





# Executive Overview

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In its people, places and passion, Mississauga is a great city. So how do we position ourselves to become a truly exceptional city in the 21st century?

The City of Mississauga needs to confront the challenges, embrace the opportunities, and capitalize on the assets that will allow us to continually grow, in every respect – socially, culturally, economically, physically, recreationally, and environmentally.

Every municipality is constantly evolving, and requires strong direction from its civic leaders. The City of Mississauga has had a strategic plan in place since 1992. Its most recent update was approved by Council a decade ago, in 1999. This has been the foundation on which policies and decisions have been made as the city has continued to develop. Now, it's time for another update. It's time to think about and shape Our Future Mississauga.

## A Community Conversation

Our Future Mississauga – that's the name of the project initiated by City Council in June 2007. This is a project about community engagement, and developing directions to inform the next strategic plan. In essence, Our Future Mississauga aims to be a civic conversation, involving every segment of the community – the most comprehensive conversation ever held in the city.

It's a conversation that has allowed thousands of individuals – from residents to businesses, community groups to city institutions – to share their hopes and dreams for the city. Although City staff and leadership contributed greatly to the process, this is not a City Hall report; it reflects the ideas and vision of the people who live and work in Mississauga.

The conversation has been divided into five phases, each building on and informing the next.

The first three – Reconnaissance, Inspiration and Vision – captured the initiatives and innovative thinking already

underway in Mississauga, and gathered literally thousands more ideas. This was an extensive, exhilarating process, which has led to phase four, Direction. Here, we distilled the common themes heard during the outreach and consultations into 18 Drivers for Change. To keep moving forward, these Drivers for Change then formed the basis for five Strategic Pillars for Change – key principles and visions for Our Future Mississauga. These will prove invaluable when we turn to phase five, Plan: updating the city's strategic plan.

The efforts and best thinking that went into each phase are outlined in the body of the report and the detailed appendices. They signal the boldness of what's to come.

## Context for Review

What was the impetus for Our Future Mississauga? And how did we arrive at insight and ideas that are described throughout this document?

The first 33 years of Mississauga's development has been shaped by a clear strategy of suburban growth, strong service delivery, and prudent municipal fiscal management. In this short period, Mississauga has grown from a collection of cherished villages to Ontario's third largest city, and the sixth largest in Canada.

Like any maturing city, however, Mississauga faces challenges. To stimulate thinking and solicit a broad range of ideas about the city, Our Future Mississauga started by framing the conversation around eight themes:

- **Getting Around Mississauga** (a balanced approach to mobility).
- **Going "Green" in 905** (grasp the opportunity to become environmentally friendly and sustainable).
- **Creating Wealth in our Community** (become a competitive global city by seeking new business opportunities and providing business friendly conditions).
- **Embracing our Social Diversity** (celebrate and capitalize



Visiting Symposium Facilitators Consolidating Workshop Outcomes, Living Arts Centre, February 2008

on our incredible diversity).

- **Positively Influence our Quality of Life** (through positive feelings about the environment and citizens' physical/mental/social well-being).
- **Investing in Creativity and Knowledge** (as any city of the 21st century must do to attract and retain the best and the brightest).
- **Creating a Vibrant Downtown** (make the City Centre the civic, cultural, social, retail, economic, residential, transportation and employment hub for the city).
- **Realizing the opportunities of being a part of the Golden Horseshoe** (understand our inter-connectedness and strengthen our role within the greater region).

### Extensive and Inclusive Process

These themes simply started the process – what became a true dialogue among all stakeholders. New thinking and ideas continually emerged throughout the highly interactive process, from Mississaugans representing a broad cross-section of all interests, ages, geographic areas, socio-economic groups, cultural backgrounds, and the range of experiences with the city.

