# SUMMARY REPORT & RECOMMENDATIONS

On

## Green Development Standards

BACC Bay Area Climate Change Council

**Bay Area Climate Change Council**

bayareaclimate.ca

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## Land Acknowledgement

BACCC acknowledges that the Bay Area-encompassing Hamilton and Burlington-lies within the Treaty Lands and Territory of the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation as well as the traditional territories of the Erie, Neutral, Huron-Wendat and Haudenosaunee peoples.

The Bay Area is located on lands covered by the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, a treaty between the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabek to share and care for the resources of the Great Lakes. It is covered by the Between the Lakes Treaty No. 3, a treaty negotiated in 1784, ratified in 1792 between the Mississaugas of the Credit and the Crown.

We honour the enduring presence and stewardship of all First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples who continue to protect these lands and waters. We are grateful for the opportunity to live, work, and gather here, and we commit to walking the path of Truth and Reconciliation through respectful partnership, meaningful engagement, and shared environmental responsibility.

These acknowledgments mark only one step in an ongoing journey spanning generations. We offer them in the spirit of truth, reconciliation, and collective action toward a just and sustainable future for all who call this territory home.

# Summary Report and Recommendations

*On*

*Green Development Standards*



**Sponsor**

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to The Atmospheric Fund (TAF) for their generous sponsorship of BACCC. Your steadfast support empowers our team to pursue bold ideas and deliver meaningful impact within the communities we serve. Thank you for believing in our mission and helping turn vision into measurable results.

# Who We Are

The Bay Area Climate Change Council ("BACCC") represents a collaborative voice for climate action in the Hamilton-Burlington region. Members of the Council and our implementation teams span the region and represent organizations in the municipal, non-profit, education and private sectors, and include citizen representatives. The BACCC is non-partisan, and not intended to address specific political issues or concerns.

# Bay Area Climate Change Implementation Team(s) ("BACCIT")

The mandate of the BACCIT(s) is/are to implement climate action strategies as recommended by the BACCC. The team(s) is/are non-partisan in nature. BACCIT members are guided by their own Terms of Reference and participate on the BACCIT at the discretion of the BACCC.

# Acknowledgment to Contributors

We would like to acknowledge and extend our sincere gratitude to the BACCIT members who shared their expertise and lived experience to this BACCIT. The full report on green development standards and this Summary report and Recommendations reflect the input and advice of the BACCIT members. We further wish to thank staff from the City of Burlington and the City of Hamilton for having been part of the process.

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Beyond all the work of the BACCIT, we could like to acknowledge (BACCC) members, whose insightful reviews and thoughtful edits have strengthened this work.

Finally, we offer heartfelt thanks to the Cities of Hamilton and Burlington for their steadfast collaboration and leadership in advancing climate action across the Bay Area.

# Preface

The Government of Ontario introduced two legislative initiatives, Bill 17 and Bill 5 in the Spring of 2025. At the time BACCIT members were winding down their meetings. BACCC staff had developed a draft report. Though these bills, in particular Bill 17, are expected to impact the planning process, at the BACCIT's final meeting, the BACCIT decided that the BACCIT would not address the potential impacts of Bill 17. Within the broader community, as within the BACCIT, there was no clear consensus on what those impacts would be.

The BACCIT then asserted the continuing need for discussion and effective action on advancing new development projects to address human health and safety, broader environmental impacts of climate change. The BACCIT decided to maintain a focus on ensuring real estate developments of today are "future-ready". Regardless of how Bill 17 might impact the planning process, these priorities need to be discussed and reflected in a clear framework. To-date these priorities have been advanced in the GTHA principally by municipalities through Green Development Standards.

# Summary Report and Recommendations

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# Background

This Summary Report provides a summary of the full BACCC Report on Green Development Standards. It reflects the recommendations that came out of the BACCC initiative to explore how Green Development Standards would benefit the Bay Area cities of Burlington and Hamilton. BACCC established the Bay Area Climate Change Implementation Team ("BACCIT") on Green Development Standards, bringing together a group of 22 collaborators.

The full BACCC Report that forms the basis for this Summary Report reflects the BACCIT discussions of the key success factors for establishing an effective GDS program, emphasizing BACCC's goals for this project:

1. To ensure that new real estate development in the Hamilton-Burlington Bay Area is aligned with net zero by 2050, and
2. To ensure that any net zero pathway is equitable; it must not exacerbate existing inequity nor create new inequities.

The BACCIT considered how these goals needed to align with other activities that impact real estate development, specifically the work at the national level to advance the National Model Building Codes ("NMBC") for adoption by the provinces and territories. Of particular interest is the work toward the 2030 NMBC which is anticipated to be a Net-Zero Energy Ready Code.

The BACCIT explored the role that different actors play, whether the municipalities, community-based organizations or the Government of Ontario. Enabling a broader, more collaborative approach would enable the much-needed market transformation. It has become an especially important goal within the current geo-political context as Canada seeks to maximize economic benefit from creating one national economy while also seeking to grow links with Europe and Asia.

## BACCIT Priorities

The BACCIT discussed what might be the ideal approach for moving the entire building sector toward consistent standards for high-performance, future-ready real estate development. Much of the BACCIT conversation focused on those parts of the GDS that impact energy use and GHGs. That said, the BACCIT participants identified the following as top priorities for the GDS to address:

1. Energy efficiency and GHG emissions reduction;
2. Stormwater management;
3. Low-impact development;
4. Community design, in particular such issues as urban heat island effect and accessible design;
5. Transit-oriented development and active transportation.

The BACCIT focused mostly on broader, contextual issues instead of the technical issues that municipalities must decide on as part of establishing a GDS. Other organizations are better suited to provide the technical guidance for establishing a framework like the GDS. Increasingly municipal GDS programs are aligning with Toronto's Toronto Green Standards.

## The option of an Ontario-led framework

The BACCIT concluded that the Province of Ontario could play a leadership role by providing one system that would allow municipalities to adopt the level of performance that works in their municipality. It would be a more holistic system that ideally addresses the variety of issues that the GDS seeks to address. The Province would need to undertake meaningful engagement in particular with municipalities and the development community to determine these priorities and the steps to deliver this system. In the absence of such a system, municipalities have focused on using GDS as the mechanism available to them to advance municipal sustainability and climate goals.

