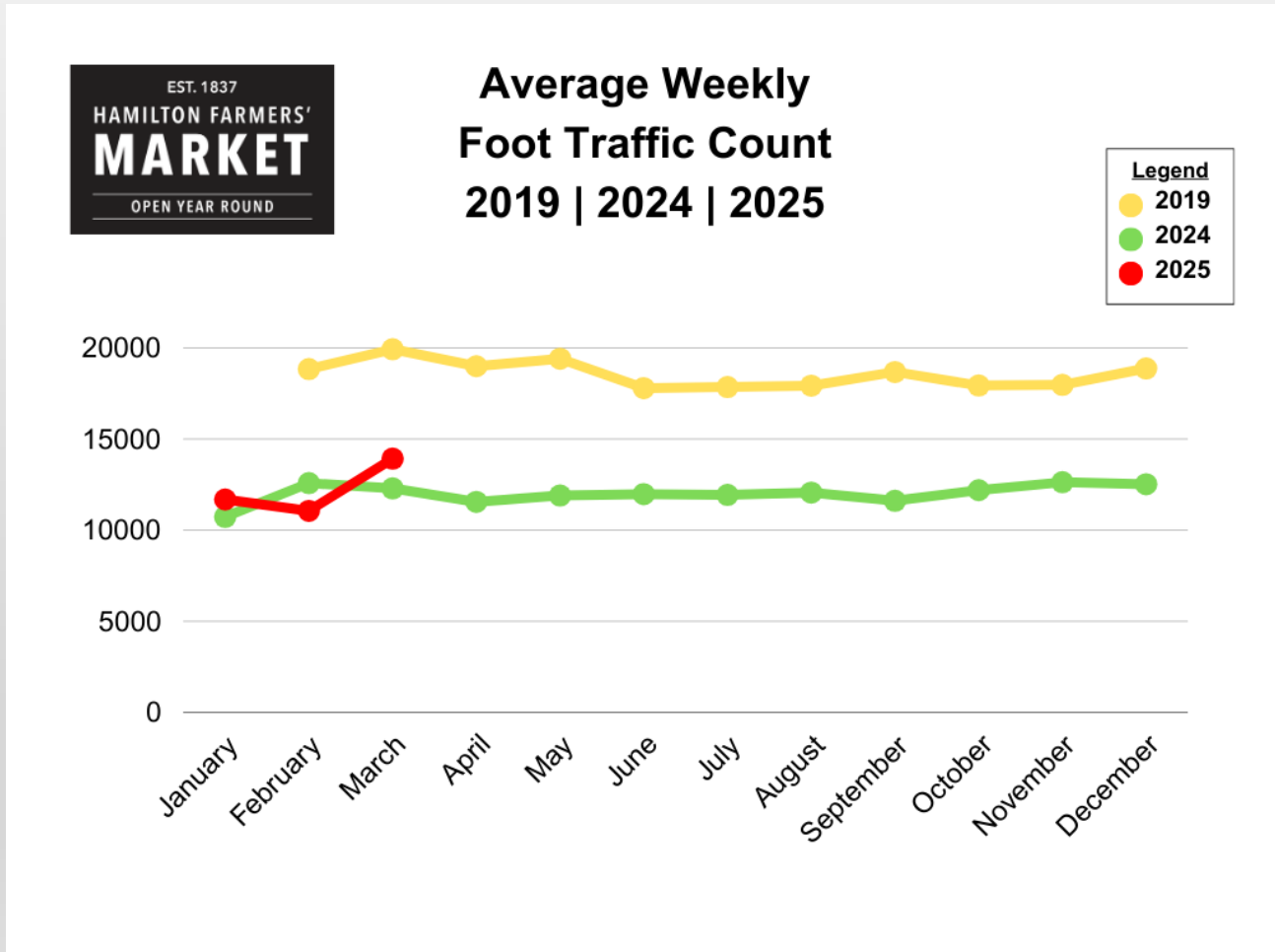
# Market Managers' Report

- **Lighting Retrofit Feasibility Study**
  - Q2 Completion, Lighting Improvements and Energy Savings
- **Painting**
  - Walls complete, railing being quoted
- **Local Showcase**
  - Extended for April/May, Extension into summer being assessed
  - Majority of Vendors Remaining w/ new additions
- **Vendor Attendance Policy Update**
  - Survey still in development
- **2026 Budget**
  - Move to Zero-Based Budgeting Process