Throughout each phase, the Our Future Mississauga consultant and BC21 team employed numerous methods to engage the community. Among them:

- **Phase One: Reconnaissance:** interviews with community members and City leadership; a review of City reports and initiatives; an analysis of current conditions; circulation of “puzzle pieces” throughout the city to solicit public input; 110 community meetings; presentations to students and other youth outreach; city tours; a website; and the creation of a Community Advisory Group (community representatives) and a Strategic Advisory Group (City of Mississauga Directors).
- **Phase Two: Inspiration:** a Speaker Series featuring urban experts and other leading thinkers, which

attracted over 3,000 attendees; a Big Ideas Workshop for the advisory groups, Mayor, Members of Council, City Manager and Commissioners; a three-part Rogers Television series about the issues facing Mississauga.

- **Phase Three: Vision:** a two-day public Visioning Symposium, which attracted over 550 people, who together took part in 23 “interactive” panel conversations, listened to presentations on city building, attended and participated in day long workshops, and generated over 5,000 ideas.

In all, almost 100,000 people took part in some aspect of the process. Ideas were constantly developed through the phases – elaborated upon, debated, refined, consolidated, tested, substantiated through research and analysis, and discussed to see if they are achievable and worth pursuing. Certain themes emerged over and over. Great ideas kept rising to the top.

### Drivers for Change

These ideas were captured in **Phase Four, Direction**. The energy-filled events, the enthusiasm of participants, the conversations that took place in community centres, halls, classrooms, offices, homes, and the neighbourhoods of Mississauga – are reflected in the Drivers for Change. Here is a summary of these drivers, the themes and ideas that resonated most deeply.

- 1 **A City of Hidden Jewels.** Mississauga has numerous natural and man-made assets that any municipality would envy; however, many haven't been leveraged to their full potential. These hidden jewels need to be explored, celebrated and elevated, in order to contribute fully to 1) the overall quality of life in Mississauga, and 2) the identity of the city. Cultural diversity is yet another “jewel”, whose richness can be better reflected in the cityscape of Mississauga.
- 2 **Tremendous Opportunities.** Mississauga has built out

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to its urban edge. Much of the city is entering a period of second generation growth, where new development must be absorbed within the existing urban footprint. The timing is perfect – we have an opportunity, right now, to step back, assess what has occurred, prepare critical plans to ensure that future development fills in the gaps in the urban fabric, and implement a shared vision for the future.

**3 An Engaged and Energized Population.** We can only realize a shared vision for the future of Mississauga with the active support of our citizens. They showed their enthusiasm during this engagement process. We need to reflect their desire, and tap into their sense of community pride and involvement, to make the new vision for the city real.

**4 A New Financial Reality.** The City of Mississauga has a reputation for prudent fiscal management. Yet as the city has been built out and provincial priorities have shifted, we have entered a period of slower revenue growth (assessment revenue) and increasing costs (e.g. ageing infrastructure, cost of fuel for transit). As we plan our future, we must recognize some economic realities.

**5 Density and Pedestrian-oriented Places.** Mississauga emerged as a city when the car dominated city planning. The isolation and homogeneity of land uses (vast areas with a single-use) poses a challenge. Today, it's time to evolve the urban form of the city. We need to be more heterogeneous, with a "critical mass" of density, and mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented places – healthy street environments where people can more easily walk, gather and cross paths.

**6 Place-making.** The city is striving to create a sense of place – a strong, positive identity for each area and the city as a whole. Neighbourhoods need their own personality, a "heart". Great places – unique, welcoming, liveable, beautiful – contribute to an

improved quality of life, engage the public realm, and reinforce a sense of community.

**7 Affordability.** The proportions of older adults, recent immigrants and low income households are growing in Mississauga – all three cohorts are particularly sensitive to issues of affordability. We must focus on the ability to live affordably (especially with regard to the cost, availability and accessibility of housing and transportation), in light of Mississauga's socioeconomic, ethnic and demographic changes.

