



TOURISM BURLINGTON

Draft Strategic Plan 2011 to 2014



Final
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1 INTRODUCTION

Tourism Burlington is a strategic partnership between tourism industry operators, the City of Burlington and the community that focuses on working collectively to maximize the benefits and economic impacts of tourism within Burlington. The organization undertakes many roles, involving visitor services, marketing and communications, advocacy, support and development to tourist packaging and new product development, and a series of other functions in support of tourism industry growth and development.

Over the last number of years, Tourism Burlington has focused on building its presence, capacity and programs as a new organization. Its first Strategic Plan aligned significantly with both the marketing and development of the industry and the formulation and capacity building of a restructured organization. Also, in the last number of years, the Province of Ontario has reconfigured tourism marketing and development through the introduction of Regional Tourism Organizations. These organizations will have significant impact on local tourism destination marketing organizations like Tourism Burlington in terms of potential funding, role and focus, and integrating into broader regional tourism and marketing initiatives.

In the spring of 2011, the Board of Directors and Executive Director of Tourism Burlington identified a need for a new Strategic Plan. This need revolved around the introduction and ongoing development of the Regional Tourism Organizations that will reshape Tourism Burlington's operating environment; the completion of the first Strategic Plan, which focused on the 2006 to 2010 period; the movement of Tourism Burlington from a developing organization to an more established industry partnership; and related to other strategic opportunities and challenges that lie ahead for both tourism in Burlington and Tourism Burlington.

In support of the new strategic planning initiative that covers the period 2011 to 2014, an Environmental Scan was completed involving seven focus groups, interviews, document reviews, trend assessments and related materials. This document is available under separate cover. The key strategic themes that emerged from the Environmental Scan are available in Appendix I.

2 VISION – WHAT WE ASPIRE TO BE

A Vision is like a horizon, it identifies the strategic direction the organization is headed and the key outcome that it wishes to achieve. The Vision should be inspirational and have the capacity to galvanize the energy and commitment of all stakeholders to move in the same direction with common cause and purpose. The following Vision was developed for Tourism Burlington.

Exceptional Visitor Experiences
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The following perspectives and themes are represented within the Vision:

Exceptional	Represents the need for tourism services in Burlington to provide distinct, unique and exceptional experiences to all visitors and stakeholders. It is not good enough to be average or to be like others. It is by being distinct and exceptional that the tourism industry will reach its potential in Burlington.
Visitor Experiences	Identifies the primary focus of everything Tourism Burlington is involved with in terms of its marketing, product development, visitor services and other activities. It is about creating, through partnerships and other means, a mix of tourism experiences that align with different tourism market segments. These experiences will be exceptional and collectively represent the foundation upon which the tourism industry will prosper and generate enhanced economic, employment and other benefits for its partners and Burlington residents.

3 MISSION – OUR PURPOSE

A Mission Statement informs a reader as to the fundamentals and essence of what an organization is about and undertakes. In application terms, every strategic or operational decision the organization undertakes needs to align with its Mission. If a strategic or operational decision is being considered that does not align with the Mission, the organization needs to ask why it would make such a decision or whether it is time to review its Mission.

The following Mission Statement was developed for Tourism Burlington for the 2011 to 2014 period.

Tourism Burlington is a partnership that delivers:

- **Increased visitors year round;**
- **Community and partner economic benefits.**
- **High quality experiences and attractions**

The following themes and perspectives are presented within the Mission:

- ***Tourism Burlington is a partnership that delivers.*** Identifies that Tourism Burlington is a strategic partnership that includes industry operators, the City, the community, funders and others. It is a destination management organization (definition in Appendix III) that brings together all the tourism interests in Burlington into a collaborative environment focused on improving the tourism industry and the benefits that can be realized from this industry for the Burlington community.
- ***Increased visitors year round.*** Identifies the first of two goals that focus the work of Tourism Burlington. Increasing visitation to the community and the funds spent by visitors represents one key goal. Part of this goal is to extend visitor stays, to grow the visitor spend across all four seasons and to increase overnight stays (preferably in roofed accommodations) to better position tourism as a year-round, sustainable industry in Burlington.
- ***Community and partner economic benefits.*** The second goal for Tourism Burlington is to work at optimizing community and partner economic benefits from tourism. From an economic perspective, this involves business retention and development, increased employment, leveraging resources and capacities and related outcomes. From a community perspective, it involves creating a stronger identification by residents and instilling a sense of pride in being community ambassadors. It also involves developing venues and facilities that not only benefit residents and enhance quality of life but also attract visitors.

