

# Burlington Official Plan, 2020 Targeted Realignment Exercise

## Engagement Approach

### Background

#### Burlington Official Plan 2020, Targeted Realignment Exercise

The City of Burlington is undertaking its Official Plan Targeted Realignment Exercise to realign the policies of the Burlington Official Plan (BOP) with the recent changes to provincial and regional policy while continuing to execute the vision of the community and apply the objectives of the Housing Strategy.

Since the Regional approval of the BOP, 2020, a number of fundamental changes to the broader policy framework have been realized or proposed. The City must ensure that the BOP, 2020 aligns with the updated Regional and Provincial policy framework. This exercise will examine only the policies within the Official Plan that are affected by recent policy changes, this will not be a comprehensive Official plan review.

Engaging people on issues that affect their lives and their city is a key component of democratic society. Public involvement encourages participation, action, and personal responsibility. Burlington's commitment to public engagement is reflected in its [Community Engagement Charter](#), adopted by City Council. The Charter establishes the commitments, responsibilities, and concepts of the relationship between the City of Burlington and the citizens of Burlington related to public engagement. The goal of community engagement is to lead to more informed and, therefore, better decision-making.

#### Burlington Official Plan, 2020 (BOP, 2020)

BOP, 2020 represents the City's long-term vision with a planning horizon of 2031 and beyond, and establishes strategic priorities for growth management, land use, and infrastructure and is a policy framework that guides the City's decision making and approval processes ensuring that all new development contributes to this long-term vision.

On November 30, 2020, the Burlington Official Plan, 2020 was approved, with modifications by Halton Region. A total of 48 appeals were received by the Region of Halton by the end of the appeal period. Currently, portions of the Official Plan are under appeal through the Ontario Land Tribunal ([OLT](#)). In order to respond to the recent proposed provincial

legislative changes like Bill 23 *More Homes Build Faster Act*, 2022, and Bill 97 *Helping Homebuyers, Protecting Tenants Act*, 2023, coupled with the regional changes to ROPA 48 and ROPA 49, City staff initiated the Burlington Official Plan 2020, Targeted Realignment Exercise to update the policies of the BOP, 2020 to comply with these policy changes and to prioritize strategic growth based on new growth analysis and the finding of the City's Housing Strategy.

## Project Milestones

- On May 17, 2023, Council waived privilege on a [memo](#) which presented the structure for a general approach to addressing existing and emerging changes to the fundamentals of the land use planning framework in Ontario. In summary, the memo acknowledges that while some policy changes required to the BOP, 2020 may continue through modifications, there are a number of future changes that are best addressed through statutory amendments.
- On June 27, 2023, Council considered staff report: [Burlington Official Plan, 2020 Targeted Realignment Exercise – Initial Work Plan](#), which provided a staff recommendation to undertake the revised approach to advancing the Burlington Official Plan, 2020 and ensuring alignment with the updated Regional and Provincial policy framework. Council approved the initial work plan report and direct Staff to develop an engagement approach for this exercise. Staff will commence this work and continue to refine the work plan and explore viable options over the next two years.
- Staff will be bringing forward the first Burlington Official Plan 2020, Targeted Realignment Exercise Update Report on January 8, 2023, and will include the Engagement Approach and will provide an update on the project.

## Summary of Interested and Affected Parties

According to the Burlington Community Engagement Charter, a stakeholder is “an individual, organization or group that has an interest in an issue, will be or is likely to be affected, or has the ability to affect a decision or outcome.

Organizations include non-governmental organizations, government, institutions and businesses.”

It is expected that various individuals and groups will be identified across the following categories:

- Residents and resident groups

- Current and future residents
- Indigenous Communities
- Community organizations; special interest, advocacy, and activism groups
- Businesses and business groups
- Development industry
- Government and public service providers (internal and external)
- City Advisory Committees and arms-length city agencies
- Private and non-profit community service providers
- Elected officials
- Media

## **The Objectives of Engagement**

To include as many voices as possible in this important conversation about the Official Plan Targeted Realignment Exercise, the project team will incorporate public engagement as a key element of the project and will be hosting several public engagement activities designed to give current and future community members an opportunity to provide meaningful input. The following objectives provide a clear understanding of what the public engagement will strive to achieve through the community discussion about the BOP, 2020 Targeted Realignment Exercise:

