



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



2nd Business sector workshop summary



January 29, 2019

Hosted by:

Kithio Mwanzia, President and CEO
Guelph Chamber of Commerce

Marty Williams, Executive Director
Downtown Guelph Business Association

Scott Stewart, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer
City of Guelph

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



2nd Business Sector Workshop

Hosted at Innovation Guelph
111 Farquhar Street, Guelph



On January 29, 2019, Kithio Mwanzia, President and CEO, Guelph Chamber of Commerce, Marty Williams, Executive Director, Downtown Guelph Business Association and Scott Stewart, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, City of Guelph, hosted a Community Plan workshop with local business leaders to obtain their valuable input in the development of Guelph's Community Plan.

Acknowledgements:

The City of Guelph is grateful to the local business community for their participation in the workshop. It was a time of honest dialogue, championing this important initiative and helping to shape the community's Plan that will guide our community for the next 10 to 20 years and more.

Agenda:

- Welcome greeting from Scott Stewart, Deputy Chief Administrative Officer, City of Guelph
- Welcome remarks from Kithio Mwanzia, President and CEO, Guelph Chamber of Commerce
- Community Plan progress report and what we are hearing from the community from Jenny Smith, Manager Corporate and Community Strategic Initiatives
- Facilitated activities lead by Kelly Guthrie, Community Engagement Coordinator and Stewart McDonough, Advisor Strategy and Innovation.
- Facilitated conversation and activities:
 1. Business community shares something they are proud of in their work or sector
 2. Business community identifies barriers in the way of achieving work in this sector
 3. Discussions regarding what would be a win for Guelph's business sector
 4. Business community highlights one thing they would like to see happen next
- Next steps and questions
- Thank you and closing summary by Marty Williams, Executive Director, Downtown Guelph Business Association

What we heard:

Some of the greatest challenges facing the business community in Guelph are attracting and retaining businesses, hiring and retaining skilled staff, affordability of living here, and ability to commute within or outside of Guelph.

- Finding and retaining skilled talent to the businesses in Guelph is a challenge, driven by two factors—availability of a skilled workforce within Guelph, the challenge of attracting talent from outside Guelph and the cost of relocating to Guelph due to lack of affordable housing and property taxes
- There is a lack of connection to and understanding of the support systems in place for businesses in Guelph
- Transit and parking raised as a major problem affecting the business community, connecting people to business areas, parking to support downtown business and transit connectedness within Guelph and to surrounding major cities including Toronto

Guelph is known as the best place to do business, live, work and play



1. A few success stories from the business community:

“Skyline—celebrated its 20th Anniversary, homegrown Guelph Company founded by three men and still private. Now they are a national company with 1,000 staff of which 250 are in Guelph. Proud/active partner with community service groups and engaging our staff to do same. Significantly invested into downtown Guelph.”

“As part of a manufacturing operation belonging to the Guelph community for nearly 70 years, the inertia of business represents a significant challenge in the force of change. One of the ways we have chosen to adapt is a local solution in a global company that guides how we adopt information technology and implement it in a cost effective way. Talent from our community is now available to plants in other parts of the work has enabled us to bring information to the shop floor level with low capital investment.”

“Built new Canadian headquarters—working with US based head office, University of Guelph and City of Guelph. In the past 2-3 years, doubled our staffing complement from 52 to 108 employees; 50 remote employees, 700+ contractors—we have become a Centre of Excellence for our international company for Training, Consulting and Technical Services (labelling).”

“Ceva Animal Health executed an amazing opportunity to grow our business in Guelph—because of our past success in producing poultry vaccines locally to supply a growing global market. Much of this success has come from our talented employees who completed agriculture-related programs at the University of Guelph. This city has provided CEVA the talent we needed to succeed.”

2. Barriers in the way of local businesses achieving success.

Two fundamental themes emerged as barriers for the business community: connectivity and transit/parking challenges. In addition to those were additional challenges equal in importance: skilled labour force, affordable housing/retail spaces, available funding and a solid promotion/marketing plan.

- **Connectivity:** Business connectedness between business support and advisory services still needs better fluidity. There is a lack of knowledge of who does what in our business support ecosystem. Entrepreneurs still do not know that business advisory services exist to help them, such as Business Centre Guelph Wellington, Innovation Guelph and 10C.
- **Transit and Parking:** Rail services to Toronto, Hwy #7, parking in the downtown core, reliability and connection of transit to all areas of Guelph, especially Hanlon Creek business area.
- **Skilled labour force:** Attracting high quality staff, having college campuses in Guelph focused on skilled trades and the perception that college is a second choice.
- **Affordable housing/retail space:** Lack of affordability and attractiveness for new businesses and new residents to stay/relocate to Guelph. The danger of companies relocating to cities with more affordable housing and favourable property taxes. Affects recruitment and retention of staff.
- **Funding:** as a small employer, it is very difficult to compete with large regional tech employers. Wages are highly inflated, often times propped up by government grants to hire more tech resources. Gaining access to local seed grants for start-up businesses.
- **Promotion and marketing:** Develop a strategy to promote Guelph as a location for investment focused on agriculture talent from University of Guelph, value of the Canadian dollar, and accessibility to Toronto Airport and strategic location for global exports. Consider incentives and rebates. Manage significant, consistent growth in the downtown core and consider regulations and policies specifically for the environment.





