2026 Approved Budget

2026 Operating and Capital Budgets

2027–2035 Capital Forecast

Community Services

Community Services

Divisional Budget Summary

	2025	2026 Budget				
Department	**Net Budget**	**Total Expenses**	**Total Revenues**	**Net Budget**	**$ Change**	**% Change**
Community Services Admin	$395	$428	$0	$428	$34	8.6%
Transit	$24,773	$37,766	$11,179	$26,588	$1,815	7.3%
Recreation, Community and Culture	$21,338	$38,875	$16,548	$22,327	$989	4.6%
Fire	$39,187	$43,833	$1,817	$42,016	$2,829	7.2%
Customer Experience	$1,416	$1,934	$378	$1,556	$140	9.9%
Total Community Services	**$87,108**	**$122,837**	**$29,922**	**$92,915**	**$5,806**	**6.7%**

Numbers are in $ Thousands and may not add due to rounding

Departmental Overview

Department Community Services Admin

Department Head Jacqueline Johnson **Department Head Title** Commissioner, Community Services

Department Description

Community Services Admin consists of the Commissioner of Community Services responsible for providing strategic oversight and direction to the following 4 departments: Customer Experience, Transit, Burlington Fire, and Recreation, Community & Culture.

The Commissioner sets divisional priories and monitors performance ensuring alignment with organization and council priorities. Key activities include coaching, relationship building, partnership and collaboration, and making necessary adjustments to resources and strategies, ensuring that each division operates efficiently and achieves its intended outcomes.

Working together with other members of the Executive Leadership Team to set organizational priorities and optimize continuous improvement opportunities.

Department Goals

Through strategic oversight and guidance of the Commissioner of Community Services, 4 departments (CX, Transit, Fire, RCC) work to achieve objectives of the following 7 key priorities:

• Ensuring Community Safety and Emergency Preparedness
• Enhancing Customer Experiences and Service Standards
• Promoting Inclusivity and Accessibility in Public Services
• Fostering Community Connectivity and Engagement
• Strengthening Cross Departmental Collaboration
• Improving Service Delivery and Operational Efficiency
• Planning and Preparing for Community Growth

Strategic Alignment with Vision to Focus Plan

Driving Organizational Performance (Focus Area 4)

OPERATING BUDGET
FINANCIAL RESOURCE SUMMARY
($ rounded to thousands)

Community Services Admin

	2025 Budget	2026 Base Budget	$ Change Base Budget	2026 Key Investments	2026 Total Budget	$ Change Total Budget	% Change Total Budget
Salaries Wages and Benefits	393	427	34		427	34	8.6 %
Materials and Supplies	1	1			1		0.0 %
Facilities and Administration Costs							0.0 %
TOTAL EXPENSES	395	428	34		428	34	8.6 %
NET OPERATING BUDGET	395	428	34		428	34	8.6 %

Budget Commentary

Human resources reflect standard provisions for the annual employee performance adjustment, range movement, payroll taxes (EI, CPP, EHT), WSIB, OMERS and group benefits. The increase also reflects the impact of the rerating of one position.

Departmental Overview

Department Transit

Department Head Raewyn Jackson **Department Head Title** Director of Transit

Department Description

Burlington Transit's provides mobility services that are reliable, efficient, and innovative. Public transit contributes to the livability of a community and ensures that all citizens, regardless of their age, socio-economic status, and ability can travel within the City of Burlington and make connections to the greater Toronto area and beyond.

Burlington Transit operates both conventional and specialized transit service within the City of Burlington and Hamilton, and connects to Oakville Transit, GO Transit and VIA Rail.

Burlington Transit provides:

- 13 regular service routes (6 routes are 15 minutes or better)
- 3 late night routes with service until 1:30am
- Door to door service for eligible specialized transit riders
- Technology and tools for obtaining real time bus information
- Rider and fare information and PRESTO services at the Customer Service Centre at Burlington GO

Department Goals

- Enhance Burlington Transit service through the implementation of a frequent transit network that is safe, reliable and comfortable
- Expand the transit network to meet community demand in new growth areas
- Develop and deliver transit rider education and information to promote transit use to seniors, newcomers to Canada and youth
- Enhance and expand the ability to deliver accessible transit service to registered clients through technological innovation and education
- Develop partnerships with businesses to promote the use of transit with their workforce
- Support the City of Burlington’s integrated mobility through technological innovation like transit signal priority
- Enhance communications to transit riders through advancements in technology and improved messaging

Strategic Alignment with Vision to Focus Plan

Enhance customer service experiences and service standards through education, processes and technology

Promote inclusivity and accessibility in public services through training and community support

Foster community connectivity and engagement by expanding opportunities and partnerships

Plan and prepare for community growth through innovation and service initiatives

Programs	
Conventional Transit Operations	In operation 22 hours a day, 365 days per year providing 3.6 million completed trips in 2024 traveling to their places of work, worship, shopping, recreation and home. Transit operators are responsible for operating the bus safely and ensuring passenger safety and security.
Specialized Transit Operations	Provide specialized transportation service (door to door transit service) for persons with a disability who are unable to travel using conventional transit. Promoting all residents within the City of Burlington are free from discrimination and are provided equal opportunities, service and facilities allowing them to fully participate in community and society. In 2024, over 66,500 trips were provided to specialized transit registered users.
Fleet, Equipment and Facility Maintenance	Maintains the city's transit fleet which include 80 conventional, 16 specialized and 11 support vehicles through preventative maintenance program and regular maintenance and repair. Ensures compliance with Ministry of Transportation, Highway Traffic Act and Accessibility for Ontarians with Disability Act legislative requirements and Integrated Regulation Standards.
Training	Develops and delivers both conventional and specialized operator initial and continuous training programs in line with Ministry of Transportation (MTO) requirements, health and safety, and industry leading practices and legislation. Manages Commercial Vehicle Operator's Registration (CVOR) and compliance checks for required paperwork. Monitors Operator safety and overall performance.
Transit Planning, Service Development & Business Services	Short-term and long-term community transit planning, route scheduling and service development. Research, statistics and data management functions for provincial reporting, city reporting and overall improvement of transit service development. Coordination of the bus stop/shelter program, including determination of locations to enhance the City's mobility and active transportation objectives. Works with other city services for development applications, mobility initiatives and improvements, operator and rider safety. Provides fiscal management, revenue management, budget development and monitoring, and support on all financial related processes.
Rider Experience and Education	Establishes and delivers campaigns to promote the use of transit as a community service. Creates and delivers education programs to teach individuals and groups how to use Burlington Transit. Oversees customer service and experience, initiates strategies to increase customer satisfaction and overall ridership across all demographics