This Ontario-led framework would also put Ontario on the timelines that provinces, territories and the Federal government have agreed to, in order to deliver the 2030 NMBC as a Net Zero Energy-ready Building Code. Through meaningful consultation with municipalities, industry and other interested partners, the Government of Ontario could establish this system with clarity about how municipalities can adopt the different tiers and standards and the timing for this adoption.

## Recommendations

The discussion and recommendations in this Summary Report are grouped under 5 different categories:

1. Target Net Zero & Climate Resilience
2. Prioritize Equity and Affordability
3. Enhance Transparency and Predictability
4. Advancing Market Transformation
5. Engage and Collaborate across Community

The recommendations tabled below were crafted as a single, inter-locking playbook that tackles four persistent barriers to sustainable real estate development—lack of clear targets, housing-cost pressure, slow approvals, and skills shortages. These recommendations are aimed at municipalities, community-based organizations, as

well as a suggested path for the Province of Ontario in an attempt to ensure alignment across different levels of government and that every solution proposed reinforces the next.

The recommendations are also designed to provide some flexibility in anticipation that each of the City of Hamilton and the City of Burlington will determine how to best advance their climate and sustainability goals. Each city will be seeking legal advice about how recent amendments to the Planning Act will impact municipal planning requirements and processes.

# TARGET NET-ZERO AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Clear targets provide certainty for builders and signal sustained municipal commitment. For municipalities, GDS can be adopted as a holistic set of requirements that are adopted all at once as a program or as a set of requirements that are developed and implemented over time.

Setting a firm deadline of 2035 was seen to be a reasonable deadline for achieving zero carbon, climate adapted green development (with interim milestones). This timing for the building sector also aligns with national efforts on the building codes.

New construction tends to lead the entire building sector in adopting new technologies and construction methods. It mainstreams the new technologies and construction methods for subsequent adoption in the retrofit/renovations markets. Aligning the Bay Area net zero targets focused on new construction to this 2035 deadline, aligning with the national level timelines is an essential step to provide momentum and start building industry expertise which is much needed for the much larger task of retrofitting the existing building stock.

The Canadian Board for Harmonized Construction Codes ("CBHCC") that drives the national building code process has set the goal that the 2030 National Model Building Code ("NMBC") will provide the framework for net zero energy, zero carbon, climate resilient buildings.

The BACCIT quickly reached consensus that an important part of setting clear targets for reaching net zero was education. Both the public and industry alike would benefit from any efforts to deepen knowledge and familiarity with high performance buildings and climate-adapted real estate properties.

**Please refer to Table 1 below for the general recommendations**

## RECOMMENDATION 1 : TARGET NET-ZERO AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE

### How to read this table

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | This organization or city will be involved in this process |
| No | This organization or city will NOT be involved in this process |

| ACTION | HAMILTON | BURLINGTON | COMMUNITY- BASED ORGANISATIONS |
|---|---|---|---|
| A. Aim for net-zero by 2035 with interim milestones | yes | yes | yes |
| B. Use grants and low-interest loans to bridge cost gap | yes | yes | no |
| C. Showcase for residents health and safety, lower bills and comfort to drive adoption | yes | yes | yes |
| D. Combine rebates, loans, fast-tracks to accelerate uptake | yes | yes | no |
| E. Educate industry on rebates, loans, fast-tracks to accelerate uptake | yes | yes | no |

# Hamilton

The City of Hamilton Council has approved of the Green Building Standards ("GBS"), Hamilton's version of GDS. At the writing of this report, implementation of the GBS had been postponed to allow staff to respond to comments from interested parties. It has also been impacted by the Government of Ontario's Bill 17.

Within this context, Hamilton can still accelerate its transition to net zero by signalling its commitment to green development being zero carbon, climate adapted by 2035. To that end, Hamilton could:

1. Track progress as Hamilton has already set out certain clear interim milestones. It could be through tracking progress publicly through annual reports from the City of Hamilton's Office of Climate Change Initiatives (OCCI), and embedding those goals in its Climate Action Strategy.

2. The City should then ensure that developers are able to determine the amount of financial incentives that they will qualify to receive. This allows these financial incentives to be incorporated into early analysis of the financial viability of the project. The Tax Increment Grants are an example of a financial incentive that is long-standing and well understood by industry because of Hamilton's ERASE program. This approach would address upfront costs for builders and developers while delivering future-ready developments for future occupants.

Public-facing initiatives (education initiatives, utility-backed case studies of energy savings and open-house tours of net-zero homes) make the benefits tangible, boosting community buy-in. As the changing weather patterns evi-dence the impacts of a changing climate, residents in the Bay Area will be able to relate most easily with the health and safety benefits of a future-ready property.

## Burlington

The City of Burlington in 2021 released the Sustainable Building and Development Guidelines ("Guidelines") which offer a broad range of mostly voluntary options for incorporating sustainable features. The Guidelines and their uptake could be advanced as follows:

1. Burlington should begin reviewing the level of industry uptake of its Guidelines, as this data can inform a deeper analysis of which issues could be made more robust in the city's Guidelines. The City of Burlington would increase transparency and improve public discussion on its climate goals through annual reporting on the uptake of Burlington's Guidelines.

2. Burlington would benefit from a timely review of its Guidelines and as part of this review, considera-tion of which GDS priorities might inform updates to the Guidelines.

3. Burlington can strengthen its climate agenda by adding a firm 2035 net-zero energy ready target for real estate development, to align with the objectives for the NMBC 2030. This approach will com-plement Burlington's long-term broader climate 2050 goal.

4. As Burlington is part of the Region of Halton that can provide regional support, Burlington might consider using this network to advance its climate and sustainability goals for green development. Partnering with neighboring municipalities (in particular with Halton Hills that already has a GDS program) could provide the opportunity for regional, pooled incentive programs that offer consistent financial incentives.