- Provide relevant information about the project, decision-making process and how the public will be engaged and how they can provide input and feedback;
- Work with City communications and engagement staff, as well as consultants to provide a coordinated approach to engagement, communication and evaluation of the implementing policies, where appropriate;
- Provide multiple channels for people to provide meaningful input, both online and in person, at appropriate decision points;
- Create an ongoing record of what is said during engagement and make it publicly accessible throughout the process, so they can track the progress of the project, including reports back to the community to highlight how feedback was or was not incorporated into final recommendations to Council;
- Gather meaningful input from members of the community whose voices are historically underrepresented in conversations about city issues;

- Establish a project page on [getinvolvedburlington.ca](https://getinvolvedburlington.ca) as the main online platform for up-to-date information about the project and upcoming engagement opportunities; and
- Use clear, plain language to inform the public about which aspects of the process are out of our control and cannot be influenced through the Official Plan Targeted Realignment Project.

## Hybrid Meetings

As part of our commitment to fostering effective communication and collaboration, the engagement team will deploy a hybrid meeting model that seamlessly integrate in-person and virtual interactions. The hybrid meeting model will provide a variety of opportunities that support different levels of comfort and accessibility to include a broader range of participants. The engagement approach aims to ensure accessibility, inclusivity, participation and effective communication among all participants.

## Potential Engagement risks

The following potential risks and barriers that may arise throughout the engagement process have been identified and will be used to guide the design of each round of engagement.

- **Misconceptions about Project Scope:** The City values public consultation and working with communities to advance the Burlington Official Plan, 2020 and to ensure conformity with the updated Regional and Provincial policy framework. The City will provide relevant information on matters related to BOP, 2020 and Regional Official Plan policies, growth analysis studies, the City of Burlington's aspirational 2031 Housing Pledge and the role and function of several new community areas and engage the public to seek input and feedback where appropriate. The project team is committed to providing clarity about the scope of engagement, what can be influenced and what elements fall outside of the scope of this project.
- **Misconceptions about the purpose of engagement:** The purpose of engagement is to engage as many voices as possible in the critical conversation about the targeted realignment of the policies of the BOP, 2020. The City will be hosting several public engagement activities over the course of the project to provide the community with opportunities to provide meaningful input, where influence can be made. The input that is collected will inform City's decision-making.

- **Alienation or Lack of Trust:** Participants may be reluctant to participate based on past experiences of not feeling heard, or concern about how feedback will be brought forward. The engagement program and reporting will need to show in real time how decision making is being influenced by the engagement program and have the outputs will be reflected back to communities.
- **Safe Space:** The engagement process will require careful consideration of how to create safe spaces for conversation and sharing thoughts and concerns. Creating a safe, welcoming, inclusive space is critical to foster open, honest and respectful conversations.
- **Broad Outreach:** The limitations of digital and in-person engagement will need to be considered in the context of reaching vulnerable or historically underrepresented communities. The engagement approach will need to utilize a mix of digital tactics, virtual and in-person engagement, and outreach through organizations on the ground. Input from all engagement events will be key to formulating analog tactics and mechanisms that reach those with digital barriers or constraints. There will also need to be space for smaller group conversations, to support all voices in being heard.
- **Timing/Schedule:** There are currently many uncertainties regarding the realization of many of the provincial policy changes, including when many of the Bills will receive Royal Proclamation. The initial work plan is outlined in Report [PL-45-23](#).

## Policies and Factors That Cannot be Influenced

In every public engagement process, it is important to be aware of the things that cannot be influenced: either because they are beyond the City's control (for example things that are required by regional or provincial policy or law), or because they are outside the scope of the project as set out in the Council-approved work plan. In discussing the Burlington Official Plan, 2020 Targeted Realignment Exercise, the following aspects of the project are considered 'givens' and will not be included in engagement activities

1. All policies in BOP 2020 must comply with the *Planning Act*, *Provincial Policy Statement (PPS)* and other provincial policies, as well as the Halton Regional Official Plan (ROP). This includes the recent amendments to the ROP (ROPA 48 and ROPA 49, as modified by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing).

2. The scope of work, timing and resources, including the conceptual work plan, has been approved by Council through staff report [PL-45-23](#).
3. The City's Growth will continue to be prioritized in Strategic Growth Areas, growth to 2051 will continue to be prioritized within the Built Boundary.
4. The updated local vision for growth will align with the Strategic Plan, Vision to Focus, and the Burlington Official Plan, 2020, and will set out the requirements of building healthy, complete and sustainable communities.
5. The updated local vision for growth will deliver on the shared Provincial mandate and the City's vision for housing, including the Housing Strategy, which will support the creation of new housing for a wide range of household sizes and incomes.
6. Technical reports are given – public is not asked to comment on content of technical reports.
7. This Targeted Realignment exercise may change or be revised as required and may be informed by future legislative change, (e.g., final version of Proposed Provincial Planning Statement).
8. City Council has signed a [Housing Pledge](#) to facilitate the delivery of 29,000 residential units by 2031.
9. Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs) will not be reviewed as part of this project and are undergoing a separate concurrent review, for more information please visit the [MTSA project website](#).