Continuous Improvement Initiatives

1. A new testing component was added to transit operator recruitment as part of the interview process. The testing component is an effective approach to ensure candidates have the basic knowledge, safety skills and customer service skills before they are hired. Once hired, transit operators go through a rigorous 4 to 6 week training program. This has resulted in more trainees completing the program and are successful in their roles.
2. Burlington Transit operations staff worked with Burlington Digital Services to implement a Sharepoint based system for incident reporting. The intent was to save time by capturing information digitally, which will decrease the amount of time manually entering information and also create a digital record which will improve the ability to analyse and gather statistics about incidents, discipline and collisions.
3. Changes made to products used to clean and disinfect buses has resulted in cost savings. A more concentrated washing compound lasts 6 times longer than previous products, therefore achieving cost savings.
4. In March 2025, Burlington Transit moved the customer service to the Burlington GO. This was an innovative solution that supports customer service, accessibility, operational and capital savings. The move positions Burlington Transit to respond to the planned transit service changes and aligns with the provinces' objectives to create sustainable transit services. The move to the Burlington GO increased the number of in person interactions to over 70% in June and July 2025 compared to June/July 2024.
5. Burlington Transit Planning, implemented a module in the transit scheduling software system that allows for analysis of actual bus running times using on board transit AVL systems. This allows for transit planners to analyse real time data and calibrate service levels to enhance the punctuality and efficiency of transit service.
6. Burlington Transit's implemented additional service enhancements that improved the reliability and frequency of the transit system. Burlington Transit now operates 6 routes with 15 minute or better service. These enhancements reflect the increased ridership year over year. In addition, Burlington Transit continues to align schedules with GO transit to support strong regional connections and make transit a viable and convenient choice for Burlington residents.
7. Procured 4 hybrid buses for delivery in late 2025 to support sustainability and greening of the transit fleet.

Addressing Gaps and Challenges

Burlington Transit continues to be impacted by traffic congestion within the City due to QEW/403 incidents and lane closures on the Burlington Skyway. The implementation of the Transit Signal Priority is intended to improve travel time on key corridors within the City. In addition, transit works closely with Transportation and Communications departments to ensure transit messaging exists when communicating road closures.
To further address these challenges, Burlington Transit has included websites/apps that use real time transit data for riders. These apps/sites (Transit App/Google maps) notify riders of service disruptions and provide alternative routing. Real time information supports improved rider experiences across the transit network and ensures that connections to the broader GTHA can occur on GO, HSR and Oakville Transit.

The next transit strategic plan will be completed in 2026 and will address several challenges that Burlington Transit faces on a regular basis. The plan will include a detailed review of the current state and address areas for short and long term improvements. The strategic plan will include staff and public engagement to inform the future state. An implementation plan will include a financial plan that will outline the City's financial commitment to invest in the long term enhancement to transit.

Department Initiatives	Target Completion
Improved Transit Service Continue to implement the frequent transit network to meet community demand in new growth areas with the goal to increase ridership and increase the number of routes providing 15 minute service. This also includes improved communications on the Burlington Transit website to support real time service disruptions and route modifications.	Dec 2026
Transit Signal Priority implementation and pilot project on 16 intersections and gather data for analysis. The goal to improve reliability and reduce travel time on major roads within the City of Burlington. By end of Q2 2026 gather data to determine effectiveness of TSP on the on time performance of transit.	Jun 2026
Transit Strategic Plan Complete the City of Burlington Transit Five (5) Year Strategic Plan (2026-2030) to outline the goals and strategies to grow ridership and enhance transit within the City of Burlington.	Jun 2026
Transit Service Severe Weather and Incident Route Plan Development of a severe weather and incident route plan that includes alternative routing for major weather events. This plan would align with the RPF snow removal priority and identifies bus stop locations to support service continuity. The objective is to ensure transit service can operate during major snow events safely for riders and transit operators; and to develop a communications plan that outlines impacted stops or routes.	Jun 2026
Implementation of hybrid buses to support lower emissions and sustainability. Hybrid buses will be purchased by Burlington Transit for the next few years. The delivery of the buses purchased in 2024 will arrive late 2025. The implementation plan will include maintenance and operator training; as well as benchmarking to compare diesel to hybrid.	Apr 2026

OPERATING BUDGET
FINANCIAL RESOURCE SUMMARY
($ rounded to thousands)

Transit

	2025 Budget	2026 Base Budget	$ Change Base Budget	2026 Key Investments	2026 Total Budget	$ Change Total Budget	% Change Total Budget
Salaries Wages and Benefits	22,526	24,097	1,571	122	24,218	1,693	7.5 %
Internal Charges	300	300			300		0.0 %
Materials and Supplies	1,758	1,991	233		1,991	233	13.3 %
Commodities	3,608	3,883	275		3,883	275	7.6 %
Facilities and Administration Costs	2,032	2,117	86		2,117	86	4.2 %
Contracted and Professional Services	701	901	201		901	201	28.6 %
Funding for Capital and Debt Repayment	4,045	4,355	310		4,355	310	7.7 %
TOTAL EXPENSES	34,970	37,645	2,675	122	37,766	2,796	8.0 %
User Fees and Service Charges	6,843	7,825	981		7,825	981	14.3 %
External Recovery	14	14			14		0.0 %
Transfer from Reserve Funds	955	955			955		0.0 %
Senior Government Grants	2,385	2,385			2,385		0.0 %
TOTAL REVENUES	10,198	11,179	981		11,179	981	9.6 %
NET OPERATING BUDGET	24,773	26,466	1,693	122	26,588	1,815	7.3 %

Budget Commentary

The 2026 transit budget includes operating impacts of the conventional buses and specialized transit vehicles purchased in 2025. These impacts include the addition of operators as well as the operational costs (parts, fuel) per bus.
In 2026 it is anticipated that inflation and tariffs will further add to the financial pressures for transit, as well as increased costs for improved service for specialized transit.
Forecasted ridership and revenue increases may be slower due to a changing economic outlook in Ontario.