**8 More Living Options.** Shifting demographics will demand that we create new types of places and spaces, offering more options for aging in place (friendly environments for older adults), and for attracting a younger population (vibrant business, employment, recreation and education opportunities). Both realities demand more and better options for moving around Mississauga.

**9 Innovative Businesses.** The city has successfully grown by attracting large corporate employers. But place-making and wealth creation is also contingent on small-scaled and innovative businesses, e.g. creative industries, small high-tech firms, and local start-ups. Encouraging the presence of these types of businesses, and the spaces to accommodate them, will foster entrepreneurialism, more opportunities for Mississaugans, and a more diversified/sustainable economy.

**10 Land Use and Mobility.** Current land use patterns reinforce increasing car use; land use planning and how people move about must shift for Mississauga to become a sustainable city. The city needs to provide transportation alternatives such as great public transit, and an urban form that supports mixed uses (a myriad of daily activities in proximity) and active modes of transportation.

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- 11 Post-Secondary Educational Opportunities.** A city our size should have more than one university, and offer a broader range of post-secondary options. Too many youth feel they must leave home because of a lack of local educational opportunities. Fostering more educational options – perhaps with focused and unique areas of excellence – will attract and retain youth and talent in the city.
- 12 Modern Day “Port” for Immigration.** As a major entry point and destination for immigration, the city has an extraordinary opportunity to celebrate the Canadian experience and help immigrants pursue their chosen professions. Such support would encourage foreign-trained workers to seek out the city and make it their home, enriching them and our community.
- 13 Expressions of Diversity.** Immigration has been key to Mississauga’s growth. Yet this widespread cultural diversity hasn’t translated into a rich urban environment, i.e. in architecture, services, or retail. Mississauga’s diversity has the potential to express itself more prominently, to fundamentally change the experience of the city, and leverage our identity as a mature urban centre.
- 14 Unveiling the Waterfront.** Mississauga has world-class assets with its 22 km Lake Ontario shoreline, the Credit River Valley, and other waterways. For many people, these are some of their favourite areas in the city. Yet not enough Mississaugans, let alone residents of the broader region, are fully aware of our great water resources. These need to be celebrated, elevated, and protected, to enhance recreational amenities and boost the identity of Mississauga.
- 15 Growth in the Greater Golden Horseshoe.** For Mississauga to capitalize on a portion of the growth that’s expected in the region, we need to provide the right infrastructure to accommodate growth (where it ought to happen and not), and the right framework to benefit from such growth.
- 16 Capitalizing on our Strategic Location.** Mississauga is firmly placed at the centre of the Golden Horseshoe – one of the largest and most economically influential city-regions in North America. This is the moment to capitalize on this geographic opportunity. The city can position itself to be, among others, a regional cultural, recreational, entrepreneurial, and educational centre.
- 17 Health and the Environment.** The health of people and the health of the environment are inherently linked, and are a 21st century imperative. We need to think of both when reshaping our living environments. This relates to strategies that enable healthy lifestyles (e.g. walkable areas), and that secure a clean, sustainable environment (e.g. vehicle use).
- 18 Evolution of the City Centre.** The geographic heart of the city, Mississauga City Centre, has developed rapidly as a civic, commercial and residential hub. City Centre is facing imminent intensification. Transformation is happening now, and needs to be shaped to achieve a desirable urban form and mix of uses, in keeping with other city-wide objectives.

### **Making it Real: The Strategic Pillars for Change**

The next part of the Direction phase was Making it Real – that was the name of a workshop that followed development of the Drivers for Change. This one-day workshop involved the Mayor, Members of Council, City Manager and Commissioners, the Community Advisory Group, and the Strategic Advisory Group.

Drawing on the Drivers for Change, the group discussed the key ideas going forward, called the Strategic Pillars for Change. The workshop group refined these ideas, talked about the actions that could flow from them, and emerged with five Pillars that will provide structure and direction to the strategic plan.

