

City Council Report

REPORT NUMBER 322-2025-Growth-

DATE

PREPARED

October 7, 2025

FILE

**CITY COUNCIL
MEETING DATE**

October 21, 2025

SUBJECT

Introduction of the Draft Smart Growth Action Plan

RECOMMENDATION TO CITY COUCIL

For Information Only.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report introduces the draft Smart Growth Action Plan, a community vision for sustainable growth. The Plan identifies targets to grow Thunder Bay's tax base, population, and conditions for economic growth. The 10-year plan includes over 100 actions to achieve these targets in collaboration with community partners.

This report outlines the process followed to create the Plan, including the participation of Task Force Growth and extensive public consultation.

The Plan will undergo detailed review by the Standing Committee on Growth, as well as additional public engagement, before being presented to City Council for approval on December 2, 2025.

DISCUSSION

The Smart Growth Action Plan has been developed as a tool to grow Thunder Bay's tax base, population, and conditions for economic growth. The Plan has brought many of the city's major institutions together to collaborate on a shared vision for sustainable growth.

Development of the Plan has been led by Task Force Growth, convened by the City Manager in late 2024. A full membership list for the Task Force is available in the appendix of the draft Smart Growth Action Plan accompanying this report.

The Plan builds on the insights and opportunities identified in the Economic Growth Assessment recently completed by the Thunder Bay Community Economic Development Commission (CEDC), a summary of which is included as an appendix to the Smart Growth

Action Plan. The CEDC has played a key role in the development of the Plan, with Chief Executive Officer Jamie Taylor serving as a Vice-Chair of Task Force Growth.

The Smart Growth Action Plan responds to years of slow growth in Thunder Bay, compared to other Canadian cities. This low growth limits business development opportunities, employment and earnings potential for workers, and the municipal revenue needed to sustain the services residents rely on.

Yet the opportunity is clear: there are early positive signs that growth is happening. With revitalization of both downtown cores underway, new housing construction and renewed interest in larger commercial and industrial investments, Thunder Bay has a strong foundation for growth.

The Smart Growth Action Plan outlines over 100 actions that will build on this foundation. The Plan is based around three Pillars:

- **Readiness:** Preparing Thunder Bay to support growth with shovel-ready lands, resilient infrastructure, and clear processes.
- **Attraction:** Enhancing the city's appeal by fostering active downtowns, welcoming public spaces, and a strong community identity.
- **Talent:** Setting the groundwork for a city where skilled people choose to build their careers, graduates find opportunities, and workers are set up to thrive.

Actions in the plan are organized within the three pillars and assigned a timeline and lead organization. Successful implementation of the actions will depend on collaboration among multiple partners working with the lead organizations.

To monitor success of the Plan, a framework of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and Performance Indicators (PIs) is established (see *Part 3: Delivering Results*). Progress on these metrics and implementation of the Plan's actions will be reported annually to Council.

The Plan will undergo detailed review by the Standing Committee on Growth at meetings on October 28 and November 25, as well as additional public engagement, before being presented to City Council for approval on December 2, 2025.

CONSULTATION (INCLUDING STANDING COMMITTEES AND/OR PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT)

Significant public consultation has helped shape the Plan – reflecting the needs, priorities and values of Thunder Bay residents. In spring-summer 2025, public input was gathered through facilitated focus groups, town halls, targeted meetings, and a public survey.

Throughout this first phase of public engagement, the City's Growth team heard from newcomers to Thunder Bay, young professionals, local businesses and business associations, Indigenous organizations, education, law enforcement, and other community groups.

The feedback received in this first phase of public engagement has meaningfully shaped the Smart Growth Action Plan. A number of actions were approved by Task Force Growth specifically to respond to community input.

A second phase of public engagement will begin in conjunction with the presentation of this report. This includes a public survey and follow-up meetings with focus groups and other stakeholders. The results of this engagement will be summarized in future reports to the Standing Committee on Growth (November 25, 2025) and City Council (December 2, 2025).

This public engagement builds on the significant contributions of the 25 members of Task Force Growth, who have contributed expertise and ensured the perspectives of sectors ranging from business and industry to health and education are represented.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATION

Funding and financing the Smart Growth Action Plan will require a balanced approach that combines municipal commitment with external resources. The precise share of municipal contributions is not yet known, as many actions will be delivered through partnerships or supported by external funding sources, rather than funded directly by the City.

Wherever possible, the City would leverage grants and programs from other orders of government, as well as investments from industry and community partners, to maximize impact and reduce the local burden. Collaboration will be key, sharing costs, aligning resources, and pooling expertise to advance projects that benefit the whole community. Although every action in this Plan is achievable within the ten-year timeframe, success will depend on working together across sectors to sustain momentum and bring this shared vision to life.

BACKGROUND

The Smart Growth Action Plan was included in the 2025-2027 City Manager's Workplan presented to City Council on February 10, 2025.

An initial presentation on the development of the Smart Growth Action Plan was delivered in a Non-Business Meeting on June 16, 2025.

REFERENCE MATERIAL ATTACHED

Attachment A - Draft Smart Growth Action Plan

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Date (10/15/2025)