Key Investment :2026 -014 Transit Mechanic - To support the growing demands of Burlington Transit's expanding fleet.

Departmental Overview

Department	Recreation, Community and Culture		
Department Head	Emilie Cote	**Department Head Title**	Director of Recreation, Community and Culture

Department Description

Recreation, Community, and Culture (RCC) connects people to their communities and promotes well-being through inclusive programs, welcoming spaces, and meaningful partnerships in recreation, sport, arts, and culture. Guided by its mission to "Enhance the quality of life for everyone, every day", RCC delivers services that directly support the health and vibrancy of Burlington.

RCC's externally facing services include community development, direct-delivered recreation programs, allocation of recreational spaces, arts and culture programming, customer service, and the coordination of festivals and events. These services are grounded in the principles of the 2019 Framework for Recreation, which prioritizes access and inclusion—ensuring everyone gets to play. Behind the scenes, RCC is supported by internal teams in customer support, facility operations, marketing, and administration, as well as cross-functional collaboration with legal, finance, technology, and human resources.

RCC operates a wide range of indoor and outdoor facilities with a combined replacement asset value of $1.15 billion.   These facilities include a golf course, outdoor rink, dedicated senior centre, 10 skateboard parks, 106 sport fields, 141 public art installations, 236 community garden plots, 9 community centres, 7 pools, and 11 ice pads. Together, these spaces reach 3.9 million people annually. Many of these participants come to us through the122,000 hours of community rental use and through the 300,000 registered program participants enjoying one of our 610 programs.

RCC is supported by upwards of 1,200 unique staff members, including 130 full-time staff and part-time roles equivalent to 133 more, and over 1,100 volunteers. This dedicated team helps maintain a 96% satisfaction rate. Strategic partnerships with organizations like the Burlington Performing Arts Centre, Burlington Public Library, and 21 joint ventures further expand RCC's reach and impact across the community.

Department Goals

Grow Participation and Inclusion - Expand access to recreation, sport, and cultural programs by offering inclusive, welcoming, and responsive experiences that reflect the diversity of our community.

Maximize Facility Use - Make the most of our recreation and community spaces by activating underutilized areas and promoting non-prime rental times to better serve residents.

Ensure Accessible Services - Provide flexible pricing, fee assistance, and accommodations to ensure programs and facilities are accessible to people of all abilities and backgrounds

Strengthen Partnerships - Deepen collaboration with community groups, partner boards, and agencies, while exploring new opportunities to enhance service delivery and community impact.

Foster Community Connection - Build stronger neighbourhood ties through local events, hub locations, and a wide range of recreation and sport offerings that reflect community interests.

Deliver Outstanding Experiences - Provide exceptional customer service and maintain safe, clean, and welcoming facilities that residents are proud to visit.

Enrich Public Spaces - Lead public art and placemaking initiatives that celebrate creativity, enhance civic pride, and beautify our shared spaces.

Plan for Tomorrow - Stay ahead of emerging trends and evolving community needs by continuously adapting our programs, services, and infrastructure.

Strategic Alignment with Vision to Focus Plan

Foster strong, connected neighbourhoods where people feel a sense of belonging and community.

Champion health and well-being by offering inclusive programs, events, and services that reflect the needs of all residents.

Create meaningful opportunities to engage with the community - listening actively and responding thoughtfully.

Stay ahead of the curve by anticipating and adapting to the evolving needs of our growing and diverse population.

Programs	
Recreation Program Delivery	A public service providing a diverse range of recreation programs and services for residents. Through partnerships and direct delivered models, offers programs and services for the community in the areas of adults, aquatics, holiday and summer camps, fitness, golf, youth and inclusive programming.
Community Partnerships	Builds meaningful connections across Burlington by supporting organized sport and place-based community development. Through collaboration with user groups and local organizations, helps deliver a wide range of sport programs—from baseball and soccer to hockey, figure skating, and fitness—that promote active living and bring people together. At the neighbourhood level, staff work directly with residents to strengthen local pride and engagement. This service supports community events, administers grants, activates hub spaces, and empowers resident-led initiatives—all with the goal of creating inclusive, welcoming spaces where people feel connected and involved.
Public Art	This service supports the acquisition, care, and placement of public art throughout the city, led by the Public Art Development Implementation Team. Through thoughtful curation and strategic installation, public art helps beautify Burlington and foster a strong sense of place. The team also manages promotions, oversees donations, and supports community-initiated projects that reflect local creativity and identity
Events and Creative Services and Programs	Direct-delivers and supports community partners to offer 90+ Festivals and Events to our community, including the Concerts in the Park and large- and small- scale events such as the Santa Claus Parade and Rib Fest. Creative programs delivers specialized programs such as Burlington Teen Tour Band, Music Programs, and Burlington Student Theatre. Through the Burlington Teen Tour Band program, this service area represents the City with pride at local, provincial, and international events and parades.
Facility Asset Maintenance and Operations	An enabling serve that manages and maintains more than 1 million square feet of facility assets across a variety of asset types including arenas, pools, community centres, and corporate facilities, which combined total a replacement value of more than $1.15B. Supports large capital projects and manages smaller facility improvement projects on site.
Business Services	An enabling service that offers financial management, business process, technology systems, human resource administration, training, marketing, permitting, and customer experience services across the department Establishes supportive frameworks and processes, acts as liaison between RCC and other internal departments, and partners with the business units in recreation to provide seamless service delivery, innovative solutions, and alignment with corporate goals and timelines.

