



SUBJECT: Take Action Burlington – An Update on Our Local Environment

TO: Committee of the Whole

FROM: Capital Works

Report Number: CW-07-19

Wards Affected: All

File Numbers: 210-08

Date to Committee: June 10, 2019

Date to Council: June 17, 2019

Recommendation:

Receive and file capital works department report CW-07-19 regarding the Take Action Burlington – An Update on Our Local Environment report.

Purpose:

The purpose of Take Action Burlington – An Update on Our Local Environment (Appendix A) is to provide an overview of the state of Burlington's environment highlighting local sustainability efforts and actions that can be taken in a user-friendly document. It relates to the following areas of the Strategic Plan:

A City that Grows

- Promoting Economic Growth
- Intensification

A City that Moves

- Increased Transportation Flows and Connectivity

A Healthy and Greener City

- Healthy Lifestyles
- Environmental and Energy Leadership

An Engaging City

- Good Governance
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Background and Discussion:

History of the State of the Environment Reports

In 1990, the City of Burlington declared itself a Sustainable Development Community with sustainable development then defined as “meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.” The Burlington Sustainable Development Committee (SDC), a volunteer citizens advisory committee appointed by City Council, was formed at the same time to advise council and encourage discussion on matters related to sustainable development.

SDC members produced their first State of the Environment Report (SOER) in 1998, reporting on the state and health of Burlington’s environment and providing recommendations to City Council for improvement. Further editions were released in 2004, 2007, 2011 and 2015 to coincide with new council terms and with discussions around the development of new strategic plans to ensure environmental matters were top of mind. Attached in Appendix C are the list of recommendations made in the 2015 edition, SOER V, along with the staff response to each of those recommendations.

A New Direction

When the SOER was first produced in 1998, the internet was not as predominant as it is now. As such the document was a ‘go to’ resource to learn more about our local environment. Hard copies were distributed to all Burlington library branches and to school libraries with students in grade seven and higher. The SOER was also posted on the SDC’s city webpage at burlington.ca/sdc.

Over the years, it has become increasingly difficult to find SDC members who are comfortable with volunteering to research and write a chapter of the SOER as well as an overall editor for the document. In fact, an intern wrote three of the 11 chapters in the last SOER which was a 150-page document cover to cover. In light of this, staff worked with the SDC to come up with a new streamlined process for the current edition.

Strategy/process

Sustainability staff made a presentation to SDC members in 2017 highlighting the typical 18-month process associated with producing the SOER, as well as identifying the opportunities and constraints with the existing process. It was recommended that the city’s two sustainability staff members along with three members of the SDC form a sub-team to identify options for a potential new direction for environmental reporting.

Sustainability staff researched other municipal examples, met with each member of the former City Council and with members of staff in transportation, transit, city building (planning), capital works, ITS (business intelligence), city manager's office (communications) and roads, parks and forestry (RPF). Results of these interviews as well as reports gathered from other municipalities were shared with members of the SDC sub-team.

Sustainability staff made a follow-up presentation to all members of the SDC in 2018 regarding the findings of the interviews as well as providing examples from other municipalities.

- Staff feedback included the need for a shorter, concise and visually appealing document; links to the strategic plan; engage the SDC in the process (review drafts and provide feedback); and encourage focused recommendations (five instead of 20).
- Council input was that the document was comprehensive but too long losing the intended message of the report; keep the SDC engaged in the process; and use climate change as a theme or a reporting lens.

The following actions were taken based on the consultation process:

- Sustainability staff researched and wrote the document while engaging the SDC throughout the entire process.
- Climate change is embedded throughout the document rather than in a stand-alone chapter as climate change mitigation (the need to reduce GHG emissions) and adaptation (the need to adapt to our new climate) will impact how we live, work and play.
- The document is rebranded under the "Take Action Burlington" umbrella that sustainability staff have been using since the city hosted the Community Climate Change Summit in 2010. This term represents that it's not just what the city is doing to reduce our impact on the environment but what we can all do collectively to make a difference.
- The document is centered around four themes: land, air, water and waste. It is more concise than previous SOERs with connections to the strategic plan and hyperlinks to other sources for more information where they exist.
- The following headings are covered under each theme:
 - Climate change connections
 - What are we (the city) doing?
 - What can you (individuals and businesses) do?
- SDC recommendations stemming from the Take Action Burlington report are presented in Appendix B for consideration by staff and council.
- The staff update to the 2015 SOER V recommendations is in Appendix C.

Successes since 2015

Land

- In 2017, the city completed a new trail on the Eileen and John Holland Nature Sanctuary in North Aldershot on property donated by the family in 2013. This land is a part of the Cootes to Escarpment EcoPark System where the city is one of nine organizations working to reconnect, restore and protect 1,900 hectares of natural lands owned in the Hamilton-Burlington region.
- As part of the Burloak Regional Waterfront Master Plan approved in 2014, invasive trees and shrubs were removed in 2017 and appropriate species were planted in 2018.
- The City partnered with community groups and organizations to plant 110 large trees and 2,158 small trees across Burlington in 2018.
- A two-year private tree bylaw pilot is being tested in Roseland as of March 1, 2019.
- Two more city run community gardens and an additional 122 plots were added since 2015.
- In April 2018, City Council approved Sustainable Building and Development Guidelines. A copy of these guidelines is given to all development applicants and they are encouraged to incorporate green design into their project. A future update to the Burlington Official Plan will include these guidelines.

