



# City of Burlington

## Your Voice, Your Vision, Your Burlington

### Stakeholder Interviews Summary

In fall 2024, the City of Burlington launched a community needs assessment to help guide priority setting for future planning efforts, including the City’s comprehensive plan update, capital improvement plan, and parks and recreation open space plan. As part of the community-wide engagement effort, the consultant team, Consor, completed virtual and phone interviews with 10 community representatives (see Appendices for interview questions and list of participants) to collect feedback and insights on four City service areas, transportation, parks and recreation, police, fire, and library, and outreach methods to effectively engage community members. The resulting feedback is summarized in this report.

## Highlights

Key findings from the combined community leader interviews include:

1. Burlington is viewed as having a small town feel, but also serves as a regional hub for recreation, retail, and activities.
2. Desire for improved community outreach and inclusivity, focusing on cultural representation and language access.
3. Transportation in Burlington requires improvements to enhance safety, accessibility, and infrastructure for pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit users.
4. Parks in Burlington are well-maintained and community-focused, but need more inclusive events, a dedicated community space, and upgrades to current amenities.
5. Police and fire services are responsive to community needs, but face concerns about staffing capacity and inclusive community engagement as Burlington grows.
6. The library has strong offerings and services and would benefit from expanded hours, increased outreach, and accommodating community growth.
7. Community engagement should incorporate outreach through different methods, emphasizing local partnerships and inclusive communications.
8. Building trust through inclusive, multi-channel community engagement prioritizing collaboration and actionable follow-through.

The following section expands on these points and provides representative quotes from interview participants shown in italics.

Participants shared that Burlington has a small community feel, but also serves as a regional hub offering amenities for recreation, shopping, and community activities

*“Burlington has a small town feel but is transitioning to a bigger town – a tale of two cities.”*

*“... a hub city; known to be a better place to shop and go out to eat – great parks system, senior center, great family community.”*

*“Place for families to grow.”*

## A desire for enhanced community outreach and inclusivity, particularly through better cultural representation and language access

*“Would love to see a cultural center that reflects the community”*

*“Outreach to more community members who have not historically been engaged with”*

*“Have more language access and accessibility”*

## Transportation: A need for additional improvements in safety and accessibility, including sidewalk and crosswalk improvements, bike lanes, updated public transit routes, rural connectivity, and youth engagement.

*“Sidewalks seem to be improving; not a lot of bike friendly spaces – doesn’t feel safe to bike”*

*“Not a lot of bike friendly spaces in Burlington and it doesn’t feel safe to bike, especially for youth”*

*“Public transit is pretty confined to city limits right now; difficult to access even a mile out into the more rural areas.”*

## Parks and Recreation: Well-maintained and community-focused, but need more inclusive events, upgraded facilities, and additional playgrounds and trails with a dedicated community space for programming

*“Facilities seem well maintained for what they are and feel safe, fields are in good condition”*

*“Knowing they [Parks and Recreation staff] have done a lot, and we have really nice soccer fields, but I think we can improve in events and gatherings that reflect the community that lives here. More culturally specific events”*

*“Would like to see upgraded trails, really like the new accessible park; would like to see better restrooms, shelters, and larger places to gather – huge need for recreation and community center”*

## Police and Fire: Responsive to community needs, though there are some concerns about staffing capacity, community engagement, and challenges that arise from Burlington growth

*“[Police and fire personnel] Showed up whenever there is an issue”*

*“With growth, it’s more difficult to manage traffic and safety; don’t see fire department staff out as often in the community, again, maybe due to capacity”*

*“Knows the department is stretched thin, but would like more community engagement”*

Library: Appreciate strong community engagement with a variety of programs and could benefit from expanding hours, enhanced outreach, and upgraded facilities to serve growth in the community

*“They think outside the box and have really stepped up in the community and created relationships – partnered with BHCC to support youth and young people”*

*“Could have expanded hours”*

*“Lots of services and events, but the word doesn’t get out – connecting with community and bringing families together”*

Community engagement requires using multiple methods, focusing on inclusivity, partnering with local organizations, and ensuring accessibility through language and location-specific outreach

*“Think about who we are asking to come to the table, including youth; the community newsletter is good, but not everyone automatically gets it”*

*“Always more to do to invite in people who use Spanish; schools sent out a bulletin once a week, could connect with the principal to push out the information”*