5. Community outreach and education on future-ready developments would bring visibility to how these developments enjoy reduced operating costs and health and safety benefits. It would build public sup-port. For example, Burlington might look at setting up net-zero exhibits at local events or establishing public awards for high-performance buildings.

6. The BACCIT recommends prioritizing new intensification areas and MTSAs for incentivizing low car-bon, climate resilient developments. Burlington might also look to emphasize the low-carbon energy transition, sharing infrastructure costs and exploring cross-boundary thermal links with Halton Re-gion. This could position Burlington to deliver scalable, low-carbon heat to mixed-use developments

and accelerate regional decarbonization.

## Community-Based Organizations

Community-based organizations (CBOs) can play a decisive role in an equitable net-zero transition. CBOs can work together to maximize their impact in Hamilton and Burlington, for example to:

1. Translate and Mobilize – Turn municipal climate targets into plain-language fact sheets and infographics, convene community forums to shape interim milestones, and champion equity-centred goals that reflect frontline needs.

2. Monitor and Hold Accountable – Develop and publish annual "progress scorecards" so residents can see how well local governments are meeting their commitments.

3. Showcase and Inspire – Organize neighbourhood home tours and virtual walk-throughs of net-zero, climate-resilient properties; create multilingual materials on health and cost-saving benefits; spotlight early adopters through community awards, social-media campaigns, and local events.

By combining clear communication, public accountability, inspiring success stories, and practical financing support, CBOs can ensure that climate action delivers tangible benefits for all residents.

# PRIORITIZE EQUITY AND AFFORDABILITY

As we face a changing climate and more extreme weather patterns and events, the priorities of equity and affordability with become ever more urgent. Communities that face socio-economic barriers ("equity-deserving populations") are typically impacted more severely by climate change and more extreme weather patterns. Vulnerable populations are also disproportionately impacted by the increasing costs of housing.

GDS can help ensure that low-income residents (1) share the benefits of higher performing real estate, such as enjoying lower energy bills, healthier air, and climate-proof homes, and (2) can participate in training and upskilling to address labour shortages and workforce development.

Developments that align with GDS deliver properties that have lower operational costs as well as better comfort, health and safety for occupants. The Bay Area needs to ensure that future-ready design isn't limited to those who can pay the premium. It is essential that as much as possible the cost premium is addressed through effective tools.

**Please refer to Table 2 below for the general recommendations**

# RECOMMENDATION 2: PRIORITIZE EQUITY & AFFORDABILITY

## How to read this table

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | This organization or city will be involved in this process |
| No | This organization or city will NOT be involved in this process |

| ACTION | HAMILTON | BURLINGTON | COMMUNITY- BASED ORGANISATIONS |
|---|---|---|---|
| A. Embed affordability, health and inclusion in every incentive | yes | yes | yes |
| B. Consider rewarding with grants for projects with priorities of affordability & local hiring | yes | yes | no |
| C. Explore bulk-buy equipment and materials, solar arrays and/or heat pumps Launch real-time green-development dashboards | yes | yes | no |

## Hamilton

Hamilton has been developing a Climate Justice Framework, which hasn't yet been made public at the time of writing. This Framework could provide guidance about how the City implements its GBS. It might enable Hamilton to deepen how its actions in administering GBS bring benefit to equity-deserving communities. In the interim, the BACCIT anticipated the following actions to advance equity and affordability:

1. Hamilton can lock in long-term housing affordability, sustainability and climate resilience by implementing its own version of Green Development Standards that the City of Hamilton has called Green Building Standards ("GBS"), or certain parts of the GBS (post Bill 17 amendments).

2. As Hamilton develops its Implementation Plan, there will be a great opportunity to integrate into all of its financial incentives particular Incentives that are tied to the needs of equity-deserving families.

3. The City of Hamilton, working with the City of Burlington and other key stakeholders would benefit from exploring a bulk purchasing program.

Given the current challenges that Canada is facing with the cost of imports, exploring bulk purchasing of certain equipment and materials would reduce costs to developers. It could also be limited to the bulk-purchase of solar arrays and high-efficiency heat pumps.

## Burlington

Burlington has established its Affordable Rental Housing CIP which offers a bundle of ten financial incentive programs. The programs provide for grants, forgivable loans, municipal fee waivers, development charge assistance and brownfields tax assistance. With new market rental projects not moving forward, Burlington developed this CIP in order to deliver on Burlington's Housing Acceleration Fund commitments.

Other possibilities for Burlington include:

1. In Burlington, there could be a great opportunity to analyze other Burlington incentive programs and consider how it could integrate into all of its financial incentives a requirement for meeting the needs of equity-deserving families.

2. As described above, the City of Burlington, in conjunction with the City of Hamilton, could explore ways to support a dedicated approach for bulk purchasing.

## Community-Based Organizations

BACCC and other CBOs should look to collaborate on community-level efforts to support municipal climate targets with practical implementation pathways. Specifically, CBOs can complement municipal actions by:

1. Leaning into Affordable-housing Leadership – CityHousing Hamilton, Indwell, housing co-ops, and faith-based housing agencies control large portfolios that are ripe for deep-energy retrofits and net-zero new builds. Their projects can serve as living laboratories for tiered Green Development Standards (GDS).

2. Exploring methods to – ACORN Hamilton, local tenant groups, and the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction keep the "leave-no-one-behind" mandate front and centre. They could be valuable partners to ensure that equity-deserving people, their families and their broader communities are effectively informing GDS implementation.

3. Collaborating with funding partners to ensure the greatest community benefit – The Hamilton Community Benefits Association can enable effective Community Benefits Agreements, Indwell brings proven, supportive-housing models; CMHC offers co-investment and insurance products that de-risk technology innovation and upgrades; and Mohawk College provides micro-credential training for the trades needed to execute the work.

By clustering these actors around joint planning tables and project pipelines, community organizations can play a role in analysing methods to limit cost increases while increasing uptake. The Bay Area can pair strong social safeguards with the technical and financial capacity required to scale equitable, low-carbon housing city-wide.