Continuous Improvement Initiatives

Through the 2025 budget, Council made strategic investments in RCC, driving meaningful progress across key priorities. Highlights include:

Culture Plan Renewal
One-time funding from the Culture Reserve Fund is supporting the development of a new Culture Plan, updating the 2013 Cultural Action Plan. In collaboration with cultural boards and community stakeholders, this initiative will shape a unified vision for arts and culture in Burlington, backed by a detailed action and funding strategy.

Facility Operations Excellence
2025 marked Year 4 of a seven-year plan to enhance preventative maintenance at recreation facilities, with $100,000 added annually. Results to date include reduced downtime, lower reactive maintenance costs, fewer service disruptions, and improved customer satisfaction.

New Community Facilities
Operational funding supported the launch of the Skyway Community Centre and Phase 1 of the Bateman Community Centre—creating new spaces for recreation, connection, and partnership.

In addition to these budgeted investments, RCC advanced several continuous improvement initiatives:

Data Dashboard Project
In partnership with the University of Waterloo’s Future Cities Institute, RCC is developing an integrated dashboard to better analyze and communicate performance across multiple data sources.

Tyandaga Golf Club Pathway
A new multi-use pathway connects Kerncliff and City View Parks with the Bruce Trail, enhancing off-season use of Tyandaga Golf Club and doubling as cart paths during golf season.

Service-Level Enhancements
RCC introduced several new initiatives, including an adaptive aquatic program, an “outdoor living room” engagement model, strategies to reduce program wait lists, and the creation of an additional community hub.

Addressing Gaps and Challenges

While RCC continues to deliver high-quality services, key challenges remain—particularly in expanding access and participation while balancing constraints related to facility space, program availability, and staff capacity. To address these gaps, RCC is advancing several strategic initiatives that promote innovation, fiscal responsibility, and partnership.

Optimizing Facility Use:
Using a multi-faceted approach, recreation is seeking to optimize the spaces in recreation facilities as well as leverage spaces not traditionally thought of as specifically for recreation.

- Partnership agreements built on the principles of the Agencies, Boards, and Commissions (ABC) Framework increase alignment and collective positive impact. In 2026 and beyond, Recreation will continue collaborating with legal and others to refine partnership agreements.
- Place making and sense of belonging continue to figure prominently in long-term planning and inform strategic initiatives such as the addition of new programs and services, the application of learning from Helsinki, implementation of the Arts and Culture strategy, and responding to community needs.

Program and Service Availability:
Through responsiveness in programming and innovation in service delivery, recreation is working to meet community demand for high quality programs amid a growing, shifting demographic.

- The increase in camps and aquatic participation has resulted in additional part-time staff hours funded through revenues. A long-term, strategic approach with sufficient support and oversight from supervisory staff is required to create a sustainable model.
- Partnerships agreements, when thoughtfully developed and implemented, support the delivery of new or expanded services to the community.
- The Live and Play plan, along with ongoing community engagement, provides a foundational framework for service level baselines and future forecasting. Regular alignment of operational planning with these guiding documents ensures a responsive and strategically grounded approach to service delivery.
- Fiscal responsibility and investment based on community benefit is essential as community needs increase. Staff are introducing a framework to guide how rates and fees are set for community programs and services, with a goal to support fair and consistent decisions that reflect community values, promote equitable access, and ensure everyone can participate.

Staff Capacity:
As the city continues to grow, innovative strategies will be essential to support the staff who deliver front-line services. Investing in leadership development, enabling technology, and fostering a growth-ready mindset to position the organization effectively and sustainably adapt to evolving demands.

- Enabling technology through a Customer Relationship Management system, as well as through efficiency tools such as power automate, SharePoint, and application of artificial intelligence increase the capacity and impact of staff. Training and support to intake technology changes is essential.
- In a large, customer-facing service area, leading through multiple layers of staff is standard practice. To ensure front-line teams are supported and equipped to meet community demands, investment in leadership training is essential. This approach strengthens decision-making, builds organizational capacity, and reinforces a culture of strategic service delivery.
- Collaboration across service areas—such as Transit and Service Burlington—enhances reach, amplifies impact, and delivers greater value to the community. Initiatives like cross-promotion between Transit and RCC, and the expansion of a pilot offering City Hall services (e.g., tax payments) at RCC facilities, demonstrate how integrated service delivery can improve accessibility and strengthen community connections.

Department Initiatives	Target Completion
Neighbourhood Development Strategy Aligned with the Vision to Focus framework, RCC is committed to empowering residents to actively shape their communities. This strategy is designed to strengthen belonging, create meaningful opportunities for engagement, and help reduce social isolation. Drawing on insights from the 2025 delegation to Helsinki, RCC will apply proven, innovative approaches tailored to Burlington’s local needs—building more resilient, connected neighbourhoods.	Jul 2026
Community Grant Review RCC is finalizing a comprehensive review of its community investment programs to ensure they are responsive, equitable, and impactful. The revised grant program will maximize utilization by aligning funding opportunities with community needs, while following a flexible and transparent process. This approach will strengthen RCC’s ability to support grassroots initiatives and empower residents to contribute meaningfully to community life.	Apr 2026
Rates and Fees Framework RCC is developing a comprehensive Rates and Fees Framework that balances fiscal responsibility with equitable access to programs and services. The framework will include free and low-cost options to ensure affordability for all residents, while establishing clear cost recovery thresholds. By strategically applying tax-based subsidies based on community benefit, RCC aims to enhance participation, promote transparency, and build public trust in how rates and fees are set.	Oct 2026
New Community Spaces RCC will fully operationalize the Skyway Recreation Centre and Phase 1 of the Robert Bateman Community Centre during their first year following reopening. These revitalized facilities will provide Burlington residents with expanded opportunities to participate in recreation, sport, and cultural activities—supporting community well-being and fostering inclusive, vibrant spaces for connection and engagement.	Sep 2026
Partnership Agreements Guided by the principles outlined in the Accountability Framework Agencies, Boards, and Commissions, RCC will collaborate with internal partners and subject matter experts to prioritize, draft, and execute updated agreements with agencies, boards, commissions, and joint ventures. As part of this process, RCC will establish key performance indicators to monitor impact and support continuous improvement across all partnerships.	Dec 2026