# Q1 Foot Traffic Report

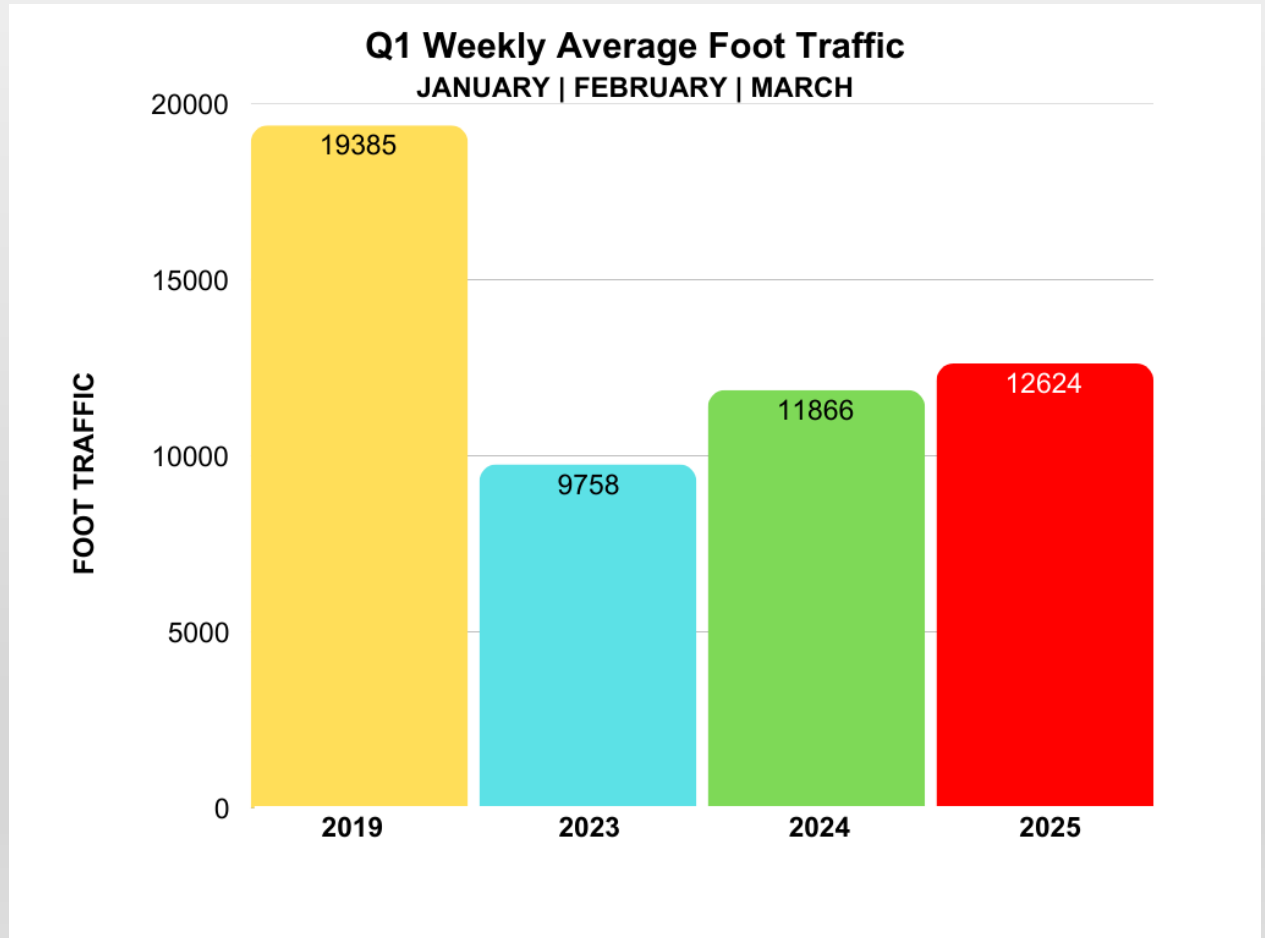
- Foot Traffic on an upward trend in Q1
- February decrease due to weather events