# ENHANCE TRANSPARENCY AND PREDICTABILITY

Swift, predictable timelines bring value to developers. Predictability also requires transparency, which allows a proponent to clearly understand expectations. Where timelines are unknown and protracted it increases costs to the proponent. Where the metrics, timelines and administrative processes are transparent and predictable, it is easier to assess the success of the GDS program. It forms a strong basis for continuous, iterative improvement.

The BACCIT discussed implementation issues like providing a streamlined "one-window" experience for project proponents and the tools that can enable streamlined implementation—for example establishing Community Planning Permit System, Green-Building Concierge, and real-time dashboards—so builders and developers know what's required and can move quickly. Finally, to achieve a successful transition, upskilling the trades is necessary, so these recommendations include a parallel priority on workforce development and skills development.

**Please refer to Table 3 below for the general recommendations**

## RECOMMENDATION 3: ENHANCE TRANSPARENCY & PREDICTABILITY

### How to read this table

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | This organization or city will be involved in this process |
| No | This organization or city will NOT be involved in this process |

| ACTION | HAMILTON | BURLINGTON | COMMUNITY- BASED ORGANISATIONS |
|---|---|---|---|
| A. Formalise tiered GDS with clear mandatory & voluntary levels | yes | yes | no |
| B. Pilot CPPS to bundle zoning & site-plan and minor variances processes | yes | yes | yes |
| C. Expand one-window Green-Building Concierge | yes | yes | yes |
| D. Launch real-time green-development dashboards | yes | yes | no |
| E. Invest in workforce hubs & micro-credentials | yes | yes | yes |

## Hamilton

Hamilton can improve uptake and compliance with its tiered GBS by continuing to engage with builders, residents, and climate advocates as Hamilton implements its GBS and as it starts to collect data about GBS uptake. More specific recommendations are:

1. Piloting a Community Planning Permit System (CPPS) in priority growth areas (such as MTSAs and brownfields) would bundle zoning, site-plan, and building approvals—making compliance with the GBS tiers faster and more predictable. A CPPS can cut approval times by streamlining the planning approval process.

2. Hamilton could enable a dedicated "GBS Concierge" approach, where applicants have one point of contact for procedural and technical guidance, fee schedules, and help connecting with incentives. The BACCIT returned on a number of occasions to the idea of having one point of contact within the planning department. This one point of contact would need to not just orchestrate responses from city staff. That person would also bring great benefit to the process by coordinating across City departments to provide coherent feedback, ensuring that there is no conflicting feedback from City departments.

3. Hamilton would benefit from establishing some form of transparency in data about how the GDS implementation is progressing. This might take the form of a public dashboard—synced with OCCI climate-progress reports—shows real-time uptake and emissions savings.

4. Finally, Hamilton would benefit from working with Mohawk College and local trade associations to develop short-course credentials on airtightness, heat pumps, and embodied-carbon accounting builds the workforce capacity needed to deliver each successive tier.

## Burlington

Burlington delivered in 2021 its current Sustainable Building & Development Guidelines. These Guidelines likely were established for the same reason that GDS are a powerful tool - all the sustainability and climate related elements were brought together into the same document. This was an important step in providing predictability and transparency. Other recommendations are:

1. As mentioned above, Burlington would benefit from completing a review of uptake by applicants and an analysis of how to improve uptake of its Guidelines. This should include an assessment of the changing economic and environmental context. This can include developing a process for regular review and adaptation, every 3-4 years with the goal to move the real estate sector toward the zero carbon, resilient future.

2. Burlington should consider expanding its use of Community Planning Permit Systems (CPPS), further to the CPPS that Burlington previously established regarding Major Transit Station Areas. There is evidence that using a CPPS shortens timelines by consolidating zoning and site-plan approvals, giving developers a clear pathway to meet higher tiers in exchange for faster decisions.

3. Providing developers a clear pathway would enable Burlington to improve developer's uptake of the voluntary sections of Burlington's Guidelines. In the alternative, as part of evolving its Guidelines into a tiered Framework, the City can consider mechanisms to drive developers to meet higher tiers in

exchange for faster decisions.

4. Burlington should expand its Building and Development Business Concierge service, to support builders and developers in learning about incentives, and workforce development. This might also include some educational materials, like case studies or checklists for developers moving toward integrating more sustainability design principles. Using this great resource to provide a more holistic service through the City's existing Concierge service, applicants receive one-stop guidance that allows them to themselves keep progressing on their sustainability path.

5. Lastly, coordinating with local workforce programs (e.g., Mohawk College's micro-credential programs, green-construction certificates and the Halton Skilled Trades Alliance) ensures builders, trades, and inspectors have the skills to deliver on every tier, accelerating Burlington's shift to low-carbon growth corridors.

## Community-Based Organizations

CBOs can be pivotal accelerators of equitable green development through the following actions:

1. Public engagement & clarity — Translate technical tiered-standard language into plain-language guides, town-hall presentations, and social-media explainers so residents understand what each green tier means for costs, comfort, and climate benefits.

2. Equity-driven CPPS advocacy — Orchestrating community input into a Community Planning Permit System (CPPS) that embed clear community-equity criteria (e.g., minimum below-market units, workforce diversity targets) before projects qualify for fast-track approvals.

3. Builder & non-profit liaisons — Offer "single-window" navigation help for local builders, co-ops, and non-profits, linking them to grants, tax-increment financing, and technical advisors so smaller actors can compete alongside large developers.

4. Data-guided reform — Collect and publish neighbourhood-level data on affordability gaps, energy burden, and climate risks; use the evidence to spotlight inequities and drive continuous policy improvements.

5. Targeted capacity-building — CBOs like Mohawk, McMaster and other trade associations should collaborate on delivering training streams for builders and developers. These might cover topics such as CPPS compliance, embodied-carbon accounting, and net-zero construction techniques—so under-represented groups can lead in the green-building market.

By combining clear communication, equity advocacy, hands-on support, and skills training, CBOs ensure that ambitious green-development tiers translate into tangible, inclusive benefits on the ground.

