

# Economic Activity



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# ECONOMIC ACTIVITY

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Burlington’s location in proximity to Toronto and Hamilton, coupled with its access to major highway and rail infrastructure and an abundant supply of land, allowed the City to grow rapidly over the last 50 years. A number of conditions that supported this rapid growth are expected to change over the next 20 years. The manufacturing-based economy has entered a period of transition where issues of globalization, technology changes, including automation and labour force changes, all contribute to a new role in the economy for manufacturing. Congestion along major highway *infrastructure* is increasing, as are fuel costs.

The Strategic Plan’s first strategic direction supports a City that Grows. Key to working toward that direction is the promotion of economic growth. The Strategic Plan acknowledges that there are many interrelated actions.

A healthy and *sustainable* city provides opportunities to accommodate a wide range of businesses and economic activities throughout the city. The City has *employment* concentrations in manufacturing, retail trade and health care and social assistance. In 2015 the City had the highest proportion of full time jobs compared to other local municipalities in the Region of Halton. Similar to the Region of Halton, the economy and jobs are diverse and well balanced.

In recent years, the growth in commercial space in the City has outpaced population growth. The current supply of commercial space is above average for suburban GTA municipalities. However, vacancy rates and sales performance levels in the City indicate that the retail market is healthy.

The City has an available supply of commercially designated land sufficient to meet future demand to 2031. However, there are underserved portions of the City, as well as *intensification areas* which will require additional local serving needs.

Institutional and *public service facilities* are critical to the economy and the vibrancy of the City. Ranging from a post-secondary institution to a hospital to a fire station, this Plan provides opportunities to locate *public service facilities* throughout the City. Both are critical to the development of a *complete community*. This Plan also identified opportunities to support innovation and research as well as investment in existing and proposed *public service facilities* and *institutional uses*.

This Plan, through the development of the Mixed Use Intensification Areas, is promoting the *re-development* of traditional commercial areas into revitalized mixed use, pedestrian-friendly hubs of activity.

The economy of Rural Burlington is quite different from that of the Urban Area, being based on *agriculture* and *on-farm diversified* uses, other resource industries,

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*home occupations, recreation and agricultural-related tourism.* Rural Burlington’s location in close proximity to major urban areas presents its industries with major challenges but also with new opportunities.

The City’s long term land use strategy to accommodate employment has been developed to manage the challenges and opportunities that the City will face over the planning horizon of this Plan. The strategy:

- a) retains existing vacant lands within the *Area of Employment* lands to provide for a wide range of parcel sizes, locations and characteristics over the long term;
- b) builds on the existing employment lands policy framework to nurture existing *employment* lands, including a level of predictability for those already invested and support for the continued use and *re-development* of employment lands for *employment* purposes; and
- c) focuses on encouraging *employment* growth in *mixed use intensification areas* including the City’s *mobility hubs*. These areas will be planned to accommodate *employment* uses which are *compatible* with other sensitive uses and to have the potential to contribute to vibrant, mixed use, transit-supportive uses.

Building on the City’s strengths, over the planning horizon of this Plan, people will work throughout the City in *Areas of Employment*, urban centres, *mobility hubs*, other mixed use areas, in the Rural Area and even in existing residential neighbourhoods in the form of home occupations and small scale neighbourhood commercial uses.

This section includes policies on employment, area of employment protection, innovation districts, strategic employment areas and the agricultural system.

### 5.1 EMPLOYMENT

#### 5.1.1 OBJECTIVE

- a) To promote economic development and competitiveness.

#### 5.1.2 POLICIES

- a) The *City shall* promote economic development and competitiveness by:
  - (i) providing for an appropriate mix of *employment* uses including industrial, commercial and *institutional uses* to meet long-term needs;

- (ii) providing for a diversified economic base, including maintaining a range and choice of suitable sites for *employment* uses which support a wide range of economic activities and *ancillary uses*, and take into account the needs of existing and future businesses;
  - (iii) planning for, protecting and preserving *employment areas* for current and future uses; and
  - (iv) ensuring the necessary *infrastructure* is provided to support current and forecasted *employment* needs.
- b) *Major office* and appropriate major *institutional development* should be located in urban growth centres or *major transit station areas*, with existing or planned higher order transit service.

## 5.2 PROTECTING THE AREA OF EMPLOYMENT

The *Planning Act* defines *Area of Employment* as an area of land designated in an Official Plan for clusters of business and economic uses. These areas are devoted to *employment* uses and are critical to the long term *sustainability* of the City. The *Area of Employment* captures a cross section of lands including a portion of designated Employment Lands as well as employment-oriented designations Mixed Use Intensification Areas, as described on Schedule B, Urban Structure.

