



**SUBJECT: Red Tape Red Carpet recommendations 2023**  
**TO: Community Planning, Regulation & Mobility Cttee.**  
**FROM: Burlington Economic Development**

Report Number: ECDEV-05-23

Wards Affected: All

Date to Committee: October 31, 2023

Date to Council: November 14, 2023

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### **Recommendation:**

Receive and file Burlington Economic Development report ECDEV-05-23 regarding Red Tape Red Carpet (RTRC) recommendations and associated appendices; and

Direct the Executive Director of Burlington Economic Development, Executive Director of Community Planning Regulation and Mobility and Executive Director of Community Relations and Engagement to report back on the implementation plan in Q2 2024.

### **PURPOSE:**

#### **Vision to Focus Alignment:**

- Increase economic prosperity and community responsive city growth
- Deliver customer centric services with a focus on efficiency and technology transformation

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### **Executive Summary:**

In 2019, Mayor Meed Ward and Councilor Galbraith launched and co-chaired the Red Tape Red Carpet Task Force initiative, which led to 22 recommendations to better serve the business and development communities, and work has been undertaken to implement those recommendations.

In 2022, we entered the new term of council and engagement was undertaken with the business community to understand where we have improved, what issues they face in doing business in Burlington and how we can make it easier for them to start, locate and grow in Burlington.

The engagement highlighted the need for ongoing work towards a more efficient, transparent, and customer-focused development process in Burlington that can provide faster turnaround times, improve communication, and facilitate business growth. Recommendations for draft prioritized actions for Red Tape Red Carpet for 2023 onwards can be found in Appendix A to this report.

The purpose of this report is to provide an opportunity to engage with members of committee on issues identified and emerging opportunities to improve the customer experience. During Q3 2023 staff have continued to refine the recommendations and this report outlines the evolution of the recommendations based on business engagement. One of the critical findings of the engagement was the need to ‘purpose-fit’ the methods of service to the varying needs of different business segments. To address this finding the following key initiatives have been identified:

- Continue to expand the functionality of the online portal, “MyFiles”, to cover more application types and full end to end process of those applications;
- Expand the services provided by Burlington Economic Development to better support small businesses and the development industry; and,
- Scope the opportunity for enhanced service offered by the Customer Experience Manager by implementing Hi-Impact criteria to identify those development proposals which address areas of critical need within the city (ex. Affordable housing, significant employment-related tax assessment growth).

Moving forward these recommendations will be the updated and evolved recommendations for Red Tape Red Carpet replacing the original 2019 recommendations moving forward.

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## **Background and Discussion:**

### **Red Tape Red Carpet Key Achievements 2018-2022**

In 2019 the Red Tape Red Carpet Taskforce collected insights and ideas from the Burlington business community, partner organizations and staff to better understand the challenges (reduce “red tape”) to locating or expanding a business here, and to ideate around solutions that would better serve our businesses (roll out the “red carpet”). On September 23, 2019, City Council approved the 22 recommendations arising from the Mayor’s Red Tape Red Carpet (RTRC) Task Force initiative to better serve our customers as part of the City’s commitment to continuous improvement. A draft implementation plan was presented at the October 8, 2019, Planning and Development Committee via city manager report CM-24-19: Red Tape Red Carpet Update and approved by City Council on October 21, 2019.

The City of Burlington has achieved several key accomplishments in improving its development and customer service processes as part of the 2018-22 Red Tape Red Carpet recommendations. An update was provided to Community Planning, Regulation and Mobility Committee (CPRM) as part of report Burlington Economic Development report ECDEV-02-23. An online Red Tape Red Carpet Dashboard was launched and presented at the December 3, 2019, Planning and Development Committee to provide regular updates on implementation of the recommendations and ensure transparency and accountability. It breaks out each of the 22 recommendations and provides interactive tools to review the status and what's been done so far. The dashboard was last updated to reflect RTRC Implementation in Q2 2023 and is available for review at <https://www.burlington.ca/en/council-and-city-administration/red-tape-red-carpet-progress-reporting.aspx>.

In 2022, we entered the new term of council and engagement was undertaken with the business community to understand where we have improved, what issues they face in doing business in Burlington and how we can make it easier for them to start, locate and grow in Burlington. As part of this engagement, focus groups were held based on the following key segments of businesses that interact with the City of Burlington and Burlington Economic Development:

1. Industrial, Commercial, and Institutional (ICI) Realtors
2. Industrial, Commercial and Institutional Landowners and Developers
3. Residential Landowners and Developers
4. Existing Businesses (Non-Development Industry)
5. City of Burlington Staff

Detailed feedback received from each of these groups was presented as part of Burlington Economic Development report ECDEV-02-23 at the June 27, 2023, Community Planning, Regulation and Mobility Committee meeting.