# ADVANCE MARKET TRANSFORMATION

Until the market starts to demand those characteristics and benefits that GDS deliver, change will likely be driven through regulations. Market demand can drive much quicker transformation, but it requires a concerted multi-year approach to transform how the public understands green development.

Over time, developing transformation driven by market demand also is the most economically sustainable approach. Finally, public recognition give industry leaders greater profile and can motivate other industry proponents to invest in advanced building techniques.

The actions described herein can be set out into two goals: (i) expanding demand for green development, and (ii) rewarding projects that exceed minimum Green Development Standard (GDS) requirements and demonstrate clear low-carbon leadership.

**Please refer to Table 4 below for the general recommendations**

## RECOMMENDATION 4: ADVANCE MARKET TRANSFORMATION

### How to read this table

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | This organization or city will be involved in this process |
| No | This organization or city will NOT be involved in this process |

| ACTION | HAMILTON | BURLINGTON | COMMUNITY- BASED ORGANISATIONS |
|---|---|---|---|
| A. Implement process for expedited permits, awards & predictable financing | yes | yes | no |
| B. Expand Urban Design & Architecture Awards to integrate award that promotes compliance with GDS | yes | yes | yes |
| C. Provide reliable long-term grants and programs ie. TIG schedules | yes | yes | yes |
| D. Establish Bay-Area Centre of Excellence for builders; micro-credentials with colleges, builder forums, shared case studies; link course | yes | yes | no |

## Hamilton

Expanding demand for green development is essential and within Hamilton, the following actions can enable this priority:

1. Establish a regional awards program. In the alternative, Hamilton already has established the Urban Design and Architecture Awards, which awards celebration occurs every two years. Hamilton could add a category of awards to raise the profile of developments that meet higher tiers of its Green Building Standards.

2. A prototype public dashboard, perhaps as a regional initiative, backed by a new "GBS Concierge" in Planning & Economic Development, could track GBS uptake and showcase winners of the expanded Urban Design & Architecture Awards' new Net-Zero Trailblazer category.

3. Supporting incentives and other measures that provide financial benefits to proponents including exploring establishing a energy and emissions labelling programs, and hosting quarterly builder forums—in collaboration with CBOs —to share success stories and spur wider market adoption.

## Burlington

For Burlington, recommendations for supporting market transformation are similar to those set out above for Hamilton, and include:

1. Drive uptake through incentives. Burlington's 2025 Affordable Rental Housing CIP can drive low-carbon, inclusive development by layering multiple incentives: tax-increment grants (TIGs), forgivable loans.

2. Explore developing a public dashboard, perhaps as a regional initiative, providing information about the performance of new developments.

3. Explore a regional awards program or expand Burlington-based awards program like the Burlington Community Builders Awards, or in the alternative collaborate with a member-based organization like the West End Home Builders Association and its Awards of Distinction.

4. Burlington should partner with the Halton Workforce Board to issue or recognize micro-credentials in high-performance construction. Providing an additional financial incentive as part of an incentive program like the TIG agreements can also have a long-term impact in building the skilled labour pool needed to deliver affordable, net-zero, resilient housing at scale.

## Community-Based Organizations

CBOs can play an important role in market transformation toward equitable green development by:

1. Building resident capacity – Run workshops and outreach campaigns that translate lifecycle-cost savings into plain language and offer hands-on help completing grant and Strengthening navigation tools. Provide lived-experience feedback to keep digital dashboards and application portals user-friendly, and champion "concierge" programs that guide non-profits and homeowners through technical and financing requirements.

2. Embedding equity safeguards – Co-design incentive criteria that direct benefits to equity-deserving communities and guard against "green gentrification," ensuring affordability and tenant protections accompany every upgrade.

3. Expanding workforce skills – Work collaboratively to support educational institutions in developing appropriate materials and learning opportunities. This would include promoting micro-credential and other learning programs (e.g., heat-pump installation, air tightness testing).

By collaborating across CBOs, the community can provide practical support to help residents understand the value of green design and capture cost savings. It also can support industry in understanding and unlocking funding, and the community can advocate for the green-building transition.

## ENGAGE AND COLLABORATE ACROSS COMMUNITY

The Bay Area can deliver meaningful change over relatively quick timelines through a "whole of community" approach to delivering information, upskilling and improving the quality of GDS uptake. This would include municipal engagement that is on-going and iterative, rather than every few years when a program is being updated.

Working with residents to collaborate ensures solutions match lived reality and builds lasting public support. Engaging local community organizations to play a role enables a municipality to benefit from the level of trust that these organizations have with the communities that they support.

The BACCIT emphasized that technical solutions alone haven't been sufficient to accelerate adoption of the technology and new methods. Effective change is most supported by meaningful engagement with residents, with an emphasis on ensuring equity-deserving groups were well-represented.

**Please refer to Table 5 below for the general recommendations**

## RECOMMENDATION 5: ENGAGE & COLLABORATE ACROSS COMMUNITY

### How to read this table

| | |
|---|---|
| Yes | This organization or city will be involved in this process |
| No | This organization or city will NOT be involved in this process |

| ACTION | HAMILTON | BURLINGTON | COMMUNITY- BASED ORGANISATIONS |
|---|---|---|---|
| A. Move from consultation to co-development via meaningful engagement, lived-experience workshops | yes | yes | yes |
| B. Expand cross-sector green-building working groups | yes | yes | yes |
| C. Open-source regional performance dashboards | yes | yes | yes |
| D. Host annual town-halls & ambassador programs for ongoing feedback, engagement | yes | yes | yes |
| E. Educate co-ops / shelters who haven't yet been doing retrofits regarding funding, providing case studies | yes | yes | yes |

# Hamilton

Hamilton can deepen community-driven climate action through deeper and ongoing collaboration with residents and community-based organizations by:

1. Adopting ICLEI-BARC's engagement framework and broadening CityLAB collaborations to co-design projects with residents.

2. Elevating the Community Climate Change Advisory Committee or another committee to engage with residents and provide input into policy decisions to reflect diverse community insights.

3. Partnering with those grassroots organizations to disseminate Information about low-carbon real estate developments.

## Burlington

Burlington can embed equity-centred climate action more deeply into City processes by:

1. Sharpening Climate Resilient Burlington (CRB) participatory-design practices so that each neighbourhood provides direct input on resilience projects.