4 PRINCIPLES AND VALUES – WHAT IS IMPORTANT TO SUCCEED

Principles and Values have three primary roles within a Strategic Plan. First, they create opportunities to further interpret and define key themes within the Mission Statement. Second, and most importantly, they define the basis of the organization's relationship with partners, people and other interactions. Third, they can create a platform for the development of organizational accountabilities.

The following Principles and Values have been identified for Tourism Burlington.

We Value:

- **Exceptional customer service**
- **The support and active participation of our partners**
- **Collaboration, innovation and continuous improvement**
- **Accountability and integrity.**

The first Principle focuses on Tourism Burlington's need to facilitate and to deliver each day exceptional customer service. It is through exceptional customer service that visitors, local residents, partners and others will come to see tourism as an important economic benefit and opportunity for the community, and to support the realization of the full potential of tourism in Burlington.

The second Principle recognizes the fundamental relationship between Tourism Burlington and its partners. In this Principle, the support and active participation of Tourism Burlington's partners is a key success factor. This support and participation needs to be both nurtured by Tourism Burlington and delivered by the partners, as Tourism Burlington's success is dependent on the engagement of partners.

The next Principle focuses on the need for Tourism Burlington, both within itself and its partners, to be collaborative, innovative and to support continuous improvement. Tourism is a dynamic industry that is constantly changing. Successful organizations need to be continually learning, innovating and collaborating, both within and beyond the community in order to be successful.

The fourth Principle focuses on the need for Tourism Burlington to be accountable for its decisions, use of resources and actions, as well as to act with integrity in all that it does. This accountability connects with its partners, the community, funders and others, and is the cornerstone in building strong relationships. These values will position Tourism Burlington as a credible leader in facilitating tourism development and growth in Burlington.

5 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS – OUR ACTION PLAN

Strategic Directions represent the first level in operationalizing a Strategic Plan. They identify the actions and priorities that Tourism Burlington needs to focus on for the 2011 to 2014 period in order to advance towards the achievement of its Mission and Mandate.

The following three Strategic Directions have been established for Tourism Burlington for 2011 to 2014.

1. Exceptional Visitor Experiences
Facilitates the delivery of exceptional visitor experiences
<i>The Future We Are Striving For</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Customer service is a priority❖ Burlington is seen as a compelling tourism destination❖ Burlington's tourism potential is fully realized
<i>What Will Tourism Look Like?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Burlington is identified by visitors and partners as a distinctive and memorable destination❖ There is increased numbers of year-round visitors who spend more each time❖ Tourism partners participate in growing the tourism industry
<i>How Will We Measure Success?</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Burlington's tourism brand is recognized and valued❖ Visitor spends increase significantly❖ Tourism partners engage in industry development and marketing activities
<i>Our Action Plan Includes</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Assess and prioritize the best tourism opportunities for Burlington❖ Encourage private sector tourism investment❖ Capitalize on existing and new tourism opportunities in Burlington❖ Effectively use marketing and communication tools to reach diverse audiences

2. Growing Tourism Prosperity

Increase the range and viability of Burlington's tourism opportunities

The Future We Are Striving For

- ❖ **New marketing, training and other programs are developed that support tourism partner success**
- ❖ **Partners understand the roles of RTO #3, Halton Region and Tourism Burlington**

What Will Tourism Look Like?

- ❖ **Increased financial success for tourism partners**
- ❖ **Evident expansion of new tourism opportunities**
- ❖ **Tourism Burlington's programs and services are participated in by partners**
- ❖ **Benefits from tourism have been maximized through OTMPC, RTO #3 and Halton Region activities**
- ❖ **The City and tourism partners identify tourism as an economic priority and invest in its future potential**

How Will We Measure Success?