In addition, Customer Service Requests (CSRs) completed by Burlington Economic Development were analyzed to look at key problems, feedback from businesses and the most common issues that businesses ran into when requesting economic development support in facilitating interactions with the City of Burlington.

The engagement highlighted the need for a more efficient, transparent, and customer-focused development process in Burlington that can provide faster turnaround times, improve communication, and facilitate business growth. Recommendations for draft prioritized actions for Red Tape Red Carpet for 2023 onwards can be found in Appendix B.

## **Draft Red Tape Red Carpet Updated Recommendations 2023**

As part of ECDEV 02-23, draft RTRC recommendations were made. These were based on extensive feedback with businesses, staff and the development community. Over the summer staff have continued to develop and refine the recommendations. The full list of RTRC recommendations presented to the Community Planning, Regulation and Mobility Committee on June 27, 2023, are included in Appendix A. This list of recommendations and prioritization criteria continues to be refined, and the following amendments to the recommendations are being made.

### **Expansion and finalization of HIGH IMPACT (HI) CRITERIA for business concierge services and council reporting**

#### **HIGH IMPACT (HI) ECONOMIC CRITERIA**

- For industrial and commercial files:
  - \$3.7+ million in new industrial tax assessment
  - \$2.8+ million in new office tax assessment
  - \$9.2+ million in new retail tax assessment
- For industrial and commercial files:
  - 50+ industrial jobs generated or retained
  - 20+ office jobs generated or retained
  - 30+ retail jobs generated or retained

#### **HIGH IMPACT (HI) ATTAINABLE HOUSING CRITERIA**

- As a minimum the development must meet the following criteria:
  - Consistency with Provincial Policy and conformity with Regional and Local policy frameworks.
  - Compliance with the City's Urban Design Guidelines and built form expectations, as outlined in the City's Official Plan(s).
  - Conservation and retention of existing Cultural Heritage Resources.
- In addition, the development must meet at least one of the following criteria to qualify as High Impact:
  - 30% units designated affordable in the proposed development.
  - 100% purpose-built rental units in a development with 10+ units in the proposed development
  - Apartment dwellings with 3 or more bedrooms in 35% of units in the proposed development.
  - Mixed Use Developments that contain 3+ land uses (i.e. residential, retail/commercial, office, employment, minimum 0.1 Ha parkland, public service facilities, etc.)

These criteria will apply to development files in the MTSA's. Once the Community Planning Permit System (CPPS) is approved the concierge service for development files covered under the CPPS will be revisited and modified if needed to achieve the desired effect of the HI criteria throughout the city.

#### HIGH IMPACT (HI) COMMUNITY CRITERIA

- Projects that have a high impact on community and deliver new services or supports to the community e.g., new city facilities, social support facilities, public services facilities, institutional facilities etc.

Files recognized as High Impact (HI) will be eligible to receive a Development Concierge service, which will include a tailored service to support applicants through the process. Depending on the types of applications required prioritization of HI files will not necessarily involve expediting of processes as legislated timelines will still need to be met across applications. However, the service will provide end to end coverage, ensuring smooth hand-off between staff teams and supporting maximized opportunity for concurrent reviews.

In addition, it is recommended that the HI criteria be integrated into the agenda setting process for the Committee of Adjustment with additional monthly meetings set aside to discuss HI files so that they can be provided with priority servicing.

Discussions are taking place on how the HI file reporting should be managed with the proposed new Standing Committee Pipeline to Permit. Reporting on the effectiveness of the HI criteria will be included with other development-related reporting to the appropriate Committee of Council. The new committee will also be a valuable resource for providing advice during continuous improvement evaluations of the HI criteria.

#### **Direction on Joint Working Group with Landscape Ontario**

At the June 27, 2023 presentation of the draft Red Tape Red Carpet Recommendations a delegation was provided by Landscape Ontario and the following staff direction (SD-30-23) was approved to help address their concerns as part of the Red Tape Red Carpet recommendations.

Direct the City Manager in response to the formal request by Landscape Ontario (as included in briefing note dated June 19, 2023, and submitted on behalf of professional landscape member businesses serving the City of Burlington) to proceed as follows:

#### ACTIONS:

1. Establish a Joint Working Group to review outstanding issues and continuous improvement opportunities related to all facets of the City of

Burlington development application permitting process as it applies to professional landscaping services. In so doing, the City fully acknowledges the need for urgent stakeholder engagement with Landscape Ontario members as stated in the briefing note as follows “*The professional landscape business would like to work in collaboration with the City of Burlington to play key role in providing advice and feedback to Council*”;

