



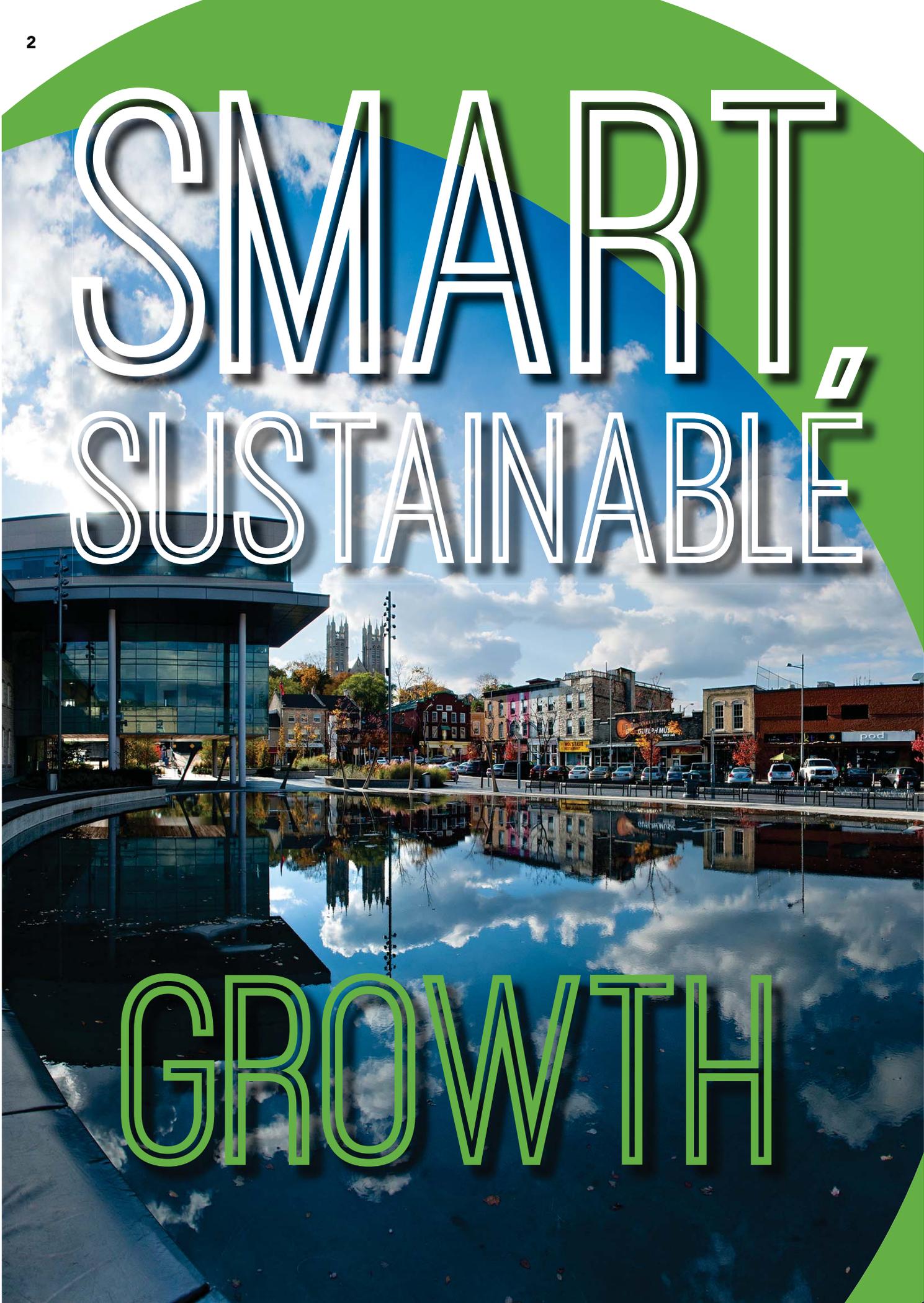
invest in Guelph



AS FEATURED IN **BUSINESS IN FOCUS**
MARCH 2015

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GROWTH



Guelph is located in one of the fastest-growing economic regions in Canada, so when the Province of Ontario's growth management strategy came into effect in 2006, Guelph was charged with aggressive growth targets to meet; a 50 percent population increase and a 30 percent employment increase over 25 years. An added challenge lies in Guelph's commitment to achieve these targets without expanding its current geographic boundaries, all the while preserving the character of the city during significant intensification.