- ❖ **Increased visitation to Burlington tourism venues**
- ❖ **New tourism opportunities are offered**
- ❖ **Increased partner participation in Tourism Burlington programs and services**
- ❖ **Burlington tourism products, activities and events have been included in RTO #3, Halton Region and provincial initiatives**
- ❖ **Investment in tourism by the City and partners increases**

Our Action Plan Includes

- ❖ **Inventory, assess and share tourism opportunities and impacts with partners**
- ❖ **Deliver programs that support tourism partner success**
- ❖ **Develop an effective and efficient tourism services delivery partnership with all levels of government**
- ❖ **Identify and advocate for investments that support tourism growth**

3. Engaging the Community

Engage Burlington residents to gain their support and to be ambassadors for tourism

The Future We Are Striving For

- ❖ **Residents support tourism as a valued contributor to Burlington's quality of life**
- ❖ **Organized groups understand the benefits of tourism and promote these opportunities**
- ❖ **The community values tourism as an economic priority**

What Will Tourism Look Like?

- ❖ **Residents and their families and friends, participate in tourism activities**
- ❖ **Organized groups and residents are engaged and identify tourism opportunities-they participate as volunteers and are enthusiastic ambassadors**

How Will We Measure Success?

- ❖ **Tourism is supported by the residents, tourism partners and funding agencies**
- ❖ **The number of organized groups promoting tourism grows**

Our Action Plan Includes

- ❖ **Research tourism opportunities and contributions**
- ❖ **Develop a comprehensive communication plan to educate and inform residents about tourism benefits, services and opportunities**

The first Strategic Direction focuses on Exceptional Tourism Experiences. For Tourism Burlington, this Strategic Direction focuses on facilitating the delivery of exceptional visitor experiences for people coming to Burlington, local residents and others. The notion of exceptionality is vital, in that Burlington needs to differentiate its brand and its uniqueness from many other currently comparable tourism areas. Without that differentiation, and a focus on quality visitor experiences, Burlington will not be able to realize the full potential of its tourism capacity.

In support of this Strategic Direction are three key outcomes. The first involves positioning Burlington as a compelling tourism destination that is unique and differentiated. This second is that Burlington will strive to realize its full potential as a tourism destination, focusing on developing and marketing its key assets and capabilities. The third outcome is that customer service will be a priority for Tourism Burlington, the community, partners and others. Quality customer service is seen as the starting point in realizing tourism's potential in Burlington.

The second Strategic Direction involves growing tourism prosperity. The focus of this Strategic Direction is on enhancing the viability of tourism opportunities and partners in Burlington. This includes a wide range of activities, from marketing, to training, to working with other tourism marketing organizations, to partners investing in tourism infrastructure and opportunities, to other actions.

Three outcomes are identified for this Strategic Direction. They are offering marketing, training and other programs and services that better support tourism partner success. Also involved is identifying the best / preferred tourism opportunities for Burlington based on its assets and infrastructure, along with promoting new tourism opportunities. The third is to overcome the hurdle of partners and the community understanding the different roles and capacities of the various tourism marketing delivery organizations, involving RTO #3, Halton Region, the province and others. Clarity is essential so that partners know who delivers what and that there is no redundancy, inefficiencies and loss of capacity.

The third Strategic Direction is engaging the community. Currently, tourism is not seen as an economic priority and many residents do not equate Burlington as having significant tourism potential. This Strategic Direction focuses on educating, working with and establishing the community as key ambassadors and supporters of tourism in Burlington.

The three outcomes for this Strategic Direction involve working with the community so that they better understand and value tourism in Burlington as a contributor to the community's quality of life. Also involved is the need for organized groups and residents to be actively engaged in leading tourism initiatives, participating as volunteers and always being strong ambassadors, spreading the word, encouraging and speaking out in support of visitation to Burlington, whether with family or friends or when meeting people from other communities. The third outcome is establishing a community-wide understanding of the economic benefits of tourism and the potential that tourism has as an economic priority for Burlington. This outcome is important in encouraging the City, partners, other funders and others to investment in tourism opportunities.