The City has a finite supply of lands within the *Area of Employment* and it is critical that the *City* adopt a policy framework which protects that supply from unwarranted conversion. The *City* will need to maintain its supply of land within the *area of employment* in order to capitalize on its growth potential over the long term, given the fixed urban boundary.

From time to time, there *may* be a compelling reason to consider conversion, particularly when a conversion can achieve another one of the *City's* strategic objectives.

### 5.2.1 OBJECTIVE

- a) To conform to the policies of the Provincial Policy Statement, the Provincial Growth Plan and the Regional Official Plan to guide the consideration of *employment* land conversion, at the time of a *municipal comprehensive review*.

### 5.2.2 POLICIES

- a) It is recognized that all lands within the *Area of Employment* are necessary to achieve a significant component of the *employment* forecasts for the City to

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the year 2031, as identified in Chapter 2, Sustainable Growth, of this Plan. The *area of employment* includes all lands identified as *Area of Employment* on Schedule B, Urban Structure, of this Plan, which are contained within the following land use designations on Schedule C, Land Use – Urban Area, of this Plan:

- (i) Business Corridor;
- (ii) General Employment; and
- (iii) Urban Corridor-Employment;

and the following land use designations on Schedule E, Land Use – Uptown Urban Centre, of this Plan:

- (i) Uptown Business; and
- (ii) Uptown Business Corridor.

- b) Proposals for the re-designation of lands defined as the *Area of Employment* on Schedule B, Urban Structure, of this Plan, from *employment* uses to non-*employment uses*, or to add a range of uses to an *employment* designation that are primarily permitted in a non-*employment* designation, including major retail uses, *shall* be evaluated in such a way as to utilize the *employment* generation and economic potential of the *employment* lands, based on meeting the following criteria:

- (i) the proposal *shall* only be considered in conjunction with a *municipal comprehensive review* as identified in the Provincial Policy Statement and the policies of Provincial Plans;
- (ii) there is a demonstrated need for the conversion, as determined by *City Council*;
- (iii) the proposal *shall* not detrimentally affect the short and long term *employment* land needs of the *City*;
- (iv) the proposal *shall* not *adversely impact* the achievement of the *City's intensification* targets and density targets;
- (v) the *intensity* and characteristics of the proposed non-*employment uses shall* not *adversely impact* the overall viability of the *Area of Employment*, or the desirability or proper servicing of existing and future surrounding land uses;
- (vi) there is existing or planned *infrastructure* and *public service facilities* to accommodate the proposed conversion;
- (vii) cross-jurisdictional issues have been considered;

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- (viii) proposals for the re-designation of lands abutting major transportation corridors including rail lines, Provincial Freeways and Major and Multi-Purpose Arterial Streets, as identified on Schedule P-1, Classification of Transportation Facilities-Urban Area, are discouraged;
- (ix) support studies as identified in Subsection 12.1.5.1.2.1, Complete Applications, of this Plan are prepared;
- (x) in addition to clauses (i) through (x) above, the re-designation *shall* also meet at least two of the following conditions:
  - a. the amount of land affected is minor in area based on the projected land requirements within the planning horizon of the Plan;
  - b. the *development* of the site is not feasible for *employment uses* within the planning horizon of this Plan;
  - c. there are no alternative sites, designated and approved for the proposed use elsewhere in the City;
  - d. the proposal will have a beneficial impact on the surrounding uses and the broader community; and
  - e. the *development* of the lands for non-*employment uses* will meet a public need identified by City Council resolution.

## 5.3 INNOVATION DISTRICTS

Innovation districts are a type of business and/or industrial district designed to attract and promote clusters of public and private sector firms and organizations engaged in the development of new products, materials, services and knowledge.

Innovation districts are considered to be elements in the knowledge economy. Often they are anchored by post-secondary institutions and several major private firms, around which are clustered small and medium sized firms, support businesses and services and various business incubators and accelerators intended to support new ventures and start ups. The idea is that proximity, clustering and connectivity will stimulate economic activity.

The importance of the knowledge based economy is highlighted in the *City's* Strategic Plan. A key priority related to promoting economic growth is to develop an environment that is attractive to high-growth “knowledge-based” companies. The *City* will work to create the technological support, business support, *infrastructure* and educational environment to attract start ups and growing businesses.

While the uses generally associated with innovation districts such as research and development firms, product testing, and support services are permitted in a wide variety of locations in the City, the geographic clustering of similar uses can help to catalyze economic development and innovation in specific areas of the City. While residential uses do not need to be included within a given Innovation District, the ability to conveniently access a full range of residential options is very important.