# Q1 Foot Traffic Report

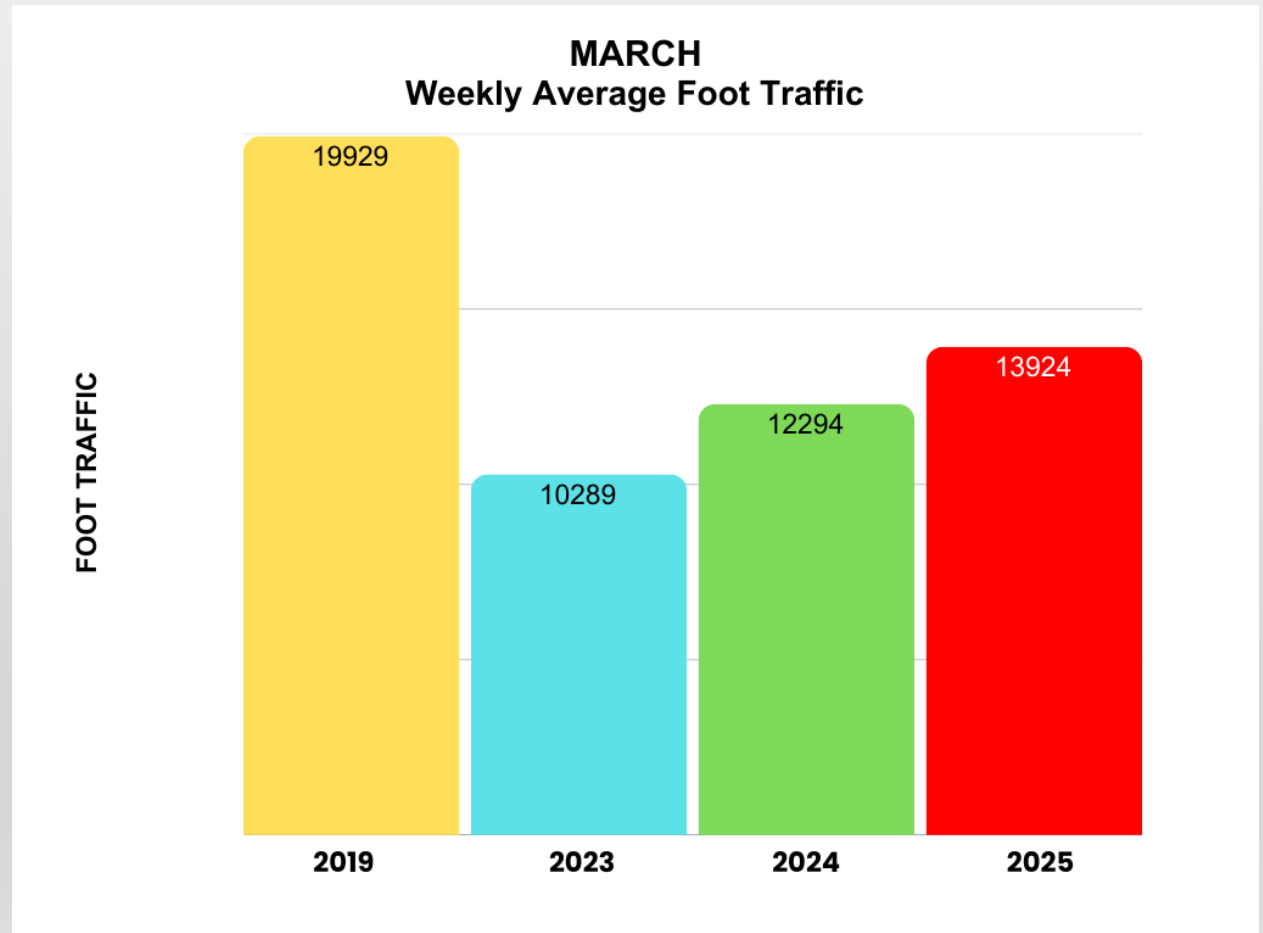
- Q1 2025 traffic has increased 6% above Q1 2024
- Q1 2025 average weekly foot traffic is 65% of Q1 2019
- Average Saturday traffic has recovered more significantly compared with weekday traffic





# Q1 Foot Traffic Report

- March 2025 traffic increased 13% over March 2024
- Counter improvements being explored





# Q1 Marketing Review - WEBSITE



Added to HFM Website in January 2025

## 90 DAY REPORT

All Visitors **16K** ↑ **16.1%** compared to the previous 90 days

### Top 3 Google Search Queries

<u>What they searched:</u>	<u>Clicks</u>	<u>Impressions</u>
hamilton farmers market	568	2,247
farmers market hamilton	138	961
hamilton market	74	348

