

Standing Committee Report

REPORT NUMBER 333-2025-Growth-

DATE

PREPARED

October 15, 2025

FILE

STANDING

COMMITTEE

October 28, 2025

MEETING DATE

SUBJECT

Draft Smart Growth Action Plan

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to present the Draft Smart Growth Action Plan (Plan) to the Growth Standing Committee (Committee) for strategic review and discussion.

The intent of this discussion is to gather high-level feedback and direction from the Committee to help refine the draft prior to its return on November 25, 2025, when Administration will seek the Committee's endorsement of the revised Plan. The final Plan will then be presented to City Council for approval on December 2, 2025.

Consistent with the governance role of Standing Committees, Administration is seeking Committee feedback in the following areas:

- Alignment with Council's strategic priorities and long-term growth objectives.
- The strength and clarity of the Plan's vision, goals, and performance framework.
- High-level observations that strengthen the Plan's overall direction and priorities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report introduces the full Draft Smart Growth Action Plan for review by the Growth Standing Committee. This 10-year plan identifies targets and actions to grow Thunder Bay's tax base and population, and provide the conditions for robust economic growth and enhanced quality of life in Thunder Bay.

The Plan has been developed as a community plan, led by community partners represented on Task Force Growth. The Plan has also been shaped by extensive public consultation, including focus groups, targeted meetings, and broader public engagement.

The Plan includes over 100 actions to achieve its growth targets, organized within three key pillars for growth: Readiness, Attraction, and Talent. Actions are to be implemented

collaboratively with community partners, with progress reported regularly to City Council and the public.

In addition to detailed review by the Growth Standing Committee, further public engagement on the Plan will be conducted before a revised draft is presented to City Council for approval on December 2, 2025.

KEY CONSIDERATIONS

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

The Economic Growth Assessment and Strategy developed by the Thunder Bay Community Economic Development Commission (CEDC), also presented to the Committee on October 21, 2025, projects that growth will remain limited over the coming decade without targeted action.

The Smart Growth Action Plan was developed in conjunction with this Assessment and sets out a roadmap to improve on its growth projections.

Recent initiatives by the City of Thunder Bay (City) and other local institutions have provided a strong foundation for increased growth efforts. This includes revitalization projects in both downtown cores, an uptick in housing construction including multi-residential builds, and renewed interest in large commercial and industrial investments.

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.

Each action in the Plan is 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) has been identified (Attachment - see *Part 3: Delivering Results*). Progress on these metrics and implementation of the Plan's actions will be reported annually to Council and shared on a public dashboard.

CONSULTATION

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, two town halls, targeted stakeholder 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 responding to community input.

A second phase of public engagement began on October 21, 2025. 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 Growth Standing Committee (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 perspectives of sectors ranging from business and industry to health and education.

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 will 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.

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.

The draft of the Smart Growth Action Plan included with this report was presented to City Council on October 21, 2025.

REFERENCE MATERIAL ATTACHED

Attachment A - Draft Smart Growth Action Plan

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Date (10/20/2025)