OPERATING BUDGET
FINANCIAL RESOURCE SUMMARY

($ rounded to thousands)

Recreation, Community and Culture

	2025 Budget	2026 Base Budget	$ Change Base Budget	2026 Key Investments	2026 Total Budget	$ Change Total Budget	% Change Total Budget
Salaries Wages and Benefits	24,400	25,717	1,316		25,717	1,316	5.4 %
Internal Charges	1,035	1,066	31		1,066	31	3.0 %
Materials and Supplies	1,317	1,453	136		1,453	136	10.4 %
Commodities	4,481	4,661	179		4,661	179	4.0 %
Facilities and Administration Costs	3,648	3,967	319		3,967	319	8.7 %
Contracted and Professional Services	1,146	1,255	109		1,255	109	9.5 %
Funding for Capital and Debt Repayment	405	336	(69)		336	(69)	-17.0 %
Grants to Other Agencies	396	400	5	20	420	25	6.2 %
TOTAL EXPENSES	36,829	38,855	2,026	20	38,875	2,046	5.6 %
User Fees and Service Charges	10,748	11,462	714		11,462	714	6.6 %
Licenses, Permits, Rents	3,507	4,005	498		4,005	498	14.2 %
Other Miscellaneous Revenue	227	141	(86)		141	(86)	-38.0 %
External Recovery	170	131	(39)		131	(39)	-23.0 %
Internal Recovery	422	432	10		432	10	2.3 %
Transfer from Reserve Funds	261	252	(9)		252	(9)	-3.3 %
Senior Government Grants	154	124	(30)		124	(30)	-19.5 %
TOTAL REVENUES	15,490	16,548	1,058		16,548	1,058	6.8 %
NET OPERATING BUDGET	21,338	22,307	969	20	22,327	989	4.6 %

Budget Commentary

The 2026 budget in Recreation, Community, and Culture includes investments targeted to allow implementation of strategic items, such as the full first year of operations at Skyway Recreation Centre and Phase 1 of Robert Bateman Community Centre. Key department initiatives for the upcoming year focus on resident connectivity and engagement, as well as partnerships with both community groups and larger agencies and boards. There is a focus on fiscal responsibility and affordability, with finalization of the comprehensive rates and fee and grant reviews expected.

Departmental Overview

Department Fire

Department Head Drew Boys **Department Head Title** Fire Chief

Department Description

The Burlington Fire Department (BFD) serves as the City's all-hazards emergency response organization, delivering essential public safety services to residents, businesses, and visitors. Through a coordinated strategy of preparedness, prevention, public education, and emergency response, BFD mitigates the risks associated with fire, medical emergencies, hazardous materials, technical rescues, and other threats to life, property, and the environment.

With a strong emphasis on service quality, operational efficiency, and firefighter and public safety, the department remains committed to continuous improvement and fiscal responsibility. BFD's programs and services support the City's strategic priorities by enhancing community resilience, maintaining critical infrastructure, and ensuring the effective delivery of emergency services across all neighborhoods.

Department Goals

The Burlington Fire Department's services are guided by the three lines of defence established in the Public Fire Safety Guidelines issued by the Office of the Fire Marshal (OFM):

1. Public Fire Safety Education
2. Fire Safety Standards and Enforcement
3. Emergency Response

The first line of defence emphasizes proactive fire prevention and emergency preparedness through targeted public education initiatives. The second line of defence involves enforcing the Ontario Fire Code through inspections and risk-based compliance measures. The third and final line of defence is emergency response, which serves as the last resort when prevention and enforcement efforts are not sufficient to mitigate risk.

While all three lines are critical to community safety, the department's primary goal is to reduce reliance on emergency response by investing in prevention and education strategies. By prioritizing public awareness and Fire Code compliance, BFD aims to build a safer, more resilient community while optimizing the use of municipal resources.

These goals directly align with the City of Burlington's strategic priorities, including enhancing community well-being, ensuring effective service delivery, and supporting sustainable infrastructure. Through these efforts, BFD contributes to a healthy, connected, and vibrant community.

Strategic Alignment with Vision to Focus Plan

Increase economic prosperity and community responsive growth management

Improving integrated city mobility

Supporting sustainable infrastructure and a resilient environment

Building more citizen engagement, community health and culture

Programs

Programs	
Fire Administration	The Administration and Leadership Division of the Burlington Fire Department (BFD) provides strategic oversight, organizational leadership, and administrative governance for all departmental operations. Under the direction of the Fire Chief, this division ensures that BFD resources are effectively managed and aligned with the City's strategic priorities. Key functions of the Administration/Leadership Division include: 1. Managing the BFD's operating and capital budgets 2. Ensuring compliance with applicable federal, provincial, and municipal legislation, policies, and procedures 3. Monitoring departmental performance and demonstrating accountability in the delivery of services 4. Supporting continuous improvement and ensuring that the department meets community expectations regarding public safety and service levels This division plays a critical role in maintaining operational effectiveness, financial stewardship, and transparent service delivery, forming the foundation upon which all other BFD programs are supported.
Fire Community Risk Assessment	Under the Fire Protection and Prevention Act (FPPA), every municipality in Ontario is required to establish fire protection services that meet the specific needs of its community. To support this obligation, the FPPA mandates that municipalities: (a) Complete and maintain a Community Risk Assessment (CRA) in accordance with the regulations; and (b) Use the findings of the CRA to inform decisions regarding the provision and level of fire protection services. A Community Risk Assessment is a foundational tool that identifies, analyzes, evaluates, and prioritizes risks within the community that may threaten public safety. It provides evidence-based insight into the types and levels of fire protection services needed, taking into account geographic, demographic, building stock, and emergency response data. The Burlington Fire Department uses its CRA to guide service delivery planning, allocate resources, and identify areas requiring enhanced prevention, education, or response capabilities. As required by the FPPA, the CRA is reviewed annually and formally reassessed every five years to ensure it remains current and relevant to the evolving needs of the community. This program ensures the department remains compliant with provincial legislation while enabling data-informed decision-making to maintain public safety and optimize service effectiveness.

