



A United Vision:  
**GUELPH'S  
COMMUNITY PLAN**



## Economic sector workshop summary



**November 5, 2018**

Hosted by:

Jim Jarrell, Linamar President and  
Chief Operations Officer

Derrick Thomson, City of Guelph  
Chief Administrative Officer

A Community Plan workshop with  
local business leaders to gain their  
perspective of business and the  
economy in Guelph.



# Economic Sector Workshop

Hosted at Skyjack Customer Access Centre.



On November 5, 2018, Jim Jarrell and Derrick Thomson hosted a Community Plan workshop with local business leaders to gain input from the perspective of business and the economy.

## Acknowledgements:

The City of Guelph is grateful to local business and business support leaders for their participation in the workshop, honest dialogue, championing this important initiative and helping to shape the Community's Plan to guide our community for the next 10 years and more.

## What we heard:

- The time is right to meet our economic goals through collaboration, strong leadership and innovation
- Guelph often punches above its weight and inserts itself into conversations that are purview to bigger cities but tempers this demonstration of leadership with a certain degree of humbleness
- Guelph would benefit from greater promotion coupled with a warning not to fall into elitism. A need

## Agenda:

- Welcome greeting from Marva Wisdom, Community Plan Co-Chair and external consultant
- Presentation by Jim Jarrell, Linamar President & COO on Linamar's perspective on the economy
- Remarks on the Community Plan from City of Guelph Chief Administrative Officer, Derrick Thomson
- Innovation Guelph's Executive Director, Anne Toner Fung, spoke to the importance of innovation to the economy
- High-level overview of the engagement activities, information was shared providing context to the scope and scale of the project and a summary of what we heard from the community.
- Facilitated conversation and activities:
  1. Business leaders discuss seven emerging community values and collaborations required to accomplish aspirations
  2. Business leaders consider emerging aspirations from events, workshops and festivals across Guelph. Identify what is missing in regards to the future direction of Guelph.
  3. Business leaders contribute to community goals for Guelph's economy answering the challenge question "What's a win for Guelph's economy?"
- Closing remarks by Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Scott Stewart

- for a differentiation strategy that channels efforts to becoming the best at a smaller number of things. The "things" were not determined at this workshop
- Focus on making it easier to do business in Guelph through clarity, simplicity and the removal of barriers
- Red carpet versus red tape—support businesses and the economy to flourish

## 1. Emerging community values:

### Inclusion and diversity:

The importance of inclusion and diversity was a consistent thread across many of the conversations. It is essential for innovation, workforce talent attraction, skill development, future success of the economy, and creating a healthy sense of belonging to the community, giving Guelph a competitive advantage. This includes building communities for 8–80 year-olds with integration across generations and cultures.

“There needs to be an organized effort to ensure that everyone is heard and shown how his or her ideas have a place.”

### Leadership:

Leadership is a collaboration of champions, ambassadors and advocates for our community to achieve common goals. Ongoing communication with an emphasis on messaging is important for a strong relationship with the community. The sum of all parts is greater than the whole.

### Stewardship:

The difference between confidence and arrogance. Do not be afraid to brag/push our brand, recognize our strengths as a community that cares about the environment. Stewardship is more than just resources and assets, but includes the quality of life with an appreciation of living in Guelph and the environment in which we live.

### Innovation:

There is strength in a creativity and diversity-based approach of working together with open information networks. Continue to cultivate supporting partners like Innovation Guelph, the Guelph Chamber of Commerce, University of Guelph and City of Guelph programs like Business Retention and Expansion to name a few.

Embrace good innovation, not simply the theatre of innovation. Be strategic and flexible, innovating to be future ready while building for today. Adaptability, agility and accepting of change are essential qualities identified.

“Innovation is critical for future success of economic growth and sustainability of employment.”

### Resiliency and sustainability:

The context resonated as valuing and preserving the environment, diversity and resiliency of the economy. A high dependency on Linamar challenges Guelph’s

economic resiliency. Properties with unmanageable condo fees, building space, adaptability and agility. “Valuing” the resiliency or sustainability of the environment or economy may not be enough when facing tough decisions when funding is required.

### Belonging:

It is not enough just to value belonging but to also cultivate and reinforce support towards it. Belonging extends far beyond neighbourliness to neighbourhood and community pride, availability and affordability of housing so families can remain together in this city. It touches on our role, brand and our place in the bigger picture as well as at the individual level of feeling a sense of place in Guelph.

### Integrity:

Integrity is a consistent foundational value where transparency is also important. Additional filters may be required for this value. Integrity is so much more than taking a position, it can be admitting when you are wrong.





