

**Opening Remarks by Ann Pappert, CAO at the Guelph Urban Design Summit
May 6, 2014
River Run Centre
Delivering Change on the ground**

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Good morning!

Welcome to Guelph- the City that makes a difference!

On behalf of the Corporation of the City of Guelph, we're delighted to be hosting the Urban Design Summit. A first time partnership with the Province of Ontario, Ontario Professional Planners Institute and the Municipal Urban Design Roundtable.

Today's Urban Design Summit serves as a platform to discuss:

- how investment in great places
- how the benefits of strong place making practices and high-quality design create more livable, enduring and prosperous cities

Glad to see many professionals from across Ontario taking this opportunity to share knowledge and experiences about the kinds of urban design tools we should be thinking of in building communities of all sizes. Guelph- you may know us by our promise- our vision - *to be the city that makes a difference....acting locally and globally to improve the lives of residents, the broader community and the world.*

If you have done your research about us – you know that we are relentlessly focused on building an exceptional City – our city's part – to provide outstanding municipal service and value. I have heard the phrase: "*Good cities react to opportunities but great cities plan and create opportunities*". And in Guelph – we've embraced that mindset.

Our leadership here is in full transformation – and the single word that has been driving that is '**enterprising.**' We know that cities must be positioned to be competitive and to create opportunities. We're constantly evolving and transforming ourselves to stay relevant to our residents and partners – this requires extreme flexibility, agility of mind and creativity.

As staff and administration, we strive to serve our Council and residents. We too must change our approaches and our tools. We also recognize that it is in our planning – and in the professional practices of our planners, that we see and find strong examples of change agents at the city and community level. New tools are required to meet the challenges we face.

Today's Summit is moving from visioning to focus on the urban design tools and other strategies which deliver change on the ground.

We respect that urban design and city building are foundational to achieving:

- our vision to make a difference and be exceptional....
- our transformation as a Corporation

- the mindset, alignment of resources and momentum, that demonstrate progressive, resilient, accessible, engaged and innovative local government

This is the kind of place Guelph strives to be.

It's about and for continually addressing our identity and distinguishing ourselves locally, regionally, nationally and globally, that we'll have sustainable growth, jobs and meaningful engaged lives and be truly an enterprising city.

New approaches to urban design contribute to high quality of life in Guelph.

A good example of the transformative power of urban design is our award-winning Market Square. We are proud of this recognition. A certificate of merit from the National Urban Design Awards in the civic design category is on the way. Market Square demonstrates how urban design and architectural excellence is enhancing the quality of life and wellbeing in Guelph. Animating this space – brought increased life to our downtown core – civic events, festivals, concerts and family-friendly movies shown on a giant screen. You should have been here for the outdoor showing of the Wizard of Oz. The community covered the street surface – transforming it into the Yellow Brick Road.

Market Square is also a gathering place - - symbolic of our changing community. And of a new relationship we wish to foster between City Hall and its citizens. Market Square is a living example of city building, one of three core focus areas in our Corporate Strategic Plan.

Economically, our planning link to local economic development, sustainable growth and investment is tangible. We developed *Prosperity 2020* to provide strategic directions to ensure that Guelph's economy is competitively positioned to 2020. Different groups have embraced the Plan and are implementing aspects of it.

As we know, there is a direct relationship between how we build our cities and our collective carbon footprint. We have several visions and plans for connectivity through transit, cycling, and trails. We have employed whole system thinking into our approach towards buildings, waste, energy and industry to reduce our carbon emissions.

Cornerstone to our economic development strategy is our *Community Energy Initiative (CEI)*. Our goal is simple.

Reducing energy consumption, generating energy locally and distributing it in efficient ways, we are supporting local business and creating opportunities for investment in our community. Our Initiative is internationally recognized for changing the way cities think about energy—from how energy integrates with municipal infrastructure plans to finding ways to managing energy differently, better, than in the past.

Our plans for district energy are centred on a city-wide thermal energy network. This network will allow neighbourhoods to share a more sustainable heating and cooling system. It's all laid out in Guelph's District Energy Strategic Plan.

We are seeing action on the ground with the first of many planned district energy facilities operating just before the New Year at the Sleeman Centre—Guelph's premier sports and entertainment venue.

The system at the Sleeman Centre uses natural gas to heat water in boilers which delivers space heating, and has a central chilling unit to chill water for cooling.

Later this year, the system will be expanded to heat and cool this building - our River Run Centre and other commercial and residential developments in the area.

Our District Energy Strategic Plan identifies other key locations for district energy nodes across the city including the 675-acre Hanlon Creek Business Park. A combined heat and power facility planned for the Hanlon Creek Business Park will play an important role in meeting the city's future energy needs while reducing the environmental impact on power generation.

As part of building a thriving local economy is our comprehensive *Downtown Secondary Plan* - a vision for revitalizing downtown Guelph over the next 20 years.

We believe that the opportunity for creating prosperity in Guelph is currently focused in our downtown area. We are seeing major investments in downtown with more than \$85 million in private sector investment already committed. Our growth goal for the downtown area is to increase the population by 6,000 and 1,500 more jobs.

In turn, the east and south end will be in the very same position over the next few years and that those areas deserve to directly benefit from the financial gains of growing our assessment base that comes from investing in the key downtown projects now.

Studies such as *The Value of Investing in Canadian Downtowns* have shown that downtowns are *benefitting from innovative partnerships, long term planning and progressive revitalization*.

All these developments, and many others, will competitively position the city for business development, and help meet targets to increase employment in priority sectors by close to 30,000 jobs by 2031.

This increase in jobs will come from a mix of sectors but the emphasis is on research, innovation, and knowledge-based workers, whether they are in the advanced manufacturing, education or professional/service areas.

It's pretty clear that we have shifted from an industrial culture to a knowledge culture.

So, I think it's fair to repeat the saying that "Planning is a public interest profession."

As professionals, you have an essential role to play in urban planning, management and governance.

Our work in city building – urban design- and addressing the greater complexity in the lives of our residents, that the tools, mindset and approaches towards urban design and planning are also being challenged to grow in flexibility and intent.

In Guelph, we're constantly open and exploring new ideas and creativity. To our staff, we have asked them to:

- be bold, frank and fearless
- be fully engaged, to build direct relationships with all our stakeholders
- communicate changing approaches and new ideas

- To embrace the Planning Act and go beyond it

Last night, at the Urban Design Summit evening discussion, I heard a few key statements that rang true for Guelph as well. They included:

- Be bold provocateurs
- be innovative and try 'safe fail' pilots
- Challenge the "department of NO" from within
- Perfection is boring – sometimes you just have to get going
- Propose creative and disruptive ways to move us forward
- Bridge vision with courageous action
- Have a walkable vision
- Collective vision is possible
- Place matters if you care about wellbeing
- Build public infrastructure first
- It's all connected
- Collective responsibility for shared prosperity

So, in closing...

Welcome to our City!

Many believe that Cities are at the centre of innovation, learning and wellbeing. It has been dubbed the "Century of the city".

For us, we're a city that is seeing itself as building to be a complete sustainable city. A city that is gaining its assertive maturity and great voice in advocating for its citizens- this is changing how a city sees itself and how it has voice and how the democratic process will unfold.

We know we need to transform how we build our city. We believe that citizens, government, private industry, community benefit organizations, all have a role to play in city building. Our planners' minds, tools, and skills are key!

So in an era of rapid knowledge exchange and urbanization, a comprehensive and collaborative approach to urban planning and development is important more than ever before. "Planning is a public interest profession."

We look forward to a successful workshop! Thank you!