Programs	
Fire Life Safety Education, Prevention and Investigation	The Fire Prevention Division plays a central role in delivering the first two lines of defence identified in the Public Fire Safety Guidelines: Public Fire Safety Education Fire Safety Standards and Enforcement This division provides fire safety training and education to building owners, occupants, and the general public throughout the city. These efforts aim to increase awareness, promote safe practices, and ultimately reduce the incidence of fire and fire-related injuries. The effectiveness of public education is measured by its ability to influence behaviour and reduce community risk over time. The division also conducts inspections to ensure compliance with the Ontario Fire Code, with a focus on high-risk occupancies and vulnerable populations. With the addition of certified Fire Investigators, the Burlington Fire Department is now positioned to take a more evidence-based approach to fire prevention. Detailed origin and cause investigations provide critical data that inform future education, inspection, and enforcement strategies. This allows the department to better understand local fire trends and tailor its programs to address root causes, thereby enhancing community safety and resilience.
9-1-1 Fire Communications	The Fire Communications Division serves as the critical link between the public and emergency responders. This program is responsible for answering 9-1-1 fire-related calls and dispatching fire apparatus to incidents across the city. The effectiveness of this function relies on three core components: 1. A reliable and resilient radio communications infrastructure 2. A team of NFPA-certified Public Safety Telecommunicators 3. A robust Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system These elements work together to ensure timely and accurate incident response, directly supporting the safety of residents and frontline personnel. As part of Burlington Fire's modernization efforts, the division is actively implementing Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG 9-1-1) and Simultaneous Notification protocols. These enhancements will leverage real-time data to dispatch the most appropriate apparatus based on incident type, risk profile, and proximity. This approach improves response efficiency and ensures optimal resource deployment during critical events. Ongoing investments in training, technology, and system redundancy are essential to maintaining this core public safety function and aligning with national and provincial standards for emergency communications.

Programs	
Fire Apparatus & Maintenance	The effective delivery of emergency services depends on the availability and performance of reliable fire apparatus and equipment. The Apparatus & Maintenance Division is responsible for ensuring that the Burlington Fire Department’s fleet and critical equipment are maintained in optimal working condition to support safe and timely response to emergencies. Key responsibilities of the Apparatus & Maintenance Division include: 1. Maintaining and repairing all fire apparatus, tools, and specialized equipment 2. Developing technical specifications for new apparatus procurement 3. Conducting regular inspections, diagnostics, testing, and preventive maintenance 4. Ensuring all fleet and equipment meet applicable safety and regulatory standards Managing a modern fleet of fire apparatus is a complex and highly technical responsibility. The Apparatus & Maintenance Division applies a structured asset management approach to ensure compliance with provincial regulations, including those outlined in NFPA standards and Ministry of Transportation (MTO) requirements. All technicians are Emergency Vehicle Technician (EVT)-certified, ensuring the highest level of expertise and accountability in maintaining fire apparatus. Through ongoing investment in maintenance programs, lifecycle planning, and equipment modernization, this program supports the operational readiness of front-line crews and contributes directly to firefighter safety and public protection.

Programs	
Fire Training and Emergency Response	The Operations Division is responsible for delivering the third line of defence. Emergency response providing 24/7 protection to the community. Frontline personnel respond to a wide range of emergencies requiring specialized skills, equipment, and coordination. Key functions of the Operations Division include: 1. Fire suppression 2. Specialty rescue (rope rescue, water rescue, and ice rescue) 3. Vehicle rescue using specialize hydraulic rescue tools 4. Hazardous materials response 5. Disaster response and support for large-scale emergencies 6. Emergency medical response under the Halton Region Tiered Response Agreement The Training Division ensures that suppression personnel are fully certified, competent, and operationally ready to meet these diverse response demands. Training is developed, delivered, and evaluated in accordance with legislated standards, including those from the Ontario Fire Marshal (OFM), National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), and Ministry of the Solicitor General. Core responsibilities of the Training Division include: 1. Delivery of core firefighter skills and safety programs 2. Coordination of specialty rescue and medical training 3. Administration of promotional exams and rank classification processes 4. Support for recruit onboarding and career development This program ensures that all emergency responders maintain the highest levels of preparedness, professionalism, and safety, aligning with provincial regulations and public expectations for emergency services.

Continuous Improvement Initiatives

The Burlington Fire Department remains committed to advancing service delivery through continuous improvement and innovation. The following priority initiatives support operational transformation, enhance data-driven decision-making, and align with key recommendations outlined in the Fire Master Plan (FMP) and Strategic Priority I—leveraging community fire risk analysis to inform service delivery decisions.

1. Acquisition of Darkhorse Analytics Software
Darkhorse Emergency Software provides advanced, data-driven tools designed to improve operational efficiency, performance measurement, and strategic resource planning.

Key features include:

a. Performance Analytics: Tracks response times, turnout times, and other KPIs to evaluate and improve service delivery.
b. Incident Mapping: Visualizes geographic distribution of incident data to identify trends and guide resource allocation.
c. Deployment Modeling: Simulates various staffing and deployment scenarios for strategic planning and risk mitigation.
d. Custom Reporting: Creates tailored reports for internal decision-making and external stakeholders, including Council.
e. CAD Integration: Connects directly to real-time dispatch data for up-to-date analysis and reporting.

Strategic Alignment: Supports FMP recommendations through data-informed decision-making and predictive analytics, enhancing BFD's ability to identify risk hotspots, validate deployment models, and improve community coverage.

2. Implementation of a Learning Management System (LMS)
A centralized LMS will streamline training delivery, improve compliance, and strengthen internal professional development pathways.

Key benefits include:

a. Training Continuity: Supports recurring training, certification tracking, and NFPA compliance.
b. Succession Planning: Aids in staff development for future leadership roles.
c. Operational Efficiency: Enables efficient scheduling, progress tracking, and resource management for all training activities.

FMP Link: Aligns with Section 7 – Training Division, which emphasizes competency development, staff certification, and succession planning.

