



September 26, 2011

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City of Burlington

Re: Draft of "Burlington Our Future", Burlington's Strategic Plan 2011 – 2014

BurlingtonGreen is pleased to provide input to the City's draft Strategic Plan for 2011-2014 and applauds the City its various efforts to seek public participation in such an important process and guiding plan. There are some excellent objectives and proposed supporting actions included. The following comments focus on recommendations that we believe will improve the plan and realize a healthier, more sustainable future for Burlington.

In general, while we are pleased to see a number of environment related objectives in the plan, there appears to remain a perspective that the environment is separate, distinct, an entity onto its own in the larger picture. Adopting a more interrelated framework where social, economic and environmental implications are considered equally among all planning areas can efficiently advance Burlington's vision – "where nature, business and citizens thrive". Establishing policy and conducting operations supportive of this model would mean that environment related objectives are not exclusive to that of the Sustainable Planning department but instead, they are woven into the fabric of every day decision making by all departments. Every operational or policy consideration and the resulting recommendation to city council must include an analysis of the environmental impact. Is it positive or negative? What options are available to make the proposal more sustainable? An example could be the Planning department establishing faster permit processing for applicants who include green building features. Doing so would be consistent with the City's vision and strategic planning principles while sending a message to prospective developers that Burlington takes its' commitment to create a healthier, more sustainable city seriously. When developing longer term master plans such as last year's Parks and Rec Master plan or the proposed updating of the Transit Plan, environmentally sustainable planning principles need to be integrated into the plan along with the social and economic considerations. A relevant document for the City's consideration focuses on "Sustainable Community Planning" : *Sustainable community planning (SCP) is a collaborative, integrated approach to community planning that steers the community towards the implementation of local and global sustainability goals, using a long-term perspective in an adaptive institutional framework.* and is available here: http://fmv.fcm.ca/files/Capacity_Building-Planning/Planning_Sector_EN.pdf

"Vibrant Neighborhoods"

Objective 1

Item 2. We like the Initiative for the development of a strategy for aging retail spaces being turned into mixed use people places – it will help develop "walkable", mixed-use neighborhoods.

Item 4. BurlingtonGreen has expressed support for the Urban Forest Management Plan approved by Council in 2010. This plan can only be realized successfully if the identified human and financial resources are supported on a continuous basis. We also recommend that an effective, enforceable **tree protection** plan be implemented

sooner than projected in the plan as it is now and in the upcoming few years when intensification occurs that our urban tree cover will be most at risk.

Objective 2

Item 1. The Strategic Initiatives outline may not be effective to get more people cycling, walking and using public transit. Developing more "walkable" neighbourhoods and intensification plans incorporating a major increase in transit services (e.g. light rail etc.) are likely going to be required to make large gains. Successfully converting citizen dependency from dirty fossil fuels to active and public transport methods will require a multi-faceted approach highlighting the associated economic, social/health and environmental benefits. We also suggest the Strategic Plan incorporate more specific targets like the City of Guelph has done for their Bicycle Friendly objectives i.e. "triple the number of daily bike trips by 2018".

Item 3. Protection of rural communities from urban development is very important but we are not sure that the initiatives proposed will be sufficient. Incorporating collaboration between municipal and regional governments and NGOs to oppose certain development plans may be effective and adding a "registry" for developers who are lobbying Burlington and Regional governments to build on green spaces would help identify the key organizations opposed.

Additionally, **urban** greenspace requires a protection plan as well and should be included as a key objective in the SP. A plan to take stock of all greenspace, rank it (factors such as ESA merit, qty of accessible greenspace within community etc) and integrate a supporting greenspace acquisition plan are required to support vibrant neighbourhoods and is needed before further development continues in Burlington. This is an important priority.

"Prosperity"

Objective 1

Item 5: to "develop a strategy that values arts, culture, recreation, diversity, health and sport" is missing "environmental sustainability" and should be added as it is essential in providing a healthy, vibrant, prosperous Burlington. Positive social and environmental initiatives will contribute to a strong economic bottom line for businesses and will provide a better quality of life for their employees and for the citizens of Burlington.

Objective 2

Item 3: We like this Strategic Initiative to "enhance mixed use intensification options and develop a community involvement plan". Equal research efforts and the presentation of associated social, environmental and economic implications and benefits should be integrated throughout the community involvement planning process.

Objective 3

Item 4: We are very pleased to see the Strategic Initiatives to "Utilize partnerships to develop and implement a Community Energy Plan" and "Expand renewable energy initiatives". The City needs to take a proactive leadership role in dispelling the myths, providing the facts and promoting the benefits associated with the advancement of renewable energy. Attracting innovative, future focused businesses to support a sustainable future will require appropriate, strategic branding i.e. 'Burlington: a friendly, healthy, eco-focused city to live, work and play' that is fully integrated with Sustainable Community Planning principles (as per link above).

"Excellence in Government": If City staff and Council ensured social responsibility and environmental sustainability was a core part of your operations and the measuring and reporting of progress, it would lead to a more prosperous, enriching future and it would create a positive brand image for Burlington.

A strategy to realize Direction 3, that the City is “well-managed, forward-thinking and responsible” is to adopt some of the planning principles outlined in the Sustainable Community Planning model. This approach would avoid staff departments operating in a silo framework replaced with a collaborative cross sharing of information and expertise. All would share common ground operation from a triple bottom line (social, economic, environmental) foundation.

Objective 2

Item 3: BurlingtonGreen is looking forward to the implementation of an engagement charter that will value community relationships . With updated strategic plan objectives and their associated programs and services identified, groups like BurlingtonGreen can assess where “gaps” may exist and offer partnership proposals that can fulfill the needs in a cost-effective community inclusive manner. Staff and Council recognition of the merit and value of community groups in contributing to the City’s strategic vision should be comparable to that of the value and process afforded to the consultants and the business sector operating under the current tender proposal process.

Objective 3

Item 5: "Create and implement a sustainable infrastructure plan aligned with the strategic plan" may provide an opportunity to advance environmental concerns, but it appears to be aimed more at city infrastructure as the expected results listed include financial sustainability as an expected result. Reductions in city waste, greenhouse gas emissions and water hydro usage should be included and each should be quantified rather than measured against a baseline to provide incentive to “strive” for improvements.

Objective 4

Although we are obviously going to agree with this objective to "ensure we are environmentally sustainable", it is not clear what a “clean environment” would be as an expected result. As with objective 3 above, we would like to see “clean environment” defined and quantified objectives developed for the outcomes as was done for corporate greenhouse gas emissions.

Respectfully,

Ken Woodruff & Amy Schnurr
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