



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



# Environment sector workshop summary



**December 6, 2018**

Hosted by:

Rene Van Acker, Dean, Ontario Agricultural College,  
University of Guelph

Scott Stewart, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer,  
City of Guelph

A Community Plan workshop with local environmentalist groups and leaders to gain their perspective on the importance of preserving and including the environment in the development of Guelph's Community Plan.



# Environment Sector Workshop

Hosted at University of Guelph, Peter Clark Hall.



On December 6, 2018, Rene Van Acker, Dean, Ontario Agricultural College, University of Guelph and Scott Stewart, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, City of Guelph hosted a Community Plan workshop with local environmental groups and leaders to gain their input on the inclusion of environmental priorities in Guelph for the development of the Community Plan.

## Acknowledgements:

The City of Guelph is grateful to the local businesses, public health, conservation and environmental groups, students and educational leaders for their participation in the workshop. It was a time of honest dialogue, championing this important initiative and helping to shape Guelph's Community Plan that will guide our community for the next 10 years and more.

## Agenda:

- Welcome greeting from Marva Wisdom, Community Plan Co-Chair and external consultant
- Welcome from Scott Stewart, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, Infrastructure, Development and Enterprise Services, City of Guelph
- Presentation and remarks from Rene Van Acker, Dean, Ontario Agricultural College, University of Guelph
- Community Plan progress report and what we are hearing from the community from Jenny Smith, Manager Corporate and Community Strategic Initiatives
- Facilitated activities led by Kelly Guthrie, Community Engagement Coordinator and Stewart McDonough, Advisor, Strategy and Innovation.
- Facilitated conversation and activities:
  1. Community shares something they are proud of in their work or sector
  2. Community identifies what barriers are in the way of achieving work in this sector
  3. Community discuss and share what would be a win for Guelph's environmental sector
  4. Community highlights one thing they would like to see happen next
- Next steps and questions
- Thank you and closing summary by Kealy Dedman, City Engineer and General Manager, Engineering and Transportation Services, City of Guelph



# What we heard:

- Biodiversity matters; it would be nice to have Guelph be a showcase to the world of how to be a biodiverse city.
- Guelph is a community that is passionate and cares about integrating and protecting the environment as we plan for future growth or redevelopment .
- The community is proud that Guelph is committed to maintaining its position as an innovator, leader and encourager in the space of communities taking ownership of energy, economy, equity and planning for climate change.
- One of the barriers identified was the lack of policy to drive businesses towards environmental sustainability.
- A lack of space and initiatives to plant in new neighbourhoods was a concern, with large areas of “new” Guelph without shaded streets and sidewalks.
- There were a number of concerns for building for the future community. Key areas of importance was transit within the city, and city-to-city; safe and connected bicycle and walking paths and more protected green spaces within communities.

## 1. A few stories from the community on environmental accomplishments:

“Leading the creation of Guelph’s guidelines for development of contaminated or potentially contaminated sites. This is a one-of-a-kind guideline. The guideline was established to streamline the redevelopment of land in the city historically impacted by chemical releases. The document received recognition, winning a National Canadian Brownfield Network award for policy development. The guidelines provide clarity on how to connect and use planning/development to brownfield renewal while reducing red tape and making it easier to do business in Guelph. The guidelines have been shared and promoted to other municipalities throughout Ontario to spread the approach.”

“Brought the idea forward of securing bike parking for the Wilson Street Parkade to council as a delegate to the Guelph Parking master plan deliberation. The parkade is currently under construction with 20+ bike spaces with swipe access. I am proud of this accomplishment as it was an opportunity that was recognized and supported by City Council and staff as a worthy addition to the downtown.”

“Proud of my role in taking the idea of promoting pollinator habits in Guelph to the founding of

There is a kindness in the city of Guelph that you do not experience anywhere else in any other cities.

Pollination Guelph and the leadership of the organization. I just announced the date and lineup for our 12th annual conference next March—12 years! I am so amazed at what we have done and the role we have played in Guelph. We recruited amazing volunteers who are involved and working with so many people directly and indirectly in the conservation of pollinators and their habitat. Guelph is truly a role model for other cities and groups to follow. People on the street know about pollinators now and the city is taking increased action with local businesses or organization and farmers. We are making a difference!”

“I am a volunteer coordinator for Tree Mobile Guelph, a not-for-profit enterprise designed to provide Guelph residents with fruit trees and plants at cost plus-a-bit, and help them to plant on their own property. Since 2011, in excess of 8,000 trees and plants have been planted through Tree Mobile Guelph.”