*“Surveying people where they are. Lucha Mania event was a success in meeting people. Reaching the Hispanic community, bringing people to have a meal is effective and facilitating conversations”*

Emphasis on fostering trust through inclusive engagement and collaboration with all community members that leads to actionable follow-through

*“Implementation. I see a lot of data that is taken from our community with little changes. I would like to see changes as soon as possible. Bringing the community to the table and place where decision making occurs”*

*“Keep building a longer table and keep adding chairs. It builds trust and when people do show up, it’s valuable for them”*

*“To go to the communities directly. A tent, music, and food and interact with the people meeting with people - meeting people where they are at”*

*“When you analyze the feedback, review how much is coming from the Hispanic community. It’s more disengagement rather than trust or fear”*

## **Next steps**

The project team will use findings from the interviews, along with feedback from the surveys, in-person events, topic-specific focus groups, to summarize key themes and takeaways to include in future City planning efforts, such as the Comprehensive Plan update in 2025.

# Appendices



# City of Burlington

## Public Participation and Engagement

### Stakeholder Interview

## Introduction

The City of Burlington is starting a community-wide engagement process to better understand needs, values, and priorities for public services and facilities and to help guide planning for Burlington's future. In particular, the City is seeking feedback on community needs in four areas: transportation, parks and recreation, police and fire, and library.

As an early step, the City is interested in your advice and feedback on these services. What we hear from you and others in the community, will help City leaders set priorities and plan long-term for the continued livability and wellbeing of Burlington.

1. How long have you lived in Burlington? How are you involved with the City and the local community?
2. How would you describe Burlington's distinct identity? Are there one or two things you feel make Burlington special and distinguish it from other communities?

## Services Feedback

3. How would you rank Burlington on a scale of 1 (the community lacks some things I need) to 5 (the community has everything I need)? Why?

In particular, the City wants to better understand how well services and facilities are meeting the community's needs in four areas: transportation, parks and recreation, police and fire, and library.

### Transportation

- Active transportation (e.g., bicycle, walking, rolling, etc.)
- Public transit
- Sidewalks and safe pedestrian crossings

### Parks and recreation

- Parks (shelters, restrooms, other amenities) and playfields
- Trails and accessibility to parks
- Community/Recreation Center or event space
- Recreation programs, classes, or events

### Police and fire

- Emergency response
- Fire services: Bicycle safety, blood pressure checks, car seat information, CPR and first-aid training, smoke alarms, Community Risk Reduction (CRR) initiatives
- Police services: Dog registration, Project Lifesaver, vacation/security checks

## Library

- Youth, teens, and adults programs and activities
  - Library of Things (rent items like board games, crafting kits, yard games, etc.)
  - Library meeting or study rooms
4. How would you rate existing City services and facilities for these four areas on a scale of 1 (very poor) to 5 (excellent)?
    - a. Transportation
    - b. Parks and recreation
    - c. Police and fire
    - d. Library
  5. Which of these service areas do you feel is most important to the community to improve or expand when setting priorities for the next decade?
    - a. Transportation
    - b. Parks and recreation
    - c. Police and fire
    - d. Library
  6. Is there something missing in these service areas that would make Burlington great? Or something that you'd like to have more of?
    - a. Transportation
    - b. Parks and recreation
    - c. Police and fire
    - d. Library
  7. Which of these changes do you feel would have the greatest benefit for Burlington's future?

## Communications Advice

8. What are the most effective ways to let community members know about and get them to participate in the community needs assessment survey?
9. Are there other individuals or groups you recommend we contact to get their views on community needs in these four service areas?

## Wrap Up

10. What best advice would you offer the City to help make this community needs assessment successful?
11. Any further comments or suggestions?

*Thank you for your time and participation!*

## Participants

Ten interviews were completed with community representatives:

- Jackie Cress, Director, Burlington Senior Center
- Kaaren Flint, Program Coordinator, Burlington Healthy Communities Coalition
- Jeremy Kramer, Interim Police Chief
- Lettie Lance, Community Involvement Library Board of Trustees
- Edson Lemus, Advisor, Latin Student Union Burlington-Edison High School
- Sean Nault, Lead Pastor, Hub City Church
- Jose Ortiz, Community Leader, Catholic Latinos
- Dr. Jesus Perez, Councilmember, West View Elementary teacher
- Dr. Chris Pearson, Superintendent, Burlington-Edison School District
- Rob Toth, Fire Chief