

DRAFT SWOT Findings

Economic Vision for the City of Burlington

Burlington Economic Development Corporation

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Contents

1	SWOT ANALYSIS.....	3
1.1	STRENGTHS	3
1.2	WEAKNESSES	4
1.3	OPPORTUNITIES	5
1.4	THREATS	5

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1 SWOT Analysis

The following section of this report presents aggregated findings into common themes from the various forms of community and stakeholder consultations performed, including the detailed baseline data analysis and competitiveness assessment results, as well as a background review of the infrastructure environment and planning policies. These findings have been compiled into a SWOT (strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis.

A SWOT analysis is an important element to any strategic planning process, and a valuable tool that supports decision making through the identification of internal and external factors that directly impact on the viability of an organization's projects or plans.

Strengths are generally attributed to local assets and resources the municipality can leverage, or build on to support local growth and prosperity. Weaknesses are current disadvantages internal to the community that hinder, or impeded successful outcomes. These factors may require improvement, strengthening, or mitigation in order to encourage and support the community's ability to capitalize on opportunities.

Opportunities are specific elements that the municipality can exploit, or leverage to its advantage in order to overcome challenges and effect positive change. Threats are generally associated with factors that may jeopardize a community's success and represent barriers, or obstacles that may prevent the City's ability to implement its strategy.

The purpose of this section is to utilize the SWOT Analysis in order to inform the overarching goals and objectives that are developed in order to effectively execute upon the Economic Vision the City of Burlington has for its future. They are drawn from a comprehensive research process, driven by stakeholder and community input, and grounded in an evidence based approach.

1.1 Strengths

- Burlington has a well-educated population and highly skilled workforce presenting competitive advantages for attracting and retaining industry looking for more educated workers, and increasing the net worth of residents
- High levels of professional services, entrepreneurship, and micro businesses that support a vibrant entrepreneurial culture and diversity of self-employment
- Very high quality of life with ample cultural and lifestyle amenities, festivals, accessible waterfront, family oriented, green space and northern rural agricultural area, clean and safe environment, and appeal to broad audience of socio-demographic characteristics



- Availability of quality and high speed telecommunications in most urban areas
- Burlington has a relatively less expensive development environment than competitor communities to the East, and the lowest average land prices compared to eastern neighbours
- Burlington has a low unemployment rate, and relatively high earnings in professional, knowledge based, and highly skilled occupations that position it well for attracting self-employed professional talent
- Burlington has a relatively diverse economy and did not fare as bad as other communities during the recent recession
- Burlington has a relatively high level of household income and experienced one of the fastest levels of income growth between comparator jurisdictions
- Within the Greater Toronto Area, Burlington is a relatively affordable place to buy a home
- Go Transit and integration with broader regional and inter-regional transit connectivity

1.2 Weaknesses

- Gridlock, traffic congestion, and poor transit offerings (especially along key employment districts and corridors) were noted as critical barriers to growth
- A insufficient supply of investment ready lands (not to be confused with a vacant land inventory) presents a key challenge for securing new investment and expansion
- Overly complex bureaucratic environment that discourages investment and frustrates business growth
- Lack of a strong and vibrant Burlington Brand that differentiates the city from its competitors, and energizes and entices people, business, and talent to move to Burlington
- Burlington suffers from a lack of a unique selling proposition
- Burlington needs a strong, long term vision for the city that drives all other elements of planning and corporate activity
- Aging and a lack of modern office space prohibits potential new business growth and employment
- Delayed improvements to municipal infrastructure frustrate the ability to attract and retain new investment
- Need to shift Burlington away from a car dependent design and stimulate more active transportation
- Need for greater alignment between the post-secondary educational community, stakeholders, and the City to increase the required type of talent in demand by local industries



1.3 Opportunities

- Supporting and/or enhancing the educated workforce, skilled labour development or skill training
- Advancing redevelopment and intensification opportunities, strategic planning and rezoning
- Leveraging Burlington's location between Hamilton and Toronto to better effect population and workforce growth
- Ensuring stronger municipal support structures for business development by streamlining regulatory process, enhanced business expansion and retention activities, small business, start up and innovation enablement
- Establish more effective and appealing incentivization programs that will encourage increased appetite in redevelopment and intensification
- Great potential contained in pursuing sector growth opportunities in High Technology, Information Communications, and Health and Life Sciences and building out the industries to develop stronger support clusters.
- Additional opportunities were identified in pursuing increased Tourism, Higher Education, Professional Services, and advanced manufacturing
- Better leverage Burlington's transportation infrastructure system that see all 400 class highways converge in the city and allow access to major economic centres and populations
- Establish Mobility Hubs around Go Stations to stimulate mixed-use live/work environments
- Significant level of knowledge and wisdom contained in older populations that could be tapped into more effectively to support mentorship, stimulate entrepreneurship, and support growth and prosperity in the local economy
- Greater volunteerism potential and community engagement to support city building and future directions
- Need to effectively harness the potential contained in strategic alliances with local developers and land owners to support mutual aims and benefit
- Focus on leading companies in key sectors that have global markets and ambitions – encourage increased corporate and regional headquarters to locate in Burlington
- Potential contained in agricultural and rural opportunities north of the 407 that could be explored and capitalized on

1.4 Threats

- Burlington needs a stronger and more integrated transit system that supports the import of workers and talent, as much as it does the export of residents and workers out of the city
- Transit systems are underserved in key employment districts, particularly the Prosperity Corridor



- Increasing cost of living and housing affordability present ongoing challenges to Burlington's ability to attract and retain newcomer and young professionals and families
- Greater affordability of living and housing in Hamilton encourages outmigration of population and workers
- Concentration of privately owned lands affects availability, price, and flexibility in providing development options
- Availability of modern and in demand office space in surrounding competitor areas and high vacancy rates inhibit development opportunities
- Cost and availability of lands in Hamilton, and other competitor jurisdictions to the west of Burlington pose significant risk to attracting new development related investment
- Burlington's lower unemployment rate may deter investment from companies with higher labour overheads, depending on the level of skill and qualification required to meet company needs
- Burlington is facing a serious shortage of younger aged cohorts, and in an increasing aging population. This is occurring at a more rapid rate than surrounding and comparator areas. In order to meet new employment, knowledge economy, and creative class talent attraction goals. With significant gaps in the ages of 24 and under, Burlington is faced with a potential shortage of people to transition into the prime working age population category over the next ten years
- Burlington suffers from youth and talent leakage as skilled individuals pursue more accessible employment and affordable living opportunities outside of the city
- Community resistance to intensification and downtown redevelopment, including prohibitive regulatory environment
- Employment Lands Operational Plan and Regional Best Planning Estimates not aligned and contribute to confusion, lack of direction, and delays associated with infrastructure and growth planning
- Lack of alignment among all key decision makers at Regional and Provincial levels towards Burlington's growth targets and aspirations