3. What would be a win for the business sector of Guelph?

The highest percentage of responses indicate addressing the transit and parking issues would be one of the greatest wins for our community.

There is also the underlying factor that the lack of affordable housing is affecting the successful attraction and retention of businesses and skilled workforce.

Transit and Parking:

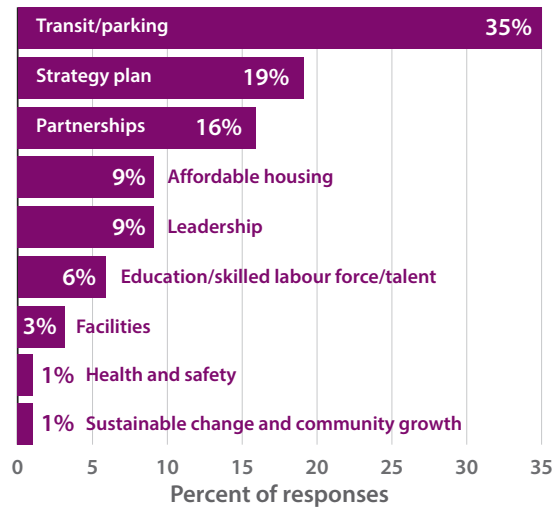
- **Cycling:** Bike accessibility and education on safety on cycling
- **Bus Transit:** Continue to improve the connectivity with local bus service to all areas of Guelph and business community
- **Rail Transit:** Regular GO-train services to Kitchener/Hamilton/London/Toronto
- **Freight Transit:** Regional transportation strategy; better movement of goods and growing GJR/CN/CP
- **Parking:** Increase availability of and affordability of downtown parking to encourage sales in downtown core. Availability and affordability of parking for downtown professionals

City planning and promotion:

- Innovative products and services locally developed and manufactured protected for export promotion
- Downtown Guelph—supported as the heart of the city with more intensified residential areas and accessibility to the Baker Street multi-purpose family friendly development that would include school, YMCA, business support agency, restaurants and library
- Continue beautiful architecture for commercial, industrial and residential. The City of Guelph works to incorporate business support ecosystem into economic development operations
- Our festivals/downtown scene and events become popular outside the community, attracting big name talent to our city and able to offer affordable access

Encourage people to come downtown and spend money

Wins for the Economic Sector of Guelph



Partnerships:

- Strong City, academic and business communications and collaborations, student engagement for problem solving, business support services and integration of social enterprise/impact measurements
- Continue to support essential services to our community—police and health services to keep the community safe
- Economic development bus tour

Affordable housing:

- Job creation/employment is supported by making Guelph an affordable place to live and work for all ages
- Poverty Task Force, Hope House, Guelph Neighbourhood Support Coalition—connectivity between low income neighbourhoods and the isolation of poverty, addiction/trafficking so that everyone is helping to address the issue (business/corporate support and engagement)

Leadership:

- Streamlined planning processes for new builds and renovations, reducing red tape and improved municipal approval processes
- Guelph has a good reputation as a place to live, continued sharing of good news stories about Guelph businesses (eg. awards, winning contracts, funding etc). Success will attract future investment

4. Business community highlights the one thing they would like to see happen next

Transit remained the majority focus of what the business community would like to see happen next. Additional mention was equally between the following themes: strategic planning and promotion, partnerships, managing sustainable change/ community growth, affordable housing, education and skilled labour force. Fewest mentions related to connectivity, leadership, health and safety.

Major Focus: Transit

- Comprehensive transportation strategy for the movement of goods, freight and people addressing local and regional connections of all modes of transportation (rail, road, shipping and air) including 2-way GO Transit for Guelph
- Invest in the Guelph brand and leverage the assets, agricultural, food, tech., railway, etc.
- Cycle/pedestrian safety
- Improved transportation between Guelph, Kitchener-Waterloo, Cambridge—all working together (cities, colleges, universities, province)

Additional comments:

- **Sustainable change and community growth:** Community works together to support residential growth and zoning requirements in industrial areas to support change for the future
- **Strategy:** Market Guelph as an agriculture leader in Canada. A strong focus on what we are good at will build a foundation for the future. Support agri-food, air quality, climate, environmental brand
- **Partnerships:** City to continue to engage business advisory and support agencies in the conversations around transportation, housing, community services for employees of businesses that need these services. City of Guelph to better articulate the economic, social, cultural value of public investment (including increase of assessment value—similar to Kitchener)
- **Health and Safety:** Mental health, drug addiction and safety. Priority and focus on the safety and education of the people that hire, work in and visit Guelph



Comprehensive transportation strategy locally and regionally utilizing and connecting all modes of transportation (rail, road shipping ports, air) for the movement of goods, freight and people.

Affordable housing increases labour pool at all job levels.

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; 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
- [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.