



James Ridge
 Michelle Dwyer
 Mayor Rick Goldring
 Councillor Rick Craven
 Councillor Marianne Meed Ward
 Councillor John Taylor
 Councillor Jack Dennison
 Councillor Paul Sharman
 Councillor Blair Lancaster

January 11, 2016

City Hall
 426 Brant Street,
 Burlington, Ontario
 L7R 3Z6

Dear City Staff, Mayor Goldring & Members of Council,

BurlingtonGreen is pleased to provide input to the City’s Draft Strategic Plan for 2015-2040. Our comments and recommendations are a result of thoughtful consideration by our Advocacy team, and also take into account the extensive community feedback we received through our Greenprint for the Future outreach program where we learned what the citizens of Burlington had to say about a variety of local environmental issues.

Both globally and locally, the health of the environment and need for effective, results-oriented action to ensure a sustainable future has never been more important. Municipalities have an essential role to play in combatting climate change and must prioritize and integrate associated action strategies into short and long-term planning. Additionally, with Burlington currently facing the conflicting challenges of build-out and population growth, the associated issues of intensification, infill practices, habitat destruction, local food security, waste management and effective transportation, combine to make sustainable planning a top priority.

Therefore, BurlingtonGreen strongly believes that climate change and the environment must be central to Burlington’s vision and planning going forward and respectfully offers the following input to aid the City in improving the draft Strategic Plan for 2015 to 2040.

Issue	Recommendation
1. Strategic Plan versus Long Term Vision: we feel the current document represents a strategic vision, rather than a plan which requires specific, measurable time-bound strategies.	Reposition the document as “Burlington’s Vision for 2015 to 2040” and develop a five year Strategic Plan in consultation with the with community, to implement the short and long term elements of the vision.
2. The Vision Statement “Where people, nature, and business thrive” is missing the element of community context.	Include the word “community”, so that the vision statement reads: “Where people, nature, business, and community thrive”.

Issue	Recommendation
<p>3. Climate Change: the document makes no reference to this, the most important environmental and social issue of our times, and though some elements, such as the City’s carbon-neutral proposal, address it in part, there is no cohesive or strongly-stated strategy articulated. Cities must be on the front line of action in dealing with climate change, and Burlington needs to demonstrate clear leadership here.</p>	<p>Add a fifth section to the plan dedicated to climate change because strategies dealing with climate change must include or involve all sections of the plan: not just health and environment, but also transportation and economic development and the type of growth we want to have and can sustain in the next twenty five years.</p> <p>If it is deemed that an additional section cannot be added then all document sections should be strengthened significantly to integrate climate change mitigation and adaptation planning strategies.</p>
<p>4. A City that Grows: we support the thrust towards intensification and smart growth; however, there is insufficient recognition of the need to develop and preserve a livable and environmentally sustainable community, while promoting economic growth.</p> <p>Smart growth must advance strategic plans that respect nature’s biodiversity and our irreplaceable green spaces that Burlington is fortunate to have. This additional point is not only important for Burlington citizens, but is fundamental to promoting economic growth in a postmodern information economy.</p>	<p>Strengthen this section to clearly indicate that the vision is to absorb growth in the currently defined urban areas to support an economically strong, livable and environmentally sustainable community.</p>
<p>5. A City that Moves: we strongly believe that a much greater focus on public transit and active transportation is required in the draft plan.</p>	<p>Make Public Transit and Active Transportation priorities by creating a dedicated section specifically dealing with “public transit” and “active transportation options”, in coordination with the Region of Halton’s recently published Active Transportation Master Plan, and where necessary, work proactively with the Region to suggest any improvements to the Plan that are needed to meet Burlington’s specific requirements.</p>
<p>6. A Healthy and Greener City: we find this section represents a fairly traditional approach to environment and more innovative and integrative thinking and strategies, with a strong focus on Climate Change are required.</p>	<p>Review this section approaching urban and growth issues from an environmental point of view, and ensure the inclusion of important issues such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Green Space: include strategies for green space growth and preservation for its carbon sink capacity and quality of life and health benefits. A comprehensive (city and privately owned) green space inventory and acquisition plan is required to support this; • Tree Canopy: include strategies to protect and strengthen our tree canopy to meet Environment Canada’s community sustainability standards. One example includes the establishment of a practical, effective private property tree bylaw given that the majority of our tree canopy is located on privately owned lands. • Habitat & Biodiversity Protection: A balanced approach to development planning is essential to ensure the city’s

Issue	Recommendation
	<p>natural areas are preserved and habitat restoration work is advanced to ensure local biodiversity is protected and enhanced.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Waste Reduction: include municipal and community strategies to support the Region and Province to meet waste reduction goals. Advancement of the city’s green procurement strategies and establishing local targets, incentives and requirements for all events and festivals conducted on city property are a few examples. • Energy: consider whether energy, being at the fulcrum of climate change, should be a distinct initiative in this section and perhaps whether the section might be renamed Environment and Energy. Include forward looking strategies such as developing community energy systems(s) by engaging industry experts and committing to community energy infrastructure development. The test for feasibility should not be limited to existing business and geopolitical measures but should include forward looking plans that anticipate changes in support of combatting climate change. • Farmland/Source Water Protection: include strategies that will strengthen the protection of our vital agricultural sector and water resources such as adopting a Food & Water First policy.
<p>7. An Engaging City: we generally support what is here, however as a Blue Dot community, Burlington needs to step up to the commitment and advance a plan to stimulate citizen engagement specifically in regards to growth and environmental issues.</p>	<p>Advance plans to stimulate meaningful citizen engagement with respect to growth and environmental issues.</p>

As a Blue Dot community, Burlington has made a commitment to recognize its citizens’ right to live in a healthy environment. It is among 100 other municipalities and 10 million people across Canada that have affirmed their rights to clean air, safe water and food, a stable climate and a say in decisions that affect their well-being.

We believe the City’s Strategic Plan for 2015-2040 must reflect this commitment and we hope that the constructive input and recommendations we have provided will help to achieve this.

We are ready and available to discuss our input with you at your convenience and as necessary and thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Respectfully,

Amy Schnurr

Amy Schnurr
Executive Director

BurlingtonGreen Environmental Association