Total Impressions

**33K**

Total Clicks

**2.1K**

Unique Visitors from Search

**11K**

↑ 11.4%

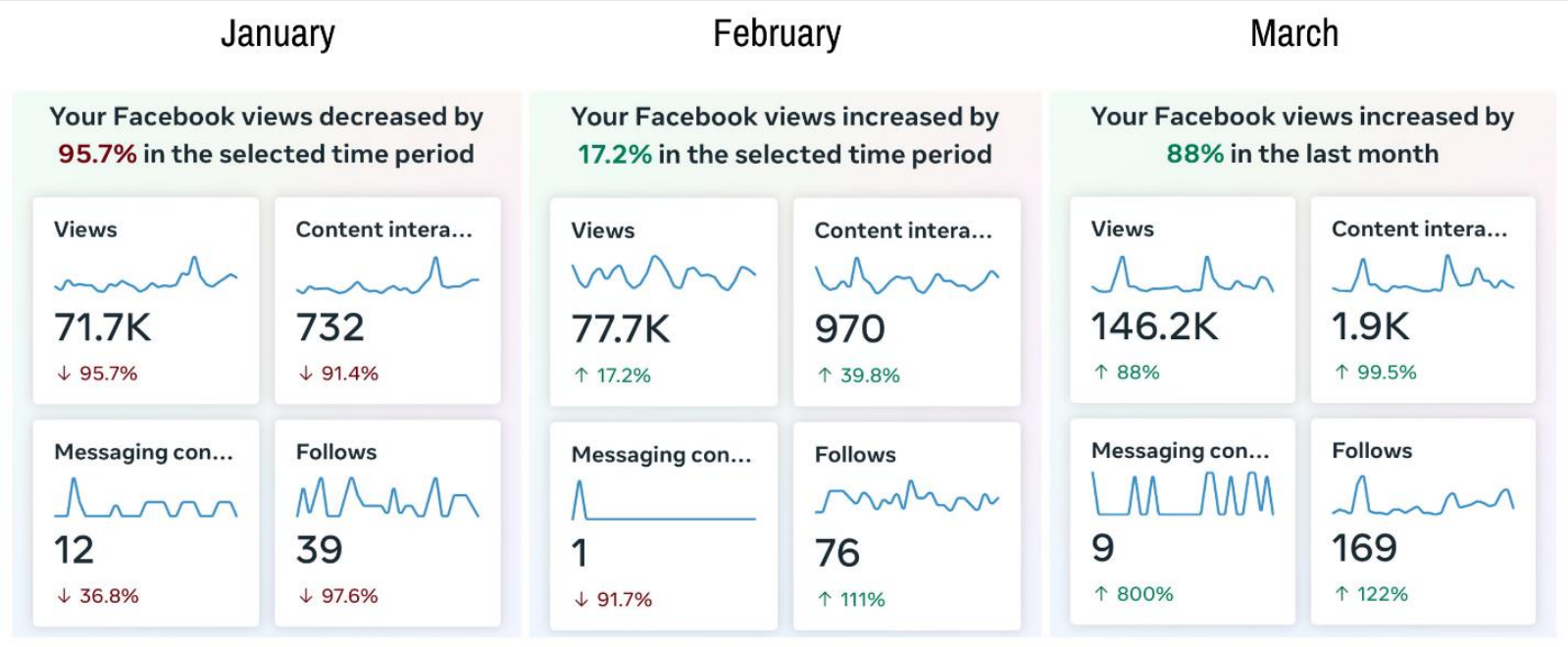
## UPDATES & ADDITIONS

- New Events page
- New Rentals page
- Local Showcase page
- Updated HFM Board page (work in progress)
- Updated Contact Us page
- Updated About Us



# Q1 Marketing Review - FACEBOOK

Facebook marketing has since been improved and significant engagement has now been achieved through that platform.



**Hamilton Farmers' Market**  
Published by [Terri Worrton](#)  
March 20 at 9:00 AM

...

Did you know the Birks Clock inside the Hamilton Farmers' Market has been a part of Hamilton's history since 1930? Originally standing at King & James, this stunning cl... [See more](#)



**TOP FACEBOOK POST IN Q1**

<b>Views</b>	<b>35,971</b>
<b>Reach</b>	<b>25,827</b>
<b>Interactions</b>	<b>430</b>
<b>Reactions</b>	<b>325</b>
<b>Comments</b>	<b>62</b>
<b>Shares</b>	<b>36</b>



# Q1 Marketing Review - INSTAGRAM

Instagram engagement decreased in Q1 mainly due to:

- A smaller number of posts scheduled by former staff
- Limited staff time
- Instagram algorithm change



hamontmarket Edit: were excited to announce an extension until APRIL! ... more

**TOP INSTAGRAM POST IN Q1**

Views	14,644
Reach	7,935
Interactions	229
Reactions	169
Comments	10
Shares	44





# Q1 Programming Review & Q2 Update

## Programming 2025: Quarter 1 Review

- 31 individual events (Jan-March 2025)
- **Programming Participants** (Jan-Mar 2025): 2048
- **Partner Highlights Include:** Hamilton Children's Museum, Hamilton Anti Racism Resource Centre, Workers Arts and Heritage Centre, Green Venture, City of Hamilton Waste Collection, The Creative Parents



## Q1 Programming Review & Q2 Update

### Programming 2025: Quarter 2 Update

- 23+ individual events (April-June)
- Notable programming events include;** Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day, 'Sample Saturdays' launch, HFM Strawberry Festival
- Partner Highlights include;** Hamilton Craft Studios, gritLIT, Hamilton Philharmonic Orchestra, Arts for All, Hamilton Public Library
- Ongoing projects include;** educational program development, Market kids club, vendor driven tasting events



# The Hamilton Farmers' Market Corporation

Governance & Operational  
Review – Final Presentation

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# The Hamilton Farmers' Market Corporation

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## → Contents

1. Introduction
2. Current State Findings
3. Future State Recommendations
4. Conclusion

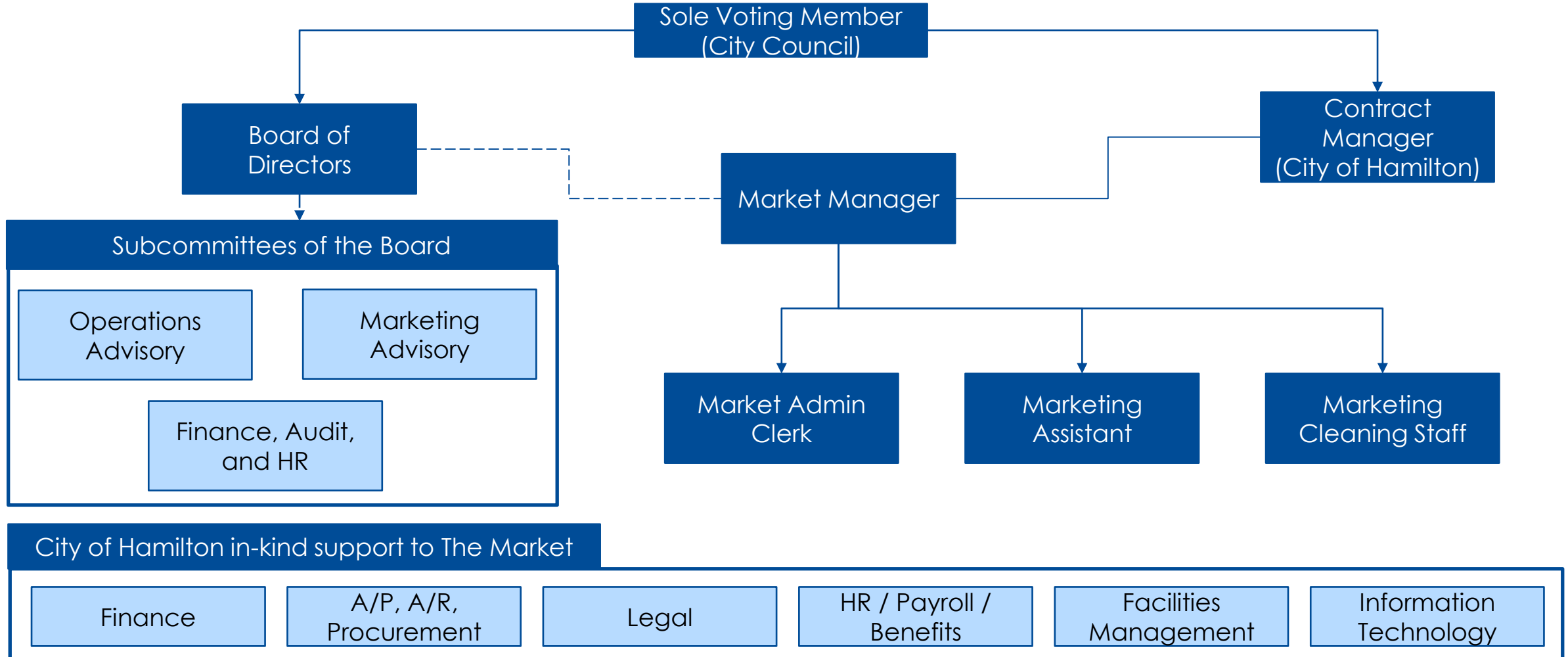
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# Current State Findings

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# Organizational Classification & Structure

The Market is classified as a Municipal Corporation subject to the Municipal Act (section 203) Regulation O.599/06



**Note:** The position of the Senior Program Manager and Market Programming Coordinator have recently been hired.

# Operational Findings

This section summarizes the themes and insights with respect to the Operations of HFMC from phase 1 and phase 2.