### 5.3.1 OBJECTIVES

- a) To establish a general framework for identifying an area with potential to function as an innovation district.
- b) To support the development of economic development strategies that establish the vision and the key element of an innovation district.
- c) To develop land use policies and tools that will support the implementation of economic development strategies for the development of innovation districts through enhanced transit and other *infrastructure* improvements, in order to create a more connected, complete and *sustainable* community feature.

### 5.3.2 POLICIES

- a) One or more potential innovation districts *may* be identified in this Plan where the following opportunities have been identified:
  - (i) an existing or proposed post-secondary institution is located in the area;
  - (ii) a clustering of a related group of businesses and/or economic activities that have the potential to support the creation of new investments, ventures or start ups to support the development of new ideas, products or services.
  - (iii) *An area of employment with access to the frequent transit network (justified), availability of infrastructure and access to a range of housing options within close proximity.*
- b) Innovation District Study Areas *shall* be identified on Schedule B, Urban Structure, of this Plan.
- c) Where an Innovation District Study Area has been generally identified on Schedule B, Urban Structure, of this Plan, an *Area-Specific Plan shall* be completed for the District.
- d) Until the *Area-Specific Plan* has been completed for an identified Innovation District Study Area, notwithstanding the permissions in the underlying land use designation on Schedule C, Land Use Plan – Urban Area, of this Plan, the following uses *may* be permitted:
  - (i) *office* uses;
  - (ii) *industrial* uses that involve assembling, fabricating, manufacturing and other processes;
  - (iii) research laboratories and information processing;
  - (iv) communications;
  - (v) municipal *infrastructure* and *utilities*;
  - (vi) conference and convention uses and hotels, where they are permitted in the underlying land use designation, subject to addressing land use *compatibility* requirements; and
  - (vii) retail and *service commercial* uses in accordance with the policies of the underlying designation.
- e) An economic development strategy and brand for the development of an Innovation District *shall* include the following:
  - (i) vision and target sectors;

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- (ii) the identification of economic, networking and physical assets available to support the Innovation District; and
- (iii) direction to undertake an *Area-Specific Plan* to determine, in addition to the policies in Subsection 12.1.4 of this Plan:
  - a. land use vision and objectives related to the vision and target sectors;
  - b. *infrastructure* investments required to promote connectivity to *frequent transit network* and mobility hubs;
  - c. alignment of land use permissions with the vision, including, where an Innovation District is located outside of an *Area of Employment*, a full range of permitted uses;
  - d. where an Innovation District is located entirely within an *area of employment* the identification of opportunities to connect to surrounding communities, mixed use intensification areas and where applicable mobility hubs, *shall* be a priority. Connections to residential and commercial uses *shall* be identified and appropriate investments in *infrastructure* such as transit and *active transportation shall* be recommended.
  - e. design standards for the private and *public realm* including *streetscapes* in accordance with the policies of Chapter 7, Design Excellence; and
  - f. the identification of tools to incentivize preferred outcomes in line with the vision and policies of this Plan and the *Area-Specific Plan*.

## 5.4 STRATEGIC EMPLOYMENT AREAS

There are four strategic concentrations of within the *Areas of Employment* with a variety of vacant *employment* lands serviced, or planned to be serviced, over the horizon of the Plan, and existing developed *Areas of Employment* that *may* have the potential to *re-develop* and potentially *intensify*. These areas are not mapped, and do not constitute specific land use direction.

These areas are generally identified in the policies of this section of the Plan and *may* be the focus of the development of tools and approaches aimed at supporting the long-term viability and health of the City's *Areas of Employment*. Opportunities to support the *Areas of Employment* as they change over the coming years *shall* remain a key priority and one that will require careful investment in *infrastructure* from water and wastewater, *utilities*, transit *infrastructure* and *public service facilities* and *public realm* improvements in response to the investments of businesses and the needs of employees.

### 5.4.1 QEW CORRIDOR

- a) This district straddles the QEW and extends from Guelph Line to Burloak Drive and from Mainway to the GO Train line. The area contains over 25 percent of the City-wide supply of vacant parcels, making up 13 percent of the overall vacant *employment* land in the City.
- b) *Development* in close proximity to the Appleby GO should be transit supportive and consider opportunities to facilitate walking and cycling.
- c) In the long term, support for *re-development* for *employment* uses within this corridor will be critical to re-invest, intensify *development* and increase the number of jobs.
- d) The QEW Corridor *shall* be the focus of the development of a long-term *employment intensification* study to develop strategies to support *re-development* and re-investment:
  - i) such a strategy *should* recognize that the lands north of the QEW/403 have a more intensive *employment* nature and in many locations provides sufficient protection from other, *sensitive land uses*;
  - ii) the strategy *should* highlight opportunities relative to the *employment* lands south of the QEW/403 and north of the GO Rail Line and Stations. The strategy *should* emphasize and identify investment required to ensure employers and employees are prioritized and provided with convenient transit and safe pedestrian access from the *major transit station areas* to the surrounding *employment* lands;

- iii) the strategy *should* acknowledge that over the long-term, the *City should* consider the development of a pilot *brownfield Community Improvement Plan* to support the *re-development* of *employment* land for new, more intensive *employment* uses.