## 2. Emerging themes and direction:

Business leaders shared their considerations on the seven topics that have emerged most frequently in the community engagement activities.

### Business and the economy

- Overarching comments highlighted that the themes are all interrelated and integrated, by getting serious about making the City of Guelph easy to do business with. The City of Guelph would gain a competitive advantage by being more entrepreneurial, fast and reactive. There are many challenges facing businesses in Guelph including affordable business space, municipal permitting/licensing bureaucracy to build new businesses, access to labour and affordable housing, and transit not properly servicing new properties

We have all the ingredients to meet our economic goals but not always working collaboratively to “bake the cake”

- Equally important were retaining and expanding local businesses and talent, growth opportunities and associated challenges while cautioning about too much focus on future, knowledge-based economy. This focus does not reflect the entire community, economy or population and the need to remember to include every one of all skill levels and trades. The suggestion is to rethink this as a business in a competitive landscape verses municipalities competing, and develop Guelph’s differentiation and value proposition. Part of the opportunity is to place ourselves in the regional economy and in the larger context of the global economy
- We should recognize the business support and advisory eco-system for their significant contributions to business. These include the University of Guelph and Conestoga College, Innovation Guelph, Business Centre Guelph-Wellington, Guelph Chamber of Commerce and the various City of Guelph programs and partnerships

### Social connections and quality of life:

- Guelph is not on the radar enough. Our community is up against strong economic competition, immigration restrictions and the way in which we are welcoming new workers and skills to Canada; there is a need for new ideas and creativity

- Concerns identified include downtown, drugs, neighbourhoods and immigration. Businesses are challenged to make time/space for employees to participate in social connections but should set the tone while balancing millennial expectations. On a positive note, leaders recognized that there are many rewarding aspects of volunteerism, and they are not alone

### Sustainable change and community growth:

- Make housing units affordable for a variety of lifestyles as a requisite percentage of new builds or retrofits

### Movement and connectivity:

- A key challenge is the lack of direct connection to Guelph using public inter-regional transit from neighbouring communities. Vital need to have a solution to travel between Guelph and Toronto in 45 minutes and perhaps an opportunity for government to decentralize. A better regional economy is achievable through better regional connectivity. Gaining a better understanding of non-transit users is important to build a better transit system. Protect cycling infrastructure and take advantage of emerging technologies like of artificial intelligence (AI)

### Culture:

- Guelph is a place to learn, live, work and visit where we need to retain our talent
- Vibrant community or arts and culture
- Strong culture helps attract and retain talent

### Environment:

- Guelph cares about our environment and should be champions of sustainability
- Environmental stewardship is a strength for our community and could be a brand differentiator

### Health and Safety:

- Positive for change, making walking, and cycling priorities. As the community grows, concerns were raised regarding the potential increase in homelessness, substance abuse and the support/partnership opportunities for business to be involved in programs/solutions
- There is a need for specialized care attached to Guelph General Hospital for mental health and substance addiction patients

### 3. Aspirational community goals:

Business leaders identified many aspirational goals as “wins for Guelph” including:

- Easy to do business—industrial spaces, flexible building design and zoning, with easy, accessible and affordable transportation to employment lands
- True partnership with businesses to reach common goals
- Guelph ranked #1 in Canada on many indices
- Guelph recognized/acknowledged along the Waterloo/Toronto corridor
- Become Canada’s first at “something” unique
- Safest city in Canada
- Strong and vibrant community as evidenced through indicators. Evidence identified from following indicators: National open for business index, regional travel times and interconnectedness, volunteerism, safety, housing and job training for homeless community, better support of mental health and addictions. Vibrant downtown bursting with retail, social inclusion and culture and is the centre of the hub. Workers are able to live well, comfortably and are not struggling
- Attracting corporate head offices and Canadian-based businesses from large to start-ups
- Municipal savings and departments working cohesively and in a timely manner, cutting the red tape



# Next steps

During the last year, we heard from many sectors in Guelph through community engagements and workshops that surfaced great ideas, comments and feedback. We have conducted similar workshops with the arts and culture; environment; and social, health and education sectors. The planning, research and engagement phase of building the Community Plan wrapped up in January and the focus of activities has transitioned towards developing and presenting the Community Plan.

The Community Plan is being presented to City Council on May 16, 2019.

## Additional Community Plan resources

- Community Plan website is [guelph.ca/communityplan](http://guelph.ca/communityplan)
- [Community Plan video](#)
- [Guelph as a Village of 100](#)—a fun way of looking at our community through numbers
- Watch quick, informative [videos](#) from our community

## Our year of listening



A United Vision:  
**GUELPH'S  
COMMUNITY PLAN**  
MAKE YOUR MARK.