3. Deployment of a Records Management System (RMS)
An enterprise RMS will provide a secure, centralized platform for managing critical operational data, ensuring accuracy, accessibility, and regulatory compliance.

Core functions include:

a. Data Integration: Interfaces with 9-1-1 CAD for unified incident, inspection, and training records.
b. Improved Accountability: Supports internal reporting, public education tracking, and performance measurement.
c. Regulatory Compliance: Enables consistent documentation to meet provincial and municipal standards.

FMP Link: Supports Section 5.11 – Records Management, Retention, and Reporting, reinforcing the importance of structured and reliable data systems.

Addressing Gaps and Challenges

The deployment of Darkhorse Emergency Analytics represents a transformational step forward in understanding and addressing operational gaps within the Burlington Fire Department. Unlike static reporting tools, Darkhorse provides a dynamic, continuously updating view of fire department performance as the city evolves.

By integrating both short- and long-term population growth forecasts and community development data, the platform enables the department to anticipate how future growth will impact risk levels and service capacity. This real-time modeling helps the Fire Management Team evaluate the operational implications of changes in land use, policy, geography, road networks, and emergency call volumes.

The platform's Diagnostic Tools go well beyond traditional metrics like incident counts and response times. Darkhorse provides a comprehensive performance narrative—one that illustrates not just what is happening, but why. It helps identify:

a. Trends in out-of-zone or mutual aid calls
b. Over-target response times
c. Geographic or temporal performance bottlenecks
d. Root causes of workload imbalances

These capabilities allow the department to visualize current performance, uncover actionable insights, and prioritize investments or interventions where they will have the greatest operational impact.

With this level of intelligence, Burlington Fire can make evidence-based decisions to strengthen performance, improve response equity, and ensure service delivery keeps pace with the community's growth and evolving risk landscape.

Department Initiatives	Target Completion
Under O. Reg. 378/18, municipalities must complete a Community Risk Assessment (CRA) every five years, with annual reviews. Integrating Darkhorse Emergency Analytics allows Burlington Fire to maintain real-time awareness of risk, analyze building occupancy, monitor coverage gaps, assess station location per NFPA 1710, and track emerging trends. This aligns with the Fire Master Plan and ensures compliance with provincial legislation.	Mar 2026
In collaboration with the Chief Transformation Officer and Finance, BFD will develop a focused multi-year budget to prioritize staff enhancements and new station development. With significant population and housing growth projected, strategic alignment is essential to ensure BFD can meet increasing service demands and maintain effective fire protection and emergency response across the city.	Jun 2026
A full career firefighter recruitment is anticipated in 2026–2027. BFD continues to participate in joint recruitment initiatives with HRPS and Halton Paramedics. The updated BFD Career Guidebook reflects the diversity of today's fire service. A new Professional Standards program will further ensure BFD is an inclusive, equitable, and responsive organization, aligned with modern public service values.	Sep 2026
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OPERATING BUDGET
FINANCIAL RESOURCE SUMMARY
($ rounded to thousands)

Fire

	2025 Budget	2026 Base Budget	$ Change Base Budget	2026 Key Investments	2026 Total Budget	$ Change Total Budget	% Change Total Budget
Salaries Wages and Benefits	39,011	41,554	2,543		41,554	2,543	6.5 %
Materials and Supplies	489	489			489		0.0 %
Commodities	382	382			382		0.0 %
Facilities and Administration Costs	596	669	73		669	73	12.2 %
Contracted and Professional Services	216	216			216		0.0 %
Funding for Capital and Debt Repayment	570	524	(47)		524	(47)	-8.2 %
TOTAL EXPENSES	41,264	43,833	2,569		43,833	2,569	6.2 %
User Fees and Service Charges	27	27			27		0.0 %
Fines and Penalties	185	180	(5)		180	(5)	-2.7 %
Licenses, Permits, Rents	54	54			54		0.0 %
External Recovery	1,710	1,532	(178)		1,532	(178)	-10.4 %
Internal Recovery	102	25	(77)		25	(77)	-75.4 %
TOTAL REVENUES	2,077	1,817	(260)		1,817	(260)	-12.5 %
NET OPERATING BUDGET	39,187	42,016	2,829		42,016	2,829	7.2 %

Budget Commentary

The 2026 Fire Department operating budget reflects a net increase of $2.83 million (7.2%) over 2025. The primary driver of this increase is Salaries, Wages, and Benefits, rising by $2.19 million (5.6%) to account for annual performance adjustments, range movement, and legislated employer obligations, including payroll taxes, WSIB premiums, OMERS contributions, and group benefits.

On the revenue side, Fire is projecting decreased revenues in three areas.

First, revenues from fire incident fines have declined following updates to our response protocols, which were adjusted to better serve the community amid rising call volumes.

Second, revenues have been reduced due to adjustments in the Fire Communications cost-sharing model, which has been realigned to reflect industry standards and to support the addition of NG9-1-1 capabilities in our Centre, while also positioning us to secure future Fire Communications contracts.

Third, revenues have decreased with the removal of funding associated with a one-time item that was included in the 2025 budget.

Departmental Overview

Department Customer Experience

Department Head Madelaine Raiz

Department Head Title Director, Community Relations and Customer Experience

Department Description

The Customer Experience Department leads the City's strategy for service excellence, ensuring every resident interaction is clear, helpful, and meaningful. We set the corporate vision for customer experience (CX), focusing on consistency, accessibility, and responsiveness across all touchpoints.

We manage Service Burlington, the City's centralized contact centre, and collaborate with Councillor Assistants and Community Liaisons to strengthen community connections. Through CX strategy, service design, and technology modernization, we're building a people-first culture of service excellence.

Department Goals

Our goals reflect our commitment to delivering exceptional service to residents, businesses, and internal teams:

• Deliver Consistent, High-Quality Service
Establish service standards and support frontline teams to ensure reliable, responsive service across all channels.

• Strengthen Community Connections
Partner with Councillor Assistants and Liaisons to enhance local engagement and responsiveness.