Air

- The city has three new solar photovoltaic installations through leasing of roof space at RPF, Transit and Mountainside Arena to solar companies generating clean energy.
- The city has partnered with many organizations to reduce our impact on our local environment including the Bay Area Climate Change Office with the City of Hamilton and Mohawk College to address climate change on a regional basis.
- Ongoing implementation of the Community Energy Plan by working with our community stakeholders including Burlington Hydro and Union Gas who deliver energy efficiency programs for homes and businesses.
- In August 2015, the city installed its first EV charging unit with two ports on city property at 414 Locust Street. As of 2018, the city has 29 Level 2 charging ports on city property with an additional 64 Level 2 and 3 charging stations across Burlington.
- The market share of new registrations for EVs (hybrid electric, plug in hybrid and battery electric) increased in Burlington between 2015 and 2018 from 1.45 per cent to 5.01 percent.

Water

- In 2015, \$20.4 million was added to the existing 10-year stormwater capital budget and forecast for major flood improvements such as upsizing major creek culverts and creek channel improvements to increase capacity to reduce flooding risk.
- In 2017, the University of Waterloo's Intact Centre on Climate Adaptation launched the Home Flood Protection Program in Burlington. Over the course of the program in 2017 and 2018, 120 home inspections were done in Burlington.
- The city has been an active member and supporter of the Halton Children's Water Festival since 2007. In 2018, 30 per cent of elementary students and 65 per cent of high school volunteers at the festival were from Burlington.
- In 2018, staff prepared a brochure to educate pool owners on the proper way to maintain their pool, spa and hot tub to reduce impacts on the environment. Blog posts about the topic were also published annually since 2016.

Waste

- In 2018, 13,911 community members, including 42 schools, 52 community groups and 17 businesses participated in BurlingtonGreen's annual clean up events.

Upcoming initiatives/plans/projects in 2019

- \$100,000 was approved in the city's operating budget to update the existing Urban Forestry Management Plan.
- Updated urban street tree planting guidelines will provide for the growth of a healthy and resilient urban forest.
- The city's second Corporate Energy Plan will include actions as to how the city can achieve net carbon neutrality for city operations by 2040.
- The city's 2014 Community Energy Plan is being updated and will be rebranded as a Climate Action Plan.
- New stormwater design standards will include climate change adaptation and low impact development.
- The Joseph Brant Museum expansion will have geothermal energy and a green roof.
- The new City Park Pavillion is designed to have a net carbon neutral operation with solar panels.
- The city is working with a consultant to design Skyway Arena to be near net carbon neutral including rooftop solar panels.
- The Cycling Master Plan Update will be released.

- As of May 1, 2019, customers using the SPLIT program will receive a free PRESTO monthly pass. As of June 3, 2019, adults 65 and over will be able to ride Burlington Transit for free on weekdays between 9 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.
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Financial Matters:

The Take Action Burlington: An Update on Our Local Environment report was researched, written and designed with existing staff resources.

Connections:

Climate change will impact our day to day lives and operations transcending beyond the environment and energy service area at the City of Burlington. It will impact:

- How we need to build such as net zero energy, incorporate renewables, district energy, etc.,
- How we get around such as walk, cycle, take transit, drive or ride share in an EV, and
- How we live in a world that will be subject to more intense storms and unpredictable weather resulting in increased damage to green (trees impacted by invasive species and storms) and grey (roads and buildings impacted more by freeze-thaw cycles, flooding, etc.) infrastructure.

As highlighted in Appendix A (pages 46 to 48) of the Take Action Burlington: An Update on Our Local Environment report, many of Burlington's Strategic Plan 2015-2040 goals are linked to this report including that:

- "The city recognizes that climate change is a significant issue and is working with the community and all levels of government towards the goal of the Burlington community being net carbon neutral."

In addition, on April 23, 2019, the City of Burlington passed a motion to declare a climate emergency to:

- "Deepen our commitment to protecting our economy, environment and community from climate change and
- Immediately increase the priority of the fight against climate change and apply a climate lens to the plans and actions of the City of Burlington including the Council strategic workplan and future budgets."

Public Engagement Matters:

In addition to the initial consultation with staff and the previous members of City Council as well as ongoing consultation with members of the SDC, the following were invited to provide feedback on two drafts in February and March 2019:

- City staff in capital works (energy and environment, stormwater engineering, parks and open space, project management, community gardens); roads, parks and forestry; city building (planning); transportation; parks and recreation; ITS (business intelligence) and the city manager's office (project management office and communications)
- SDC – awareness subcommittee members and other SDC members selected by the awareness team
- BurlingtonGreen Environmental Association
- Burlington Hydro
- Union Gas (now Enbridge Gas)
- Conservation Halton
- Royal Botanical Gardens (Cootes to Escarpment project) and
- Halton Region (public health, water and waste).

The feedback led to the production of the Take Action Burlington: An Update on Our Local Environment report. If endorsed by City Council, the next steps include:

- Posting the report on the city webpage burlington.ca/environment and making it available at event booths attended by sustainability staff and the SDC.
 - Other options being considered include:
 - Circulating the report to all city libraries and school libraries with students in grades seven and up in Burlington
 - Publishing posts (perhaps one per theme) on the Take Action Burlington blog at TakeActionBurlington.ca
 - Creating an online story map

Conclusion:

The Take Action Burlington: An Update on Our Local Environment report provides a snapshot of the state of Burlington's environment each council term. Continuing to provide this high-level report at the current interval of four years will help in identifying meaningful progress, showcase good news stories and highlight areas for improvement.

Respectfully submitted,

Fleur Storace-Hogan
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Appendices:

- A. Take Action Burlington: An Update on Our Local Environment
- B. SDC Recommendations to Take Action Burlington: An Update on Our Local Environment
- C. Staff Update on SOER V (2015) Recommendations

Report Approval:

All reports are reviewed and/or approved by Department Director, Director of Finance and Director of Legal. Final approval is by the City Manager.