#### 5.4.2 BRONTE CREEK MEADOWS

- a) This district extends from Burloak Drive to Creek Way and is bordered by Upper Middle Road and Mainway. The area contains the largest concentration of vacant *employment* land in the City, which constitutes 52 percent of the City-wide supply of vacant *employment* land. The employment function of Bronte Creek Meadows is a priority for the City. This area will be a focus for innovative *employment* and *employment* supportive uses in a *complete community* and in accordance with this Plan and the *City's* Strategic Plan.
- b) In the near term, this area *should* be guided by the development of an *Area-Specific Plan*. A portion of the Bronte Creek Meadows district *shall* be the focus of the *Area-Specific Plan*.
- c) The *Area-Specific Plan shall* be prepared in accordance to the policies of Subsection 12.1.4 and *shall* at a minimum, consider the following:
  - i) *infrastructure* and *public service facilities* requirements;
  - ii) achieving the density target established for the *Designated Greenfield Area*;
  - iii) the Natural Heritage System;
  - iv) future land use that focuses on *employment* and supportive uses; and,
  - v) consistency with the policies contained in Chapter 7, Design Excellence, of this Plan.

#### 5.4.3 403 WEST CORRIDOR

- a) This district straddles the 403 west of the 407. The area contains diverse vacant *employment* land and its relationship to the Aldershot GO Station *should* be an important consideration in its *development*. As a western gateway to the Greater Toronto Area connections to Hamilton will be critical to the long term development of the area.
- b) A significant area of the 403 West Corridor will be considered as part of the *area-specific plan* for the Aldershot Mobility Hub. The relationship between mixed use areas and *employment* lands will be considered and the opportunities and challenges for connecting the entire corridor with transit

service shall be considered. Investments in transit will be a priority to change the dynamics of the area.

#### 5.4.4 407 CORRIDOR

- a) This district is the newest *Area of Employment* in the City, located on the south side of Highway 407 between the Dundas Street and Appleby Line interchanges. This area is not fully built out and represents key opportunities for prestige *employment development* with visibility and access to Highway 407, along with close proximity to two interchanges at Dundas Street and Appleby Line.
- b) In the near-term, support for the *development* of uses that are appropriate in close proximity to residential areas will be prioritized. Investment in transit will be a priority to change the dynamics of the area.
- c) The 407 Corridor *may* be the focus of a *Community Improvement Plan* related to the optimal development of this relatively young *Area of Employment*, in order to ensure that the area meets its potential as a high-profile *employment* entry node to the City.

## 5.5 THE AGRICULTURAL SYSTEM

The economic health and long term viability of the *agricultural system* play an important role in creating a healthy and environmentally *sustainable* City. This Plan is directed at providing the conditions for *agriculture* and the *agricultural system* to grow and prosper and to adapt to changing conditions. This is addressed both through the policies in this section of the Plan and through the objectives and policies set out in Chapter 9, Land Use Policies – Rural Area, of this Plan.

### 5.5.1 OBJECTIVES

- a) To support the economic viability of *agriculture* and the *agricultural system*.
- b) To enable *agriculture* and the *agricultural system* to adapt to new challenges and new opportunities.
- c) To promote efficient *agricultural operations*.
- d) To encourage and protect local food production, including *urban agriculture*.

### 5.5.2 POLICIES

- a) The City *shall* consider providing incentives and other forms of assistance to support the development of *agricultural, agriculture-related* and *on-farm businesses* through the preparation, adoption and implementation of a *Community Improvement Plan* under Subsection 12.1.3.5 of this Plan.
- b) *The City's Areas of Employment shall* accommodate industries that are components of the *agricultural system*.
- c) *The City shall collaborate with the Region of Halton* in implementing Halton Region's Rural Agricultural Strategy to support the long-term sustainability and prosperity of the *agricultural system and the rural economy*.
- e) The City *shall* develop an *urban agricultural strategy* to identify and support appropriate *agricultural uses* in the Urban Area, in accordance with the policies in Section 4.9, Community Gardens and Urban Agriculture, of this Plan.