## Infrastructure Challenges:

- Aging building with significant maintenance issues impacting vendor operations.
- Limited equipment (e.g., exhaust hoods, sinks) and ventilation/cooling systems.
- Lack of common storage space and Wi-Fi/cell signal issues.

## Location and Accessibility:

- Poor layout and limited visibility; parking and transit challenges.
- Construction projects nearby may impact customer access short-term but increase future customer base.

## Operating Hours:

- Current operating hours are not convenient for all customers; inconsistent vendor adherence to hours.
- Four-day commitment deters farmers from participating.

## Customer Experience:

- Strong customer loyalty but unwelcoming atmosphere due to closed stalls during open hours.
- Limited seating and interaction areas reduce the Market's appeal as a social hub.

## Marketing and Communications:

- Undefined brand and limited signage; misalignment with the "Farmers' Market" name.
- Poor follow-up on vendor and public communication.

# Governance Findings

This section summarizes the themes and insights with respect to the Governance of HFMC from phase 1 and phase 2.

## Governance Model Limitations:

- HFMC operates as a Municipal Service Corporation on paper, but decision-making authority rests with the City.
- The Board functions more as an advisory body rather than a governing entity.

## Roles and Responsibilities:

- Overlapping roles between the Board and City lead to confusion and redundancies.
- Board's limited authority increases operational involvement, hindering strategic focus.

## Conflict of Interest:

- Presence of vendor directors on the Board creates potential conflicts of interest in decision-making.

## Relationship with the City:

- The City sees value in maintaining the Market as a public entity, with role in agro-tourism and sustainability.
- Dependence on City funding and services without clear accountability agreements or performance expectations.
- Lack of service-level agreements and costing for City-provided support.
- Reporting relationship of Market leadership and staff to City creates complexity for Board's role in strategic oversight.

## Public Perception and Branding:

- Past negative press and a "Culture of Complaint" have hurt the Market's reputation.
- Improved public engagement and recent strategic efforts show positive change.



# Vision Statement of Hamilton Farmers' Market

In early 2023, Hamilton Farmers' Market refreshed their Vision Statement and Role in the City of Hamilton

## Vision Statement

The Hamilton Farmers' Market continue its long-standing role of supporting local farmers, producers, and businesses while providing a reliable source of fresh food and creating a community gathering destination for downtown residents and all Hamiltonians

## Role of the Market

- Provides a wide range of fresh food and grocery options for downtown residents and all Hamiltonians;
- Serves as a social and cultural focal point of Downtown Hamilton;
- Provides economic opportunities, including business incubation, for rural and urban producers and entrepreneurs; and,
- Celebrates the agricultural tradition and strong rural/urban connections of the region.

## Guiding Principles for Future State

As a part of the vision statement, Hamilton Farmers' Market has identified the following three guiding principles for any future state developments.

### 1 Physical Design/Infrastructure

- Address the physical limitations of the market
- Provide more public spaces that are flexible to accommodate diverse uses
- Strengthen connections to outdoor spaces and neighbours

### 2 Program Mix

- More local farmers, local producers, and pop-up vendors
- More programs, events, and education (in collaboration with local partners)
- After hours and expanded culinary offerings

### 3 Operations

- Increase management capacity and funding sources
- Expand hours (for at least parts of the Market)
- Strengthen the Market's marketing, advertising and promotion
- Provide for multi-modal access, including adequate parking

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Future State

# Recommendations Agnostic to the Corporate Structure

Irrespective of the selected Corporate Structure for the market, there are six (6) recommendations that will support success and realization of the market's strategy. The likelihood and ease of implementation in a City of Hamilton context provides some direction on which corporate structure to pursue.