2. Building on existing interdepartmental reviews, Burlington and Hamilton could co-lead joint planning tables to align regional climate priorities and share lessons from implementing Burlington's Guidelines and Hamilton's Green Building Standards.

3. Using CRB metrics and Climate Action Plan indicators as triggers in a new, performance-based approvals pathway, which would reward projects that meet clearly defined resilience and emissions benchmarks.

4. The "Get Involved Burlington" platform can test a Green Ambassador network—training volunteers to champion low-carbon choices and relay resident feedback.

5. Expanding programs through community organizations, for example BurlingtonGreen's programs, for under-represented residents to include hands-on pilot participation. This ensures that marginalized voices help shape—and directly benefit from—the City's green-building agenda.

## Community-based Organizations

CBOs can act as an anchor for collaboration and engagement though securing funding to play a role is always the first step to enabling community leadership. Possible efforts from community-based organizations can include:

1. Co-designing inclusive solutions – Partner in neighbourhood, host lived-experience panels, and provide outreach so that programs reflect diverse cultural and socioeconomic perspectives.

2. Convening action roundtables – Bring residents, utilities, non-profit landlords, and municipal planners to the same table to align implementation timelines, troubleshoot barriers, and keep climate and equity goals front-and-centre.

3. Democratizing data – Train residents to carry out basic energy audits, translate technical findings into plain-language scorecards, and publish community dashboards that track progress and gaps.

4. Running feedback loops – Host public retrofit information sessions, then capture lessons learned through surveys and debriefs after each pilot project to refine incentives and outreach.

5. Unlocking funding for community housing – Help co-ops, shelters, and other non-profits assemble grant and loan applications to the FCM Green Municipal Fund, CMHC Co-Investment streams, and local CIP/TIG programs, ensuring that deep-carbon upgrades go hand-in-hand with long-term affordability.

By filling these roles, CBOs translate policy into on-the-ground action, making sure green upgrades cut utility bills, improve health, and strengthen resilience—without displacing the very communities they aim to serve.

# PATHWAYS FOR LEADERSHIP BY THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO

During the months of discussion, the BACCIT members discussed the important leadership role that the Government of Ontario plays in delivering the planning environment for the development community. Though much of the focus in recent years has been on whether municipalities have the legal authority to set mandatory GDS, much of the GDS priorities support Ontario's Adaptation and Resilience goals. In 2018 the Government of Ontario developed its Made in Ontario Climate Plan and updated this Plan in 2022. Many of the matters addressed in the Made in Ontario Climate Plan focus on themes that GDS address.

NRCan's federal strategy and the CBHCC already point to a 2030 horizon for the NMBC to be net zero energy, zero carbon and climate resilient. Ontario has not yet clarified when Ontario expects to harmonize with the energy efficiency tiers of the 2020 NMBC. Multiple analysts (Dentons, TAF, Efficiency Canada) warn that the province's status-quo OBC will miss national and municipal climate targets unless a step-up schedule is legislated.

**For this section on the Government Of Ontario leadership, the BACCIT's recommendations have been summarized in a table and then have been expounded upon in the text that follows the table.**

## Developing a GDS and Framework

| |
|---|
| A. Adopt the 2020 NMBC tiered efficiency framework for all buildings to align with 2025 energy, carbon, and climate resilience goals |
| B. Enable municipal tiered adoption, mandate interim GHG caps for 2050 goals, and align Ontario with global climate markets by 2025 |
| C. Align with trends In Europe and Asia toward accelerating climate action. In 2025, as we re-orient to markets outside of the US for our exports, Ontario needs to align its whole economy with the trends in Europe and Asia toward climate Innovation |
| D. Develop a standardized Green Development Standards framework aligned with the Ontario Building Code and subject to regular review |
| E. Create eDSM incentives for efficient, electrified new construction |

The BACCIT discussed the Ontario government developing a predictable framework for green development, as was proposed by former Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Steven Clark, in his letter of February 9, 2023 to the municipalities. It would need to be developed through meaningful engagement. With an emphasis on collaboration with municipalities and industry, this framework would enable municipalities, conservation authorities, provincial ministries, community-based organizations and industry to take the necessary time to develop strong procedures, clear information and forms.

All of the interested parties could collaborate toward more efficient planning and permitting. This might be accomplished with leadership from the Government of Ontario, as follows:

1. Explore the adoption of the full, tiered energy efficiency framework from the 2020 National Model Building Code for all building types. Aim to harmonize the energy efficiency, operational carbon emissions, and climate resilience requirements set out in the 2025 NMBC.

2. Provide the procedures for municipalities to opt into, and advance over time, the energy and carbon tiers that are appropriate for them. Require municipalities to adopt interim GHG-intensity caps that meet or exceed the Province's 2050 Net Zero goal.

3. Align with trends in Europe and Asia toward accelerating climate action. In 2025, as we re-orient to markets outside of the US for our exports, Ontario needs to align its whole economy with the trends in Europe and Asia toward climate innovation.

4. Pursue the development of a standardized Green Development Standards framework that complements the Ontario Building Code, including a provision for regular reviews.

5. Create eDSM financial incentives for energy efficiency and electrification in new construction. It would enjoy better industry uptake where the program aligned with development stages and inspections that developers already would be following to secure the needed inspections and approvals.

## ENSURING EVERYONE BENEFITS

| |
|---|
| A. Standardize funding expectations by adding a co-benefit reporting clause to centrally issued CHRS agreements and guidelines |
| B. Expand the cross-sector green-building group and convert "nice-to-have" outcomes into binding metrics, aligning Ontario programs with federal goals for cost-sharing and co-benefits |
| C. Embed accountability in the next CHRS update by requiring annual public reporting on affordability, air quality, and resilience using existing outcome tables |
| D. Develop an eDSM program for new construction, aligning with IESO's 2025–2027 plan, as early design is the most cost-effective stage for energy efficiency |

Ontario has the best access to financial resources to fund large-scale housing and retrofit funding programs. Linking funding to delivering benefits for the future occupants would be an effective way to meet Ontario's Made in Ontario Climate Plan. We propose stipulating that every provincially funded green-building program must prove affordability, health, and climate-resilience co-benefits. To that end, the Government of Ontario could:

1. Standardize expectations across dozens of funding streams. Community Housing Renewal Strategy ("CHRS") agreements and related guidelines are issued centrally, so the Government could add a co-benefit reporting clause, which would reach municipal, non-profit, and private recipients in one stroke.