6 IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

6.1 IMPLEMENTATION CHARTS

The following implementation charts templates provide a basis upon which Tourism Burlington can move forward and develop its implementation strategies over the next number of years for the three Strategic Directions. The implementation charts provide a roadmap, giving consideration to the fact that over the 2011 to 2014 period, events in the operating environment, on-going opportunities, etc. will change some of the priorities and actions. However, with a roadmap in place, the tracking of the implementation of the Strategic Plan can be reported and acted upon to ensure that the intent and purpose of the Strategic Plan is actively moving ahead.

6.2 STRATEGIC PLAN REVIEW

A two-part Strategic Plan review process is identified for Tourism Burlington as follows:

- Include a Strategic Plan component in a monthly report to the Board.
- Every year, the Board and senior staff should hold a special session to review the Strategic Plan, the key inputs, changes in the operating environment and make appropriate adjustments to the timing, tasking and related dimensions of the Strategic Plan's implementation. The Board should also consider a process approach to delete the past year and add a new year to the Implementation Plan each year as part of an updating and more dynamic approach to strategic planning.
- Every three to four years, the Board and senior staff should engage in a full review process similar to this current initiative in order to ensure the relevancy, timeliness and scope of the Strategic Plan in moving Tourism Burlington towards the realization of its Vision and Mission.

**Tourism Burlington
Strategic Plan 2011 to 2014**

OBJECTIVES	Priority Ranking	Tasking	Project Lead/Team	Reporting Dates mm / dd / yr	Approval Requirements	Desired Outcomes	Indicators / Metrics
Strategic Direction No. 1: Exceptional Visitor Experiences							
<i>The Future We Are Striving For</i>							
1.1 Customer service is a priority							
1.2 Burlington is seen as a compelling tourism destination							
1.3 Burlington's tourism potential is fully realized							

**Tourism Burlington
Strategic Plan 2011 to 2014**

OBJECTIVES	Priority Ranking	Tasking	Project Lead/Team	Reporting Dates mm / dd / yr	Approval Requirements	Desired Outcomes	Indicators / Metrics
Strategic Direction No. 2: Growing Tourism Prosperity							
<i>The Future We Are Striving For</i>							
2.1 Offer marketing, training and other programs that support tourism partner success							
2.2 Identify and promote new tourism opportunities							
2.3 Partners understand the roles of RTO #3, Halton Region and Tourism Burlington							

**Tourism Burlington
Strategic Plan 2011 to 2014**

OBJECTIVES	Priority Ranking	Tasking	Project Lead/Team	Reporting Dates mm / dd / yr	Approval Requirements	Desired Outcomes	Indicators / Metrics
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Strategic Direction No. 3:	Engaging the Community						
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The Future We Are Striving For

3.1 Residents support tourism as a valued contributor to Burlington's quality of life							
3.2 Organized groups understand the benefits of tourism and promote these opportunities							
3.3 The community values tourism as an economic priority							

APPENDIX I

Environmental Scan Strategic Themes

Environmental Scan Strategic Themes

- What is the most effective positioning and capacity framework for Tourism Burlington in light of the emergence of RTO #3 and the potential loss of up to 50% of its current budget?
- What is the Vision for tourism in Burlington, and how does Tourism Burlington articulate this Vision and actively galvanize all stakeholders towards a common strategic direction;
- How does the organization build value with residents, the industry and the City to achieve more support and collective activity to develop the tourism industry's full potential and recognize its economic value to Burlington?
- What is the appropriate performance measurement framework / program for both Tourism Burlington and the tourism industry to demonstrate its benefits, value and importance in Burlington?
- How can Tourism Burlington and the industry leverage opportunities and potential from community organizations and institutions to enhance conferences and meetings, travel trade, sport and other tourism sectors, as well as new infrastructure (the Pier, City Park, Performing Arts Centre, Alton Community Centre, etc.);
- How can the perceptual gap between Burlington and tourism be bridged and the industry's potential realized?
- How can more strategic thinking, innovation, collaborative insights and collective actions be instilled within and around the tourism industry in Burlington?
- What is the funding model that will position Tourism Burlington to deliver the innovative capacities and strategies that will make a positive economic difference for both the tourism industry and the Burlington community?