Recommendation	Description & Rationale
<p><b>Recommendation #1: Clear Roles and Responsibilities with Accountability Agreements that include Service Level Agreements</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update the formal accountability agreement between the City of Hamilton and the Market, detailing roles, responsibilities, and reporting lines. This agreement should clearly define operational, financial, and governance responsibilities.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on the current state findings, there are inefficiencies due to unclear responsibilities, leading to operational challenges and miscommunication between the City and the Market's management. The City's historical involvement has created dependencies, but moving forward, the Market's success will depend on clarity around who is responsible for what and being held accountable to deliver.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The accountability agreement should include specific, measurable outcomes, with performance metrics tied to key aspects such as vendor satisfaction and retention, customer foot traffic, revenue growth/diversification, community and economic impact, brand visibility, local and sustainable product offerings, event participation/community engagement, and financial efficiency.</li> <li>• Create SLAs with City corporate services to define expected service levels, response times, and accountability measures (including finance, facilities management, human resources, etc.)</li> <li>• Regular review meetings between the Market's leadership and Board and City representatives will ensure that both parties stay aligned on goals and responsibilities, helping avoid duplication of efforts and ensuring accountability for operational outcomes.</li> </ul>

# Recommendations Agnostic to the Corporate Structure

Recommendation	Description & Rationale
<p><b>Recommendation #2: Entrepreneurial Culture Driven by a Mission-Focused Leader</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hire a mission-focused, entrepreneurial leader to manage the Market with strategic and operational independence. This leader should focus on innovation, community engagement, and aligning operations with the Market’s long-term goals.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Findings from the stakeholder interviews highlight the need for a strong, visionary leader who can drive the Market toward its potential as a community hub and economic driver. Currently, the Market’s organizational structure lacks the seniority of this needed leadership position and operationally lacks the autonomy and entrepreneurial spirit necessary to innovate, which is compounded by its dependence on City decision-making.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The Market’s leadership should be empowered to make operational decisions with reduced interference from the City. This will enable quicker response to market changes and the ability to implement creative initiatives that engage vendors and customers. The leader should also develop partnerships with local organizations to expand the Market’s influence in Hamilton’s economic and cultural landscape.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendation #3: Stakeholder Engagement and Collaboration</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish formal mechanisms for community and vendor engagement to ensure alignment with stakeholder expectations. This could include creating a vendor advisory committee or working group that meets regularly with Market leadership and the Board to discuss operational issues, vendor performance, and market development. Participation in this committee/working group could be based on election amongst vendors and the chair may sit on the Board as a non-voting member.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Findings from stakeholder interviews indicate that vendors feel disconnected from decision-making, leading to a sense of dissatisfaction and mistrust. Additionally, community input is not consistently incorporated into operational decisions, which hinders the Market’s ability to adapt to local needs and preferences. Improved engagement will help align operations with stakeholder needs, foster goodwill, and ensure the Market remains a vital community asset.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

# Recommendations Agnostic to the Corporate Structure

Recommendation	Description & Rationale
<p><b>Recommendation #4: Infrastructure and Facility Alignment with Strategy</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invest in the necessary infrastructure upgrades and facility improvements to align the Market’s physical space with its long-term strategic goals. The facility should be a modern, functional, and welcoming environment that supports vendor operations and attracts customers.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The report’s analysis reveals that the Market’s current infrastructure is outdated and does not meet the needs of vendors or visitors. This issue has been exacerbated by budget constraints, which have delayed necessary repairs and improvements. Poor infrastructure impacts the Market’s ability to attract vendors and foot traffic, ultimately limiting its revenue potential.</li> </ul> </li> <li>A phased infrastructure improvement plan should be developed, prioritizing immediate safety and operational needs, while aligning with longer-term strategic goals such as increasing vendor diversity and improving customer experience. Funding for these upgrades could be sourced through City investment, grants, or public-private partnerships, depending on the chosen governance model.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendation #5: Financial Sustainability with Measurable Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a financially sustainable business model with clear KPIs to track performance. The business model should aim to at least break even, with a focus on diversified revenue streams including vendor agreements, events, grants, and partnerships with an emphasis to decrease financial dependence on the City over time.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial challenges have been a recurring theme throughout the report, highlighting the need for a model that can generate sufficient revenue to cover operational costs. Currently, the Market relies heavily on City funding, which makes it vulnerable to budget cuts and resource allocation issues.</li> </ul> </li> <li>The Market should set measurable financial KPIs, such as revenue growth, cost efficiency, and return on investment for events and initiatives. These KPIs should be monitored quarterly, with adjustments made as needed to ensure financial sustainability. In addition to vendor fees, the Market should explore opportunities for revenue through hosting community events, sponsorships, and leveraging Hamilton’s tourism initiatives.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Note: it is expected that the market will continue to require some financial support from the City over the long-term, but the total value should reduce over time to support growth of the Market.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