## 2. Barriers in the way of the community achieving for their environmental projects/work

There are three fundamental themes that emerged as barriers for the environment: funding, policy and infrastructure.

- **Funding:** for support with environmental issues, human resources, operating and capital costs, clawed back funding, lack of financing and revenue for not-for-profits, availability of long-term resource commitments and the fact that research and data take time and human resources. Lack of funding to do community programming and engagement to connect people to the natural world imperatives that affect our food, water and carbon footprint.
- **Policies:** or the lack thereof to protect the environment, not insistent that businesses and developers include sustainable practices, conflicting policies such as protecting NTTS vs. facilitating carbon-zero transportation, lack of legislation to protect drinking water. Lack of support for tree protection on private property and not enough notice given with tree removal in City projects, and property assessments that do not give a dollar value to trees on properties.
- **Infrastructure:** noted as insufficient expansion and renewal to serve innovation and education at a pace required for growing agriculture and food sector. There appears to be a lack of consensus of the vision and outcomes in building a cycling model, with a need to change the narrative around cycling. This includes a future tourism/recreation product “Guelph to Goderich” (G2G) trail. The barrier is the three kilometre gap that separates it from Guelph.  
  
Deficiencies in infrastructure inhibit growth of programs and behaviours such as organic waste diversion, active transportation and appropriate housing densities that support walkability. Affordable housing: people are moving out of Guelph to find more affordable housing further afield, and we are losing talent to other communities. Lack of transit connectivity; Guelph is not effectively connected to Toronto-Hamilton-Cambridge.



### 3. What would be a win for the Guelph's environmental sector?

Four major themes emerged as future wins from the environment workshop participants:

- Environment
- Social connections and quality of life
- Sustainable change and community growth
- Leadership

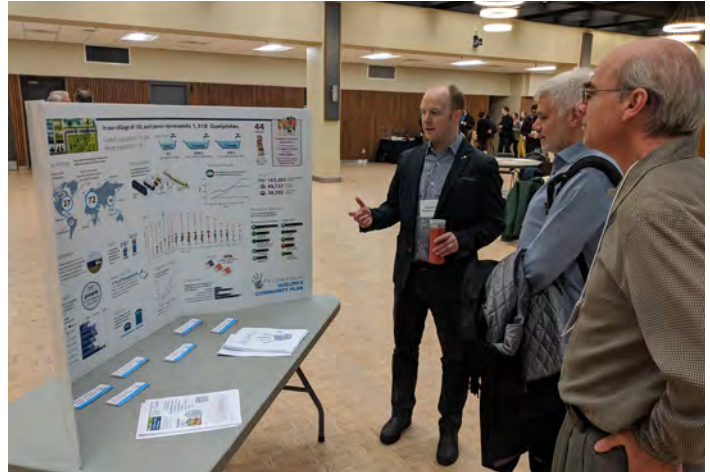
#### Environment:

- 40–50% tree cover/canopy, with 60% of households engaged in environmental progress, adoption of behaviour changes to reduce harm/impact on environment, with incentives such as City subsidies for environmentally friendly homes—zero energy, water conservation, solar, tree planting, buckthorn invasive removal, native pollinator-friendly garden planting, reduction of pesticides unless absolutely necessary and the elimination of contaminated sites
- 100% renewable energy, net energy positive, net carbon positive
- Transit improvements between Guelph-Cambridge-Hamilton to reduce number of cars on the road, one car per household
- Taking care of our water resources, storm water controls from 30% to 100% through basic quality controls, reduced surface parking areas to increase water absorption where it falls, naturalized streams, remove fish barriers, reconnect floodplains, protect the Guelph watershed and clean up rivers Eramosa/Speedvale for recreational use

Every household can cross the city, get to school and buy groceries without needing a personal vehicle by 2031.

#### Social connections and quality of life:

- Many wins identified as being achieved through infrastructure investment and development of connected, protected and safe trails separated for both walking and cycling. Unite/connect fragmented pathways. Improve/increase covered bicycle parking



facilities in downtown with a dedicated per cent of parking downtown for bikes, [bike/car ratio 10:1]

- Increased community garden programs and green spaces within walking distance of homes, that the community have access to active and passive natural amenities (pathways, trails, parks and benches)
- Community engagement/education of existing and new community members, students, businesses with a focus on our dependencies on the ecosystem, promoting environment volunteer opportunities, benefits of improved mental and physical health and provide an environment where we live, work, play together

Children get outdoors more and learn about the species there and how they interact with ecosystem.