## Engagement Commitment

The BOP, 2020 Targeted Realignment Exercise is a project that will take place over a long period of time and will have many components. The components or subprojects will differ in size and complexity. Some of the subprojects will require local studies, technical work, and intensive public engagement, while other subprojects will rely on provincial and regional policy, where there will be limited opportunities for influence. Staff will ensure that the public is aware and informed of all subprojects, regardless of the level of influence possible and strive to ensure that engagement with the public is a priority.

The engagement approach taken will also need to remain flexible in the face of current and ongoing changes to provincial and regional policy, as well as the ongoing OLT appeals process. These 'unknowns' may impact the timing and the overall outcome of the project.

The purpose of this engagement approach is to outline an approach for how and when engagement will take place over the course of the project, identifying when an engagement plan is needed for more intensive engagement and when an informational approach is more appropriate.

Outlined below are the key engagement commitments that will guide the engagement process for the Burlington Official Plan 2020, Targeted Realignment Exercise. The engagement approach is based on the [International Association of Public Participation \(IAP2\)'s Public Participation Spectrum](#), which is also a component of [Burlington's Community Engagement Charter](#). It is important to note that the finalization of the Engagement Approach will be undertaken by the project team based on input received from CPRM Committee and Council. The final document will be release to the public on the Get Involved Project Page.

#### Engagement Transparency – When and How the Public can Influence the Project

Throughout the Burlington Official Plan, 2020 Targeted Realignment Exercise, Staff are committed to being transparent about where and when the public and interested and affected parties can influence the project. Due to the nature of this project, there will be times when the engagement level will fall closer to the “involve/collaborate” side of the spectrum and times when it will fall closer to the “inform” side of the spectrum. Staff are committed to providing detailed information to ensure that all interested and affected parties have access to the most up to date project information and outcomes and will strive to provide opportunities to answer questions and have conversations. When the project reaches a stage that can be influenced by the public, Staff will ensure engagement takes place and detailed engagement plans may be prepared as required to lead this work.

Staff are committed to:

- Being **flexible** with this engagement approach, to be able to change plans in order to provide the highest level of engagement possible as opportunities arise;
- Being **clear** and **transparent** about the level of influence for each phase of the project;
- **Committing to a high level of informing the public** by disclosing all relevant information in **a clear, concise, and accessible manner** to the public, stakeholders and decision makers **through multiple avenues** including the Get Involved webpage, social media, public meetings and other forms of communication **in a timely manner**;

- Being **open** to inquiries and questions surrounding all elements of the Burlington Official Plan 2020, Targeted Realignment Exercise by providing multiple avenues for communication; and
- **Consult and involve** the public when there the opportunity for influencing the policy changes, and where granted, prepare engagement plans for specific phases of the project.

### **When will a project element require its own Engagement Plan?**

There will be phases of the Burlington Official Plan, 2020 Targeted Realignment Exercise that will require more intensive public engagement led by its own engagement plan. Staff will identify when an Engagement Plan is required to ensure that there is comprehensive engagement throughout the Official Plan Targeted Realignment Project Update Reports to Community Planning, Regulation and Mobility Committee. Engagement Plans will be prepared and posted on the project webpage and distributed through other means as appropriate.

### **How the City Will Collect and Respond to Feedback**

Throughout the engagement process, City staff will diligently collect and record all input provided by stakeholders. All input will be recorded by theme into response tables, showing in detail how the comments were considered and how they did or did not shape the outcomes of the BOP, 2020, Targeted Realignment Exercise, and why.

### **Evaluating the Public Engagement Approach**

To assist in measuring how the engagement contributed to the project decision to be made, the following will be used to evaluate the public participation process.

1. Once the project is complete, measure the degree to which community members felt they:
  - a. Understood the project's process and its limitations; and
  - b. Understood how the feedback they provided influenced the outcome of the Burlington Official Plan, 2020 Targeted Realignment Exercise, and informed the decisions made by Council.
2. Evaluate each form of engagement.
  - How did each of the engagement approaches used help to achieve the engagement objectives.



3. Analyze how the feedback received about the forms of engagement impacted the overall public participation process as the project moved forward.