
SUBJECT: City of Burlington Community Strategic Plan – Horizon 2050

TO: Committee of the Whole

FROM: Transformation Office

Corporate Strategy and Business Improvement

Report Number: TRN-03-26

Wards Affected: All

Date to Committee: March 3, 2026

Date to Council: March 10, 2026

Recommendation

Endorse the Horizon 2050 Strategic Plan as a replacement to Vision 2040 attached as Appendix A to transformation office report TRN-02-26; and

Instruct staff to consider Horizon 2050 in future land planning policy, service delivery, advocacy and budget planning; and

Instruct staff to share the Horizon 2050 strategic plan and supportive research with community partners for consideration in their future service planning.

Executive Summary

Horizon 2050 is Burlington’s updated 25-year community strategic plan, evolving from and replacing Vision 2040. Community expectations have shifted, and the operating context for municipalities continues to evolve. Grounded in research and broad engagement, the plan defines Burlington’s long-term success in practical terms: how well residents can live, grow, and thrive here—today and over time. As a result, quality of life across all ages and stages is established as the City’s central strategic outcome.

With projected population growth, shifting demographics, economic change, and increasing climate pressures, Horizon 2050 sets out four strategic directions with measurable outcomes to guide City decisions. It treats growth, land use planning, infrastructure investment, and service delivery as the “how”—tools designed to deliver the “why”: complete communities,

strong environmental stewardship, economic opportunity, and modern, accountable municipal services.

If endorsed, Horizon 2050 will guide future budgets, business planning and partnerships to ensure municipal actions remain aligned with the evolving needs of people and community over the long term.

Purpose of report:

- In 2015 the City of Burlington developed its first 25-year community wide strategic plan, Vision 2040. At that time Council endorsed a 10-year review cycle.
 - In 2025, City staff received Council approval to develop an updated community strategic plan via report TRN-01-25.
 - Staff have followed this approved strategic planning approach in developing a new strategic plan, Horizon 2050 for Council consideration.
 - This strategic plan will inform future City-led tactical planning, operational planning, and budget development. It would also establish an expectation that City-funded service delivery organizations will show how their strategic plans align with this community-wide direction.
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Background

In early 2025, City of Burlington Council endorsed (TRN-01-25) - an approach to developing a new 25-year strategic plan building from the current plan, Vision 2040. This plan sets a shared long-term direction for Burlington. It guides decision-making, service delivery, advocacy priorities, and partnerships, ensuring the City can respond to evolving community needs and changing conditions.

Key service delivery partners use the City's strategic plan to inform their own strategic and business planning and demonstrate alignment with shared priorities

Analysis

Research and Findings

Throughout 2025 and early 2026 City staff engaged in a period of research and engagement. This included:

- Current and projected demographic analysis (CANCEA data)
- Statistically valid telephone survey (CATI telephone survey completed)
- Online community survey (GetInvolvedBurlington.ca)

- In-person public engagement (Community event attendance, focus groups, and public engagement meetings)
- Targeted feedback from key stakeholders & community partners (e.g. business community, boards and committees, and non-profit service providers)
- Direct engagement with representatives from the local indigenous community (The Indigenous Advisory Circle to the Mayor)

As a result of this aggregated feedback, several key themes have emerged and required careful consideration within the draft strategic plan:

1. Some of the assumptions and ambitions set out in Vision 2040 are occurring at rates faster than anticipated thus requiring a reset and reframing of our strategic direction.
2. Burlington anticipates additional growth in its population, number of dwelling units, and employment opportunities within the community. By 2050, we can anticipate a population of approximately 265,000 residents, 110,000 homes, and 125,000 jobs.
3. Most population growth will come from international immigration and people relocating from other GTA municipalities. As Burlington continues to grow and its demographics shift, community members' needs—and what they expect from City services and engagement—will evolve.
4. The community recognizes that Burlington will continue to attract new residents and businesses because of its quality of life and community character. Growth should strengthen—not dilute—what makes Burlington livable by expanding access to housing and jobs and by enhancing neighbourhoods, public spaces, facilities, and community programming. At the same time, the City must manage growth responsibly so municipal services and infrastructure keep pace and pressures are addressed proactively.
5. Even with continued in-migration, Burlington's population is projected to age, and the number of residents in fair or poor health is expected to grow faster than the population overall. Horizon 2050 responds by making resident health and well-being a core decision lens—so planning, investments, service design, and partnerships are aligned to help people live well, age well, and stay connected across all stages of life.
6. It is anticipated that the top 10 local economic sectors will see strong job growth throughout the next 25 years. The Professional, Scientific and Technical Sector will see the highest proportionate growth while the manufacturing sector is forecast to overtake the retail sector as the number one employment sector within Burlington.
7. Proximity to nature, the environment, and accessible green spaces is one of Burlington's core community assets and a natural draw factor for new residents and visitors. Residents expect proximity and access to be maintained and enhanced.
8. Climate resilience and mitigation efforts will be a necessary future focus to support residents in maintaining the same quality of life.

9. Residents want to engage with, and receive service from a municipality that is modern, responsive, and accountable. Future investments in service delivery should demonstrate value for money.

Horizon 2050

Horizon 2050 builds on the foundation of Vision 2040 while reflecting a clear evolution in Burlington's context and community expectations. It defines elevated quality of life, for today's community members and future generations, as the primary outcome that municipal decisions and investments should align. Accordingly, growth management, infrastructure, land use planning, and service delivery are positioned as levers—not ends in themselves—used to build complete communities, strengthen health and well-being, protect the environment, and support economic opportunity.

In response to the key themes identified through research and engagement, staff have co-created a strategic planning document (Appendix A) which outlines a series of objectives that are grouped across four overarching strategic directions. These objectives are designed to maximize the positive impacts of the forecasted changes while also addressing anticipated challenges through mitigation efforts. Each objective will have one or more outcome indicator. The complete inventory of outcomes and their relationship to each strategic objective is available within Appendix A.

Delivering on these strategic directions is not the City's responsibility alone. Staff have identified a range of roles the City may play—shifting as needed based on what other partners, organizations, and community actors are doing—so efforts remain coordinated and outcomes are achieved collectively.

Prior to its presentation for consideration today, this strategy was made available to the public, business community, and to City staff for feedback via our normal public engagement platforms. Recognizing the central role of our Board- and Committee-governed service delivery partners—and the importance of Indigenous input—we directly invited Indigenous leaders and representatives, along with partner organizations, to provide focused feedback.

Next Steps

If Council endorses Horizon 2050, staff will embed it across municipal operations through enterprise-wide business planning, and will share the community vision broadly with residents and key program and service delivery partners through a comprehensive communications plan. Budgets and divisional business plans will be realigned to advance Horizon 2050's strategic objectives and measurable outcomes.

Each of our Boards and Committees will be undertaking independent strategic planning over the next 18 to 24 months. This creates a timely opportunity to align priorities and investments across the organization in support of Council's endorsed vision for Burlington.

Following the election, staff will work with the new term of Council to develop a multi-year operating plan that aligns municipal priorities and activities with Horizon 2050. Staff will also launch a set of measurable community indicators through a public-facing dashboard, updated as data becomes available, so community members can track progress toward the shared community vision.

Implications

There are no immediate financial or human resource implications through the endorsement of this report. However, Horizon 2050 will guide the future work of the municipality which will include future budget deliberations.

Strategic Alignment

- Designing and delivering complete communities
 - Providing the best services and experiences
 - Protecting and improving the natural environment and taking action on climate change
 - Driving organizational performance
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Appendices:

A. Horizon 2050 Community Strategic Plan – Strategic Directions and Objectives (Final Draft)

Report Approval:

All reports are reviewed and approved by the Commissioner, Head of Corporate Affairs, Chief Financial Officer, and Commissioner of Legal and Legislative Services/City Solicitor.