#### Sustainable change and community growth:

Guelph is recognized as leaders locally, provincially and nationally as an environmental innovation hub for stewardship, sustainable development with innovation-driven solutions for food security, water, wet land protection, renewable energy and carbon emission reduction. Guelph meets its 2055 goal for 100% renewable energy. Highlighting an ecology centre at the Yorklands Green Hub for citizen engagement and using the Clair-Maltby development as an example on the international stage for One Planet living; equity, access to food, housing and nature preservation.

## Urban Agriculture—aim for the 100-foot diet, not the 100-mile diet.

- 100% employment, zero poverty, Guelph community creates local jobs from within at-risk communities to retrofit buildings in community
- Transit: Guelph transit system, reliable, accessible where all routes operate at 15 min service or less. Electric vehicles/self-driven vehicles/scooters/bicycles manufactured and become the norm in Guelph. High frequency electric trains exist between Toronto-Kitchener-Cambridge-Airport
- Community growth does not negatively affect existing natural heritage systems

## Leadership:

Leadership is a collaboration of partnerships between the City, Council, Indigenous treaty holders, universities and community as a whole to achieve common goals. Guelph continues to be a role model and recognized by other cities as being “green”. This would require continued support of local government and policy. Wins for Guelph identified as:

- Legislated protection (such as Paris-Galt Moraine), green infrastructure (new/retrofitted), environmental key performance indicators in decision making, promotion of parkland
- Clear language in the Official Plan and Secondary Plans that direct development and municipal services toward clean, low-carbon forms and processes
- Change happens quickly rather than over several election cycles

## Stewardship:

- Stewardship includes the continuation of intentionality to build and strengthen relationships and healthy decision making with indigenous treaty holders, thereby declaring an appreciation of living in Guelph and the environment in which we live
- To make an unprecedented financial investment in the environment sector helping to fuel not-for-profit and social enterprise work
- Realize the environmental and financial benefits of an electrified transit fleet including but not limited to cost savings, noise reductions and emission reductions. This provides an opportunity to re-invest the savings to expand transit and mobility

## Inclusion and diversity:

The importance of a vision for our community that is broad enough for everyone to see themselves in the vision. Where equity prevails, everyone contributes and we identify that community engagement is a tool to build social connectedness for otherwise disconnected and disenfranchised individuals and groups. A community where all residents have access to affordable, healthy food.



## 4. Community highlights what they would like to see happen next

Focus for what happens next in the community relating to the environment fell into five specific categories: engagement, infrastructure, social connections and quality of life, leadership and economic. The following are condensed actions items based on community feedback.

### Engagement:

- Provide a sustainable citizen digital app., “my world, my choice” mentorship program to drive sustainable individual, group or community action
- Extend greater consultation/demographic diversity of people such as but not limited to: immigrants, shelters, schools (especially high school/university students) and the community as a whole

### Infrastructure:

- Build the cycle underpasses, separate bike lanes, and Baker Street community hub
- Legislate public green spaces in new build and development plans

### Social connections and quality of life:

- Free get fit programs for specific demographic concentration areas of community
- Green spaces/parks are short walk from homes to encourage safe outdoor play for children
- Decrease inequality in civic engagements, public education, access to healthy food including community gardens, foraging, natural landscapes (parks/trails) with fruit trees

### Leadership:

- Promote the final Community Plan online to keep the vision alive
- Accountability of funding and stakeholder partnerships to achieve top 5-10 shared priorities, through collaboration of planning with concrete plans, milestones, schedules and timelines to keep momentum
- Increase trust, help the community to fully understand the incredible work and plans already underway
- Establish a Guelph Round Table on environment to develop action plans and goals



- Develop an environmental page on the City of Guelph website that includes a scorecard on achievements relating to environment, but not exclusive (water, garbage, energy and natural heritage system)
- Strategic plans specify how environment is prioritized in work plans and service delivery
- Invest in green infrastructure
- Establish a standing City of Guelph—University of Guelph partnership committee

### Environment:

- Implement the Guelph Energy Efficiency Retrofit Strategy for residents to upgrade homes to become environmentally sustainable
- Provide environmental incentives/subsidies/carbon tax and spin off subsidies to the community to encourage and/or support environmentally friendly retrofits (water, storm water management, energy, green canopy, planting native plants). Free tree giveaways, free/inexpensive native plants



# Next steps

During the last year, we have 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; economic; 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



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**MAKE YOUR MARK.**