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**Strategic Pillar for Change 1: Improve the health of the environment.**

- Principle: Mississauga is a city that nurtures healthy natural environments.
- Vision: Our future Mississauga is a city that supports healthy natural environments and natural systems. It is a city where the air and water are clean. It is a city rich in natural conservation areas, and protected natural water systems. It is a city with an extensive tree canopy covering parks, schools, and every street, from Meadowvale to the airport, from Lakeview to Clarkson. A city where the activities of people support a natural environment, because they can choose to lead sustainable lifestyles, biking along trails down the Credit River Valley, or walking to school in Malton, along safe, pedestrian friendly streets.

**Strategic Pillar for Change 2: Create an environment where youth and older adults, and new immigrants thrive.**

- Principle: Mississauga is a city that thrives on its social and cultural diversity.
- Vision: Our future Mississauga is a city where everyone can live, for their entire lives. It's a city where children can play; where teenagers want to be; where young professionals choose to locate; where new families can prosper and be healthy; where immigrants are welcomed, and have their cultures become a visible part of the city's fabric; and where people can age in place, gracefully.

**Strategic Pillar for Change 3: Increase opportunities and synergies for innovative businesses and talent.**

- Principle: Mississauga is a city that prospers by providing the opportunities, synergies, and support required for creative and innovative businesses to emerge and thrive, and by attracting and developing talent.
- Vision: Our future Mississauga is a multinational city that attracts business, and offers recent graduates from Mississauga's universities and colleges employment

opportunities in knowledge-based and innovative industries.

**Strategic Pillar for Change 4: Complete our communities, as unique, walkable, diverse, balanced, connected, and safe.**

- Principle: Mississauga is a city that nurtures a unique identity and quality of life within each neighbourhood, whose residents are able to fulfill most aspects of their everyday life within walking distance and/or through effective use of transit.
- Vision: Our future Mississauga is a city where each neighbourhood is accessible and has a unique and desirable identity, and where people can fulfill their everyday lives by walking, cycling or using transit. A city where Malton stands out, because people interact with each other in the parks, schools, and in a new urban centre. Where Meadowvale is unique, because children now walk to school along safe, pedestrian friendly streets. Where Cooksville is renowned as a great place to stroll, grab a bite to eat, shop a little, and meet a friend. Where Britannia, Applewood and Erin Mills have a growing population of young professionals, who want to raise families here and be able to walk to work or work from home. And where a majority of workers in the City Centre take transit, walk or cycle to work.

**Strategic Pillar for Change 5: Develop a transit-oriented city.**

- Principle: Mississauga is a city where people choose to move about using public transit.
- Vision: Our future Mississauga is a city where residents choose transit when traveling to work, school, shops, recreation, and community facilities. It's a city where transit is easy to use, efficient, reliable, safe, and desirable. A city where residents can live in Malton, work in the City Centre, have a meeting in the Airport Corporate Centre, and spend time at the waterfront – and choose transit as their preferred mode of transportation for all activities.



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## Next Steps

Our Future Mississauga begins to identify a common understanding about the city – what works, what’s cherished, what needs to be preserved, and what needs to change. These conversations have been assembled to tell us where Mississauga should head; the strategic plan will tell us how to get there.

This moves us to phase five of this exercise, Plan. Change is essential. The community identified fascinating possibilities for change. Yet not all change can happen at once. The strategic plan will set priorities to guide actions and capital investments.

The public will remain part of the process, along with involvement from the Community Advisory Group, and opportunities to provide feedback. The people of Mississauga clearly welcome and want to be part of positive change.

The ideas that emerged throughout this process have been inspiring, but no less inspiring has been the enthusiasm shown by the citizens about their city.

There is no doubt that, as one speaker declared during the consultations, we can transform Mississauga into a “next generation” city, one that’s a model for all, and reflects the hopes and dreams of our citizens. Working together, we will plan and create Our Future Mississauga – a great 21st century city.