2. Turn "nice-to-have" outcomes into binding metrics. The federal Canada Green Buildings Strategy already frames green construction as a way to cut bills and improve health and safety; mirroring this language in Ontario's programs aligns provincial dollars with national objectives and future federal cost-sharing.

3. Embed accountability in the next CHRS update. Requiring annual public reporting on affordability, indoor-air-quality, and resilience indicators (e.g., heat-stress safeguards, flood-proofing) would use CHRS's existing outcome tables as the vehicle for transparent progress tracking.

4. Develop an Electricity Demand Side Management ("eDSM") program for new construction. The least expensive time to invest in energy efficiency is when a new development is being designed. The Independent Electricity Systems Operator ("IESO"), the organization that manages Ontario's bulk power grid, has signaled in its "2025-2027 Electricity Demand Side Management Program Plan (with benefi-cial electrification)" the intention to develop a program for new construction.

These actions would be a powerful way to incentivize investment in key features that make a building "future ready". A property that is energy-efficient is also more climate resilient and offers certain health and safety benefits like better air quality and a building that maintains its temperature while occupants shelter in place.

A highly efficient property also minimizes the peaking impacts on the electricity grid. A home that is EV, solar ready or has incorporated electrification features also could advance climate resilience. Ontario's new Home Renovation Savings Program, delivered through the IESO and through Enbridge Gas, has already demonstrated a "one-window" customer experience for household retrofits. Extending that model to new construction is essential. The delivery model could align with existing developer resources.

## TRANSPARENCY AND PREDICTABILITY

| |
|---|
| A. Provide an updated CPPS framework with case studies, step-wise guidance, and sample policy language, along with funding to help municipalities streamline green, affordable development approvals |
| B. Migrate EWRB reporting to a province-wide Building-Performance Dashboard with open API access, enabling clear, comparable data across all 444 municipalities |

The Government of Ontario has prioritized cutting red tape - transparency and predictability are goals that emphasize this priority. Ontario can enable greater transparency and predictability in the planning process by:

1. Providing an updated framework for municipalities who want to develop and adopt CPPS. Munic-

ipalities and industry alike would benefit from Ontario delivering an update to the Government of Ontario's guidance on CPPS with case studies of success stories. This might include suggestions for a step-wise approach for developing CPPS and sample Official Plan and bylaw language. These would give cities the tools for developing a more modern, adaptable planning framework. It would also benefit from direction on how to integrate the green-performance tiers and below-market units. Providing funding for municipalities to be able to design and deliver a CPPS benefits industry with shorter timelines and municipal flexibility in reviewing planning applications.

2. Migrate the Energy and Water Reporting and Benchmarking (" EWRB") data collection to a province-wide Building-Performance Dashboard. Mandatory annual reporting through the EWRB should be leveraged. Developing a portal for this data to be made readily available, served through an open API, would give industry and residents clear, comparable, consistent building data across all 444 municipalities.

## ADVANCING MARKET TRANSFORMATION

| |
|---|
| A. Develop a holistic approach to replace GDS by harmonizing the OBC with national codes and creating a unified framework for sustainable site and development design |
| B. Double the Skills Development Fund with a dedicated micro-credential stream to upskill trades in heat-pump technology and building science for green constructioN |
| C. Expand workforce funding with fast-tracked, hands-on training and partner with groups to boost inclusion of underrepresented communities, tracked by clear KPIs |
| D. Make affordability, health, and resilience funding requirements in all green-building programs, ensuring climate policies are equitable and protect vulnerable communities |

Sustainability and climate innovation are becoming economic necessities. As referenced above, climate innovation is becoming an important economic driver in certain countries - the EU, Indonesia, Malaysia, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, China, Japan are a few key markets. Canada has a free trade agreement with many of these countries, so it would be important to align with them.

Whether to meet the requirements of large customers or to ensure that a business can maintain its insurance, the issues of sustainability and climate action are quietly being mainstreamed in our economy. The Province of Ontario can play an essential role in the much-needed market transformation by:

1. Developing a holistic approach that could replace GDS. As described above, this would need to combine two actions: (1) harmonizing the OBC to keep up with the National Model Building Codes on energy efficiency, carbon emissions and climate resilience, and (2) providing one single framework for municipal adoption of the other site and development-level sustainable design standards.

2. Doubling the Skills Development Fund for upskilling trades. The Government of Ontario plays essential role in workforce development. A dedicated micro-credential stream (heat-pump technology, building science, electrician upskilling) ensures the workforce have the knowledge they need to support proper construction of green features.

3. Deepening programming and funding for workforce development. Develop options for on-site training and approach for fast-tracking, for example by combining technical learning with on-site hands-on learning and apprenticeship. As part of this, work with organizations who focus on recruiting, training underrepresented communities, with KPIs for the marginalized people joining the trades and skilled workforce.

4. Incentivize affordability, health and safety, and resilience into every provincial green-building program. Making these co-benefits a trigger for additional funding (and embedding them in the next Community Housing Renewal Strategy) guarantees that climate dollars also reduce Ontarians' bills, support Ontarians' health and safety, and protect vulnerable households.

Together, these suggested steps provide Ontario's municipalities and builders with a transparent, predictable legal framework, effective financial incentives, transparent data, skilled labour, and equity safeguards needed to scale up net-zero construction—in a way that leaves no one behind.

# CONCLUSION

Many Ontario municipalities have moved forward already with their own sustainability and climate action programs, often through a GDS framework, to meet certain obligations under the Planning Act. The BACCIT agreed on the benefits of establishing a clear framework focused on delivering future-ready real estate developments. A GDS framework would ensure that all new real estate developments benefit the whole community. Such a framework would deliver health and safety benefits. These developments would operate at a lower cost.