# Recommendations Agnostic to the Corporate Structure

Recommendation	Description & Rationale
<p><b>Recommendation #6: Ensure the Market’s Staffing Model can Support Operations</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate and optimize the staffing model to ensure it aligns with the Market’s operational needs and strategic objectives. Focus on addressing key gaps in marketing, communications, partnership/community development, and financial analysis, ensuring the right personnel are in place to support the Market’s growth and operational efficiency.</li> <li>• The current state analysis identified significant staffing gaps in marketing, communications, partnership/community development, and financial analysis. These roles are crucial for expanding the Market’s reach, engaging with stakeholders, and ensuring financial sustainability. Insufficient focus on marketing and communications has resulted in limited brand visibility, and the lack of dedicated staff for partnership and community development has hindered deeper engagement with vendors, community groups, and local businesses. Additionally, the absence of a financial analyst limits the Market’s ability to efficiently manage resources and plan for long-term financial sustainability. Filling these roles will improve both internal operations and external engagement.</li> <li>• Conduct a thorough staffing audit to identify gaps, followed by a targeted recruitment strategy to fill these key positions. Professional development should be prioritized to ensure staff in these areas can effectively contribute to the Market’s marketing strategy, community partnerships, financial planning, and overall success.</li> </ul>

# Recommendations Unique to Recommended Corporate Structure

As a Municipal Service Corporation, there are two (2) additional recommendations for the Market to successfully achieve its vision and strategy and increase its governance and operational maturity.

Recommendation	Description
<p><b>Recommendation #7: Strengthen Board Governance</b></p>	<p>To take on the functions of a Municipals Service Corporation, the Market’s Board needs to enhance its governance effectiveness, and the City needs to simplify and reduce control levers:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Board should transition from a stakeholder board to a skills-based board with a skilled and diverse board of directors with expertise in areas such as business, finance, agriculture, retail, and community development.</li> <li>• Board members need to be provided with training on governance best practices in a municipal context to ensure that the Market can operate in an autonomous manner, in alignment with its strategic goals and within its accountability framework with the City.</li> <li>• The Board needs to refine its committee structure to increase focus on key functional areas such as finance, human resources, operations, and vendor relations. Each committee should be chaired by a board member with relevant expertise and should regularly report back to the full Board on key issues, risks, and opportunities in their respective areas.</li> <li>• The City needs to streamline, simplify and adjust processes to give the Board real decision authority within the constraints of its financial resources and accountability agreement. This includes reduced levels of approval within the City and duplicative decision-making from Council.</li> <li>• To manage conflict of interest, vendors should not be voting board members but rather engaged through a non-voting sub-committee or advisory group to enhance communication and collaboration on operational topics.</li> <li>• Reporting and communication of the Board to Council should also be redefined and simplified along with the reporting relationship and communication into the City’s bureaucracy.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Recommendation #8: Review the Market’s Staffing Model and Clarify Reporting Relationships</b></p>	<p>A staffing model where Market leadership and staff report to the Board aligns with best practices but faces challenges due to labour relations. Regardless of the model, roles, reporting relationships, and performance oversight by the Board should be defined in the accountability agreement, with HR support from the City through a Service Level Agreement.</p>



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# Conclusion

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## Next steps

- While the governance model of the Hamilton Farmers' Market remains the same on paper as an **Arms-length Agency / Municipal Service Corporation**, the recommendations in this report represent a **significant departure from the status quo**.
- These recommendations emphasize a **substantial shift in how the structure is implemented**, requiring a **higher level of governance and operational maturity**. Strengthening **board governance**, developing **clear accountability frameworks**, and **fostering financial sustainability** are critical to enabling the Market to fully achieve its strategic vision.
- These recommendations will support the Market to function with **greater autonomy and responsiveness**, while maintaining **alignment with the City's priorities**. The enhanced focus on board effectiveness, stakeholder engagement, and a well-defined performance framework will drive long-term success.
- By executing these recommendations, the Market can transition from its current operational limitations to a **more dynamic and strategic entity** capable of contributing meaningfully to Hamilton's economic, cultural, and social fabric.

## Next steps – Sole Voting Member Approval

- The governance and operating model for the Hamilton Farmers' Market to remain a Municipal Service Corporation be guided by the Optimus SBR
- Staff is directed to develop the legal and operational framework (or amendments to existing instruments as appropriate) required to support the implementation of the recommended governance and operating model, including resource and budget implications, together with a transition plan, and report back to General Issues Committee for approval
- That the Staff Report and accompanying presentation be referred to the Hamilton Farmers' Market Corporation Board for review and feedback, with a report back to a future meeting of the Sole Voting Member