2. Confirm with Landscape Ontario the representation related to their member participation on the Working Group as well as City senior staff representation including but not limited to Community Planning, Engineering Services, Roads Parks and Forestry, Building Services, Burlington Digital Services and Community Relations and Engagement;
3. Prepare a high-level workplan in conjunction with the Working Group including key objectives, meeting frequency (i.e., biweekly minimum) and format (i.e. virtual), reporting timelines inclusive of a final report target to Council from the City Manager by Q3 2023 (i.e. September 12, 2023 CPRM Committee). In addition to the final report, ongoing updates on the progress of the Working Group (i.e., quick wins) will be reported out publicly on a timely basis whenever possible in the weekly Council Information Package (CIP);

Staff have worked with Landscape Ontario during Q2 and Q3 to address the staff direction. Two meetings were held with the Landscape Ontario working group to date – July 20<sup>th</sup> and Oct. 10<sup>th</sup>. In the first meeting on July 20<sup>th</sup>, Landscape Ontario representatives presented a number of concerns related to the review and permitting processes for all different types of landscape design and construction projects. Some of the Landscape Ontario issues have been addressed through the recent *My Files* Application which went live in May through the Streamlined Development Application Fund (SDAF) process improvements as well as internal departmental communications and other changes and efficiencies being implemented.

Staff are committed to continuing to work in collaboration with Landscape Ontario to address their concerns particularly related to development processing timelines and requirements. Appendix C provides the details of the discussions and progress made to date at the two working group meetings. In addition, other items have also recently emerged that will require further discussion and staff will undertake to further update committee as required over the next 6 months.

## **Role of Burlington Economic Development in addressing address gaps identified through stakeholder engagement and relationship management with residential business community**

Burlington Economic Development and the City of Burlington have been working collaboratively to engage the residential development community over Q3 2023. This has included individual corporate calls with Burlington developers and joint events with WEHBA and BILD. Some examples of new joint activities are below, and we are continuing to explore the best ways for Burlington Economic Development to work with the City of Burlington to support our residential building community and achieving complete communities in our MTSAs.

- Connecting residential developers to business support and growth resources. Joint corporate calls have been undertaken between Community Planning and Economic Development. These have resulted in new connections to innovation resources through TechPlace.
- Engagement on the new Community Planning Permit System (CPPS) tool has taken place through Developer Roundtables hosted jointly by Burlington Economic Development and the Burlington Chamber of Commerce.
- A Building in Burlington Event was hosted by Burlington Economic Development jointly with WEHBA and BILD to engage in discussions on best practices from industry in achieving complete communities.

## **Delivering a Positive Customer Experience and Evolving Relationship Management**

Recruitment has been completed for the Customer Experience Manager – Business Concierge with the role filled in mid-September 2023. Onboarding is currently underway including discussions on the roll out of HI file criteria and associated processes.

## **Expanding the mandate of Burlington Economic Development to support Main Street Businesses**

During Q3 Burlington Economic Development undertook engagement with main street business support partners including Business Improvement Association, Halton Region Small Business Enterprise Centre, Burlington Chamber of Commerce and Tourism Burlington. These discussions have helped form a new scope for the Economic Development Officer – Main Street Business role. We are also engaging with other municipalities to look at best practices in mains street business supports. Discussions are taking place between municipal partners determining the key functions and identifying the most appropriate

manner in which to staff the position in early 2024. In the interim Burlington Economic Development is continuing to back fill the existing Special Business Area Coordinator (SBAC) business support functions within existing staffing while the position is vacant.

### **Continuous Improvement and Tools to support the evolution of the customer experience**

One of the outcomes of the SDAF process was a new online portal for self-service capabilities of applications going through the Pre-Building Permit application process. The portal is known as Burlington MyFiles. Continuous improvement of this platform will entail enhancing the self-service capabilities, and expanding the service to eventually include all applications that are not eligible for HI processing. This tool will continue to grow as 'red carpet' tool for the greatest volume of applications, giving applicants and owners enhanced transparency and the ability to interact more directly in the processing of their application.

Staff are currently engaged in a proof of concept of an AI based file-review platform that has the potential to allow customers to explore design options and zoning compliance prior to formally submitting an application. The platform has the potential to automate some aspects of the processing of high-volume/low complexity files, freeing up staff resources to better serve complex files and tailored service for HI applications.

Ongoing process improvements and investment in technology are crucial to provide excellence in 'right-sized' customer service that is tailored to the nature of every application.

### **Implement Community Improvement Plans (CIPs) and other tools to support City-building initiatives.**

The low-hanging fruit is to provide funding and direction to implement the existing Brownfield CIP which was approved in 2020 for the redevelopment of complex brownfield sites. In addition to developing CIPS that support the new attainable housing strategy. The multi-year budget simulation currently includes the CIP budget beginning in 2026 in keeping with the EPP prioritization and capacity work planning.