Our communities are facing climate-impacted weather patterns, and residents want to see their municipal leaders leading their communities in addressing climate emergency. There are benefits to having a planned transition which ensures that the building sector integrates new technology and construction methods.

By enabling the adoption of cutting-edge clean technology and fostering research and innovation, Green Development Standards initiatives contribute to a prosperous low-carbon economy that supports sustainable economic growth while reducing emissions. Moreover, these strategies promote government collaboration and leadership by aligning municipal planning processes with provincial directives, ensuring that climate change considerations are embedded in decision-making and infrastructure development.

The BACCIT recommendations herein can enable residents in the Bay Area to start benefiting from every new community that is future-ready. BACCIT recommendations would bring the greatest benefit where they are implemented by the Cities of Burlington and Hamilton, sometimes at the regional level, with roles for community organizations. This approach would be even more powerful, were the Government of Ontario willing to lead in establishing a province-wide framework with guidelines for municipal uptake.

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# Glossary of Terms

Affordable Rental Housing CIP: A program in Burlington that offers financial incentives for affordable rental housing with certain grants, TIGs, application fee waivers, including grants for sustainability and accessibility design.

Climate Resilient Burlington (CRB): Burlington's plan for climate adaptation and resilience adopted by City Council in 2022. It sets out Burlington's plan for identifying community-level climate related vulnerabilities and risks and actions that can address these vulnerabilities and risks. Incorporates participatory-design practices that ensure each neighborhood provides direct input on resilience projects.

Community Design: A priority for Green Development Standards, focusing on shaping the built environment to meet the needs and priorities of a particular community. It could include issues such as creating a sense of belonging as well addressing such issues as urban heat island effect and accessible design, and designing for walkable, bikeable streets.

Community Energy & Emissions Plan (CEEP): A long-term plan setting out the municipality's climate action plan, the municipality's plan to reduce carbon emissions and pollution in accordance with provincial, national and international targets. The City of Hamilton has developed its CEEP.

Community Housing Renewal Strategy (CHRS): A program established by the Government of Ontario focused on affordable housing for low-income households and the non-profit, co-operative and municipal housing sector.

Community Planning Permit System (CPPS): A land use planning system that combines zoning, site-plan, and minor variances processes. This results in more efficient application processes and aims to deliver greater flexibility to both the municipality and applicants in designing for and meeting local needs and priorities.

Community-Based Organizations (CBOs): Organizations that play a decisive role in an equitable net-zero transition, supporting municipal climate targets and practical implementation pathways. For example, these include not-for-profit and charitable organization that might provide community supports and education as well as industry member-based organizations.

Electricity Demand Side Management (eDSM): A 12-year Government of Ontario program focused on electricity conservation and demand-side management. Over 12 years, the Government of Ontario will spend $10.8 billion to support beneficial electrification as well as energy efficiency and demand-side management initiatives.

Energy and Water Reporting and Benchmarking (EWRB): Large buildings that are 50,000 sq. ft. or larger are required to report on energy and water usage, as required in the Reporting of Energy Consumption and Water Use Regulation 20/17.

Energy Efficiency: A priority for Green Development Standards, energy efficiency means using less energy for the same output. An energy efficient building saves money, minimizes greenhouse gas emissions and is better positioned to protect human health against temperature extremes.

Green Development Standards (GDS): A holistic framework applied at the site plan application stage of development for sustainable development. GDS ensure that real estate developments are designed to withstand current and future climate impacts, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, to protect human health and safety, and to minimize negative impacts on surrounding infrastructure and ecosystems.

Green-Building Concierge: A service that provides one-stop guidance for developers on procedural and technical aspects of the site plan application process.

Low-Impact Development: A priority for Green Development Standards, focusing on minimizing the impact of stormwater runoff through more nature-based solutions for managing natural water cycles, for example managing stormwater where it falls.

National Model Building Code (NMBC): The National Model Building Codes are developed through the Canadian Board for Hrmonized Construction Codes (CBHCC). The CBHCC brings together all the Provinces and Territories with Federal resources to provide oversight and establishes various working groups in order to deliver on its priorities: health, safety, ac-

cessibility, the protection of buildings from fire and structural damage and protection of the environment. As the Provinces and Territories have the jurisdiction over property, they must adopt the NMBC. Current activity is focused on delivering the 2030 NMBC that will deliver net zero energy-ready buildings while addressing such climate-related issues as reducing carbon emissions and climate resilience issues like overheating.

Net Zero by 2050: One of the core objectives of the BACCIT, aiming to advance Green Development Standards that align with net zero emissions by 2050 in Hamilton and Burlington.

Ontario Building Code (OBC): The building code that applies in Ontario, reflecting mandatory requirements at the building level for both new construction and for making changes to existing buildings.

Skills Development Fund: A Government of Ontario fund for training, reskilling and upskilling Ontario workers and ensuring the workforce has the knowledge needed to meet future workforce needs in Ontario.

Stormwater Management: A priority for Green Development Standards, focusing on managing stormwater to reduce environmental impact and to minimize the pressure on municipal infrastructure.

Tax Increment Grants (TIG): Municipal financial incentives that help offset developers' upfront increased capital costs. TIG programs return a portion of the increased property taxes for a set period of time based on the incremental increase in property value that arises as a result of the particular real estate development.

The Atmospheric Fund (TAF): The major funder of the BACCC initiative.

Transit-Oriented Development: A priority for Green Development Standards, focusing on urban development that concentrates high-density, mixed-use development around public transit, which areas are also called Mass Transit Station Areas (MTSA).

Urban Design & Architecture Awards: Awards delivered by the City of Hamilton to recognize design excellence in Hamilton. Hamilton hosts the Awards ceremony every two years.

Workforce Hubs: A central hub for promoting more effective workforce development through collaboration. Such hubs might include mechanisms for sharing materials and best practices or a deeper collaboration to deliver the needed upskilling, apprenticeship and other training through the collaborating partners.