Up for that challenge, we spoke with General Manager of Economic Development Peter Cartwright, Acting Corporate Manager for Community Energy Alex Chapman, Corporate Manager for Downtown Renewal Ian Panabaker, and Senior Business Development Consultant Jim Mairs about their ambitious plans for the city of Guelph.

Growing up, literally

Guelph has approached intensification with a deliberate methodology. Guelph's Official Plan concentrates development to specific mixed-use nodes strategically located in the downtown, North, East, West and South ends of the city. Mixed-use allows a single property to have multiple functions enabling people to live, work and play all in the same place. The concentration of intensification to these nodes allows the municipality to effectively manage growth by strategically focusing infrastructure upgrades, addressing changing transportation needs and creating spaces for social connectedness.

"We've been referred to as 'the brightest kid in the class' with respect to the environmental technology sector, something we take pride in."

North American, post-war urban planning practices encouraged single-use developments by relying on the automobile to connect people to everyday needs (such as working and shopping). The result is a community with urban sprawl, increasing the distance between people and their needs. It is a proposition that can be quite costly in terms of the infrastructure maintenance required for long networks of utilities and roads. By encouraging live, work, play nodes throughout the city, Guelph is making better use of infrastructure in these areas, upgrading them to service more people on a single piece of land.

Aside from making infrastructure more efficient, this mixed-use nodal intensification also means less reliance on traditional forms of transportation, such as the automobile. Recognizing ►



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- ▶ the reality of this future, Guelph has made a conscious effort to improve its public mobility services, an example being the development of the Guelph Central Station. This inter-regional, multi-modal transit centre in the downtown links to walkable and cycleable spaces throughout the entire city, connecting people within Guelph and to other major urban centres.

“Essentially, we are working alongside the land owner to create state of the art, mixed-use neighbourhoods.”

Connecting people through transportation is a key priority for Guelph, but so is connecting people through the development of public spaces. Social connectivity is an integral part of encouraging interactions between people, between businesses and between institutions. In 2012 Guelph underwent major construction projects in the downtown core, the development of a new Civic museum, a skating rink/water feature and outdoor event programming space that created a sense of place in the downtown, making a remarkable impact on the value of land in this central district.

“The proof is in the over \$120 million in private sector investment in the downtown core in three years. We are seeing high-quality multi-storey mixed-use developments and have close to 1,000 new housing units either under approval, or in construction,” says Ian Panabaker. “Downtown Guelph is primed and ready for this type of intensification, the benefit of which will contribute to the funding required to finance the infrastructure to support the mixed-use development in other nodes throughout the city.”



Funding the future

Traditionally, municipal funding for such infrastructure improvements to stimulate investment comes from taxation, development charges and government transfers. With such ambitious growth targets required, Guelph is exploring alternative funding options, a more adaptive, agile and creative way to make the most productive use of City-owned assets.

Under the Canada Business Corporations Act, the City of Guelph created Guelph Municipal Holdings Inc. (GMHI), a corporation that manages selected municipal assets in order to add value, improve services, and support effective and forward-thinking city building. The company's present portfolio includes two energy utility corporations with assets of \$66.8 million but is currently investigating rail services, land development and other strategic interests. ►►

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"You can build the new energy economy anywhere, so why not here in Guelph?"

- ▶ "The intent of GMHI is to provide the City with freedom to explore more efficient ways of managing City-owned land and utilities," says Peter Cartwright. "It creates an investment environment where the municipality can act as a business partner for those projects that satisfy our own vision of Guelph's future."