### **Strategy/process/risk**

The 2019 recommendations brought forward by the Red Tape Red Carpet Taskforce involved extensive engagement with the business community. Additional work has been undertaken as part of the new term of council to engage customers and evolve the recommendations for Red Tape Red Carpet to meet current customer needs.



Ongoing feedback from the business community will be collected through the new city-wide Customer Feedback survey as well as through the work of the redesigned Customer Experience Manager – Business Development role to inform further strategies and recommendations to better support businesses to start, locate and grow in Burlington.

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### **Financial Matters:**

At this time, there are no financial impacts to the implementation of the Red Tape Red Carpet recommendations.

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### **Climate Implications:**

The implementation of the Red Tape Red Carpet Recommendations has the following climate implications:

As part of the Business Attraction Strategy, a focus will be on Cleantech will attract companies that provide solutions to climate and environmental issues. Burlington Economic Development's Business Attraction & Retention and policy initiatives also help support GHG emissions reduction through the GO Corridor Vision and Master Planning which will encourage increased employment density and mixed-use development. As well, initiatives are being developed with Burlington Transit to increase transit connectivity to employment areas and create more opportunities for employees to use public transit for their day-to-day commutes, thereby reducing the production of GHGs by private vehicles.

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### **Engagement Matters:**

These Red Tape Red Carpet recommendations were gathered through a public survey and through virtual feedback sessions with key segments of businesses that interact with the City of Burlington and Burlington Economic Development:

1. Industrial, Commercial, and Institutional (ICI) Realtors
2. Industrial, Commercial and Institutional Landowners and Developers
3. Residential Landowners and Developers
4. Existing Businesses (Non-Development Industry)
5. City of Burlington Staff

These sessions sought to identify the challenges and obstacles facing growth and the relocation/expansion of businesses in Burlington to develop actional solutions. Existing

businesses were asked largely about their experiences setting up in Burlington and how they feel the experience of other businesses in the future could be enhanced. The other groups were asked three main questions:

1. What are we doing well? What examples of good experiences or best practices have you experienced?
2. Where can we do better? Where can improvements be made? Are there any themes or recurrent issues you have experienced?
3. What do you feel has changed since the original RTRC discussions in 2018, if anything? What are other municipalities that you have worked with doing well that Burlington could learn from?

The feedback received from each session were provided in Appendix A of ECDEV -02-23.

Overall, the key themes that emerged across all sessions with ICI realtors, industrial, commercial, and institutional landowners, residential developers and landowners, and existing businesses were as follows:

- Frustration with delays in the development process, lack of transparency, and poor communication with City staff.
- Need for a more cohesive approach, stronger connections between the city and other agencies, and a focus on culture and customer service.
- Desire for realistic timing guarantees and process improvements, capacity building, and reward for staff efficiency.
- Importance of feedback and communication, empathy, transparency, and relationship-building, and learning from other municipalities.
- Negative perception of Burlington's brand and reputation, and the need for faster turnaround times to attract investment and revenue.
- Zoning and regulatory concerns, and the need for a clear and streamlined process, with a single point of contact to manage the relationships for high economic impact files, for small main street businesses, and support them in navigating the complex development process in Burlington.
- Development of a culture that enables and rewards staff to be problem solvers and work with customers to achieve goals together

The sessions took place at a time when the process improvements of SDAF had been implemented but applications had not had the opportunity to experience those improvements in the end to end processing of their applications. We recognize that many of the comments reflect the pre-SDAF processes, yet still provide valuable insights and emphasis on the value of continuous improvement and further investment opportunities as described in this report.

Once the processes outlined in this report have been in place for a period of time, staff will continue to engage with industry partners to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these measures. Beginning in Q2, 2024, Staff will report back to Council on a semi-annual basis regarding outcomes as well as adjusted and new measures to continuously improve the customer experience through the development application process.

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## **Conclusion:**

The implementation of the recommendations developed as part of the Mayor's Red Tape Red Carpet Taskforce initiative in 2018 are well underway, Stakeholder engagement in 2022/2023 has resulted in an updated and enhanced list of recommendations for Red Tape Red Carpet replacing the original 2019 recommendations moving forward.

A cross-departmental team of senior staff is developing a long-term implementation plan of 2023 recommendations. The new recommendations in this report will be reported on through an update Red Tape Red Carpet Dashboard available publicly at: <https://www.burlington.ca/en/your-city/red-tape-red-carpet-task-force-progress.asp>.

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Respectfully submitted,

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## **Appendices:**

- A. Red Tape Red Carpet (RTRC) Recommendations presented at June 27, 2023 CPRM
- B. Updated RTRC Recommendations for implementation by staff October 2023
- C. Landscape Ontario Working Group update

**Report Approval:**

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, the Chief Financial Officer and the Executive Director of Legal Services & Corporation Counsel.