APPENDIX II

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats Assessment

1. Strengths

- Tourism Burlington exists, is a strong organization, is widely valued and has a knowledgeable, capable and committed staff;
- Investments in / emergence of considerable new tourism infrastructure in terms of the Pier, the Performing Arts Centre, etc.;
- Strong relationships with the Burlington Hotel Association, along with an industry recognized Board;
- A good private sector that has considerable potential;
- A good mix of seasonal event attractions / a strong inventory of assets in place;
- A clean and safe community that is consistently identified as one of the best places to live in Canada which can be transferred to create benefits for visitors.

2. Concerns / Issues / Weaknesses

- A lot of what-ifs exist around lost opportunities for the industry, such as within sport tourism, the waterfront, etc.;
- The funding transitions and the loss of the Destination Marketing Fund which creates considerable uncertainty on the future activities and scope of Tourism Burlington;
- The prevailing view that tourism is a cost and not an investment by some key funders and partners;
- The fragmentation of the industry and the small scale of some of the operations;
- A lack of measures that demonstrate the value and understanding of the impacts and benefits of tourism in Burlington;
- There is no defining market brand that establishes a compelling destination; such as could be achieved through a key attraction;
- The location between Toronto and Niagara Falls, two of Ontario's largest tourism destinations, whereby Burlington gets lost and operates in the "shadows";
- Potential loss of a working tourism model in Burlington as a result of the RTO;
- Lack of a common Vision for tourism in Burlington and who and what tourism is.

3. Opportunities

- Having more of Burlington residents bringing families and friends to the community, along with staycations;

- Greater education on the value of tourism to Burlington, creating greater awareness of the benefits at both the local and regional level;
- Building capacity around / leveraging benefits from the emerging new industry capacity in Burlington;
- Undertaking advocacy initiatives at the City and provincial level to better understand the RTO / RTL and the implications and impacts this could have on local interests and industry capacities;
- Developing new / large events by finding entrepreneurial-oriented community organizations or companies that want to be active in this area;
- Leveraging the Pan Am Games, the War of 1812 celebration and other initiatives that have the potential to build additional capacity and legacies for tourism in Burlington;
- Maximizing the sport tourism capacity of new facilities such as the Burlington Performing Arts Centre, Alton Community Centre, the new city park etc.
- Capitalizing on the societal trend towards healthier lifestyles that could support growth in hiking, cycling and related forms of activity-based tourism.

4. Threats

- The emergence of RTO #3 and its potential impacts on local tourism organizations;
- The loss of identity for Tourism Burlington and the potential to become marginalized;
- The loss or lack of City and industry support for tourism in the future;
- If the Royal Botanical Gardens or other key tourism operators were to scale back, reposition or lose connectivity to the community;
- If the competition to tourism in Burlington, whether by industry or geography, were to become better positioned or develop competitive advantages that could impact tourism in Burlington;
- Macro-economic and recession factors that could change visitation profiles, especially from the United States.

APPENDIX III

Definition of a Destination Management Organization

Destination Management

Morrison, Bruen, and Anderson, (1998) single out five primary functions of a DMO:

- an “economic driver” generating new income, employment, and taxes contributing to a more diversified local economy;
- a “community marketer” communicating the most appropriate destination image, attractions, and facilities to selected visitor markets;
- an “industry coordinator” providing a clear focus and encouraging less industry fragmentation so as to share in the growing benefits of tourism;
- a “quasi-public representative ” adding legitimacy for the industry and protection to individual and group visitors; and
- a “builder of community pride” by enhancing quality of life and acting as the chief “flag carrier” for residents and visitors alike

Summary of the Activities of the DMO

External Destination Marketing Activities

- Web Marketing
- Events, Conferences and Festivals
- Cooperative Programs
- Direct Mail
- Direct Sales
- Sales Blitzes
- Trade Shows
- Advertising
- Familiarization Tours
- Publications and Brochures

Internal Destination Development Activities

- Visitor Management
- Information / Research
- Coordinating Tourism Stakeholders
- Crisis Management
- Human Resources Development
- Finance and Venture Capital
- Resource Stewardship
- Quality of the Visitor Experience