• Design Smarter Services
Use customer insights and experience design to improve accessibility, efficiency, and alignment with expectations.

• Lead CX Transformation
Embed customer-first thinking across departments through our enterprise CX strategy.

• Modernize Technology
Implement a new CRM system to streamline service delivery and enable data-driven operations.

• Build a Culture of Service Excellence
Deliver training and establish service standards to foster a consistent, customer-focused mindset across the organization.

• Leverage Data-Driven Insights
Use feedback and analytics to guide service improvements, measure performance, and inform decisions.

Strategic Alignment with Vision to Focus Plan

Providing the best services and experiences (Focus Area 2) Enhances service design and delivery, Ensures consistent, accessible, high-quality experiences, Strengthens community engagement

Driving Organizational Performance (Focus Area 4) Leads enterprise CX strategy and transformation , Implements CRM technology to improve efficiency and data use

Programs	
Enterprise CX Strategy & Governance	Integrates CX principles into planning, KPIs, and service reviews Outcome: Broader CX adoption; increased use of CX metrics in planning and reporting.
Service Standards & Staff Enablement	Defines service expectations and builds staff CX capabilities through training, workshops, and onboarding. Outcome: Consistent service delivery; improved satisfaction; stronger staff alignment and confidence.
CX Connect & Champion Network	Empowers staff ambassadors and community-facing roles to lead CX culture and responsiveness. Outcome: More peer-led initiatives; increased internal engagement; faster issue resolution.
CX Innovation & Co-Design Lab	Improves services through co-design, journey mapping, and blueprinting. Outcome: Redesigned services based on user input; measurable experience improvements.
Digital CX & CRM Modernization	Modernizes platforms and uses data to enhance service delivery. Outcome: Higher CRM adoption; improved digital satisfaction; smarter service decisions.
CX Insights & Performance Improvement	Monitors performance through metrics, audits, and feedback loops. Outcome: Improved service quality; stronger accountability; ongoing enhancements.

Continuous Improvement Initiatives

As a newly established department, the Customer Experience (CX) Team is driving service improvements that enhance accessibility, efficiency, and resident satisfaction.

CX Team & Structure
Establishes staffing, governance, and collaboration to lead CX strategy and support citywide service excellence.
Enables: Dedicated leadership, clear accountability, and sustained support for departments

Alternate Payment Hubs at Recreation Centres
Allows residents to make municipal payments at recreation centres for added convenience.
Benefits: Greater access, reduced travel, and less pressure on central counters

Knowledge Base Enhancements
Improves internal and public-facing content to support faster issue resolution.
Impacts: Increased staff efficiency, fewer inquiries, and better self-service options

Wayfinding Improvements for Service Counters
Enhances signage and navigation in municipal buildings.
Results: Reduced confusion, improved accessibility, and smoother in-person experiences.

Sharing CX Data with Operating Areas
Provides departments with actionable insights to guide service improvements.
Value: Informed decision-making, targeted enhancements, and greater transparency.

Addressing Gaps and Challenges

As we mature our customer experience approach, we're closing key gaps that limit service consistency, coordination, and responsiveness.
• Upgrading the CRM
A modern platform will replace outdated tools, enabling better tracking, faster response times, and a more unified service experience.
• Connecting Systems and Data
Integrating platforms and improving data quality will reduce silos, streamline operations, and support more informed decisions.
• Seeing the Full Customer Journey
A complete view of resident interactions will help staff anticipate needs and deliver more personalized, effective support.
• Improving Feedback Loops
A centralized system will make it easier to collect, analyze, and act on resident input—ensuring voices are heard and improvements are visible

Department Initiatives	Target Completion
Strategic CX Planning These activities will embed CX into planning and reporting for strategic alignment: Establish CX Working Group & Action Plans Launch CX Dashboard for Leadership and	Sep 2026
Service Excellence Training These efforts build staff capability and ensure consistent service delivery: Draft and Validate Corporate Service Implement Service Standards for Top Services Create CX Training Modules Deliver CX Training Across Departments	Dec 2026
CX Engagement Network These activities foster peer leadership and departmental CX adoption: Recruit and Launch CX Champions Network Launch CX Playbook for Departments	Jun 2026
User-Centered Service Design These activities improve services through collaborative, user-centered design: Run Co-Design Sprints for High-Impact Services Develop Service Blueprints for Priority Services	Sep 2026
Digital Service Modernization These efforts modernize digital tools and enhance service delivery through data-driven decisions: Pilot New CRM Platform Expand CRM to Additional Departments Optimize Top Digital Services	Mar 2027
CX Feedback & Monitoring These efforts strengthen accountability and drive continuous improvement: Launch Community Feedback Hub Develop Local Issue Resolution Dashboard Conduct Quarterly CX Audits with Action Reports	Dec 2026

OPERATING BUDGET
FINANCIAL RESOURCE SUMMARY
($ rounded to thousands)

Customer Experience

	2025 Budget	2026 Base Budget	$ Change Base Budget	2026 Key Investments	2026 Total Budget	$ Change Total Budget	% Change Total Budget
Salaries Wages and Benefits	1,692	1,837	145		1,837	145	8.6 %
Materials and Supplies	50	51	2		51	2	3.2 %
Facilities and Administration Costs	3	3			3		3.0 %
Contracted and Professional Services	41	42	1		42	1	3.0 %
TOTAL EXPENSES	1,785	1,934	148		1,934	148	8.3 %
User Fees and Service Charges	154	159	5		159	5	3.0 %
Licenses, Permits, Rents	132	136	4		136	4	3.0 %
Other Miscellaneous Revenue	1	1			1		0.0 %
Internal Recovery	82	82			82		0.0 %
TOTAL REVENUES	369	378	9		378	9	2.3 %
NET OPERATING BUDGET	1,416	1,556	140		1,556	140	9.9 %

Budget Commentary

Human Resources increase reflects City-wide provisions for the annual employee performance adjustment, range movement, payroll taxes (EI, CPP, EHT), WSIB, OMERS and group benefits.
Budget changes in other areas reflect inflationary pressures and user fee increases.

CITY OF
Burlington