One major successful undertaking of GMHI is the launch of the first planned city-wide thermal energy network in North America. A network of piping and small thermal energy plants will supply at least 50 percent of the heating needs of the City by 2041. Not only does this substantially reduce the community's carbon footprint, but it also provides city-wide benefits to both business and residents through the relief from volatile electricity and gas prices and availability.

"Municipalities need to be committed to long-term partnerships needed to achieve success in building a city-wide district energy network. Through GMHI, we can establish these mutually beneficial relationships that can last decades into the future," says Alex Chapman. "We can build on this network and execute on this plan far more economically. In this way we lessen the burden on the taxpayer in funding these large infrastructure projects."

"If you think about the old energy economy, you think about Texas, Alberta or the United Arab Emirates. In a post-carbon energy economy, you don't have that same sort of resource-based focus. You can build the new energy economy anywhere, so why not here in Guelph where we are already committed to supporting these kinds of investments?"

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Committed indeed, Guelph's downtown intensification and substantial utility infrastructure investment isn't the only way Guelph is preparing for growth. Understanding the importance of providing shovel-ready employment land is high on Guelph's priority list as well.

Location, location, location

Simultaneous to intensifying urban nodes, Guelph's attention is also on the management of remaining greenfield areas left in the city. The City of Guelph's current 675 acre greenfield project, the Hanlon Creek Business Park, is a hybrid of the public and private lands being sold to meet employment growth targets. The park functions as a platform from which many of Guelph's growth initiatives are supported, such as the incorporation of one of the city's first district energy plants and a 165 acre environmental reserve with 12 km of walking trails.

Traditionally Guelph has been a major player in the development of employment land, front-ending servicing and grading in order to encourage employment investment. But the Hanlon Creek Business Park is tipping the scales. Private investors contributed in large part to the development of these lands by working alongside City staff to prepare and market over a third of the saleable land in the park. "The playing field is starting to change in Guelph. The land investment community is taking notice of the increasing value of these lands, the municipality is moving aside from the position of land developer allowing private investment to take the reins," says Jim Mairs.

Taking what has been learned from the public/private develop-

ment in the Hanlon Creek Business Park, Guelph has big plans for its future greenfield development: the Guelph Innovation District. The 1,000 acre site is slated to become a significant economic cluster focused on green economy and innovation sector jobs. Plans include an innovative mix of land uses, including a new urban village, a mixed-use main street, a research ►►

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“The proof is in the over \$120 million in private sector investment in the downtown core in three years.”



► park and an adaptive re-use area around the historic reformatory complex. “Essentially, we are working alongside the land owner to create state-of-the-art, mixed-use neighbourhoods. We will have to realize our vision through private sector investment and development and through the province.”

Staying focused

Guelph’s economic development strategy identified three major growth sectors where Guelph has competitive advantage and should focus its business development efforts: the agri-food/agri-tech sector, the renewable energy and environmental technologies sector, and the advanced manufacturing sector.

“We are looking at more agri-tech headquarters around the agri-food chain. These efforts build on all the other food sector support organizations that we already have here including the University of Guelph – a world renowned leader in agri-innovation, the head office of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food and Rural Affairs, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, Ontario Regional Office of Agri-Food Canada, and thirty-five grower organizations,” says Jim Mairs.

Guelph’s internationally recognized Community Energy Initiative (CEI) is the cornerstone of Guelph’s competitive advantage




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in the environmental technology sector and the driving force of the city-wide district energy strategy. “We’ve been referred to as ‘the brightest kid in the class’ with respect to the environmental technology sector, something we take pride in,” says Alex Chapman. “It’s not just energy; Guelph houses state-of-the-art testing facilities for watershed management, and drinking and wastewater treatment right at our own municipal plant. It further demonstrates Guelph’s commitment to this important and growing sector.”

“It creates an investment environment where the municipality can act as a business partner for those projects that satisfy our own vision of Guelph’s future.”

“We are going to continue to focus on the foundational and diversified manufacturing sector in Guelph. There are a number of automotive parts suppliers here. Our largest, Linamar, recently received federal and provincial funding to create an additional 1,200 new jobs over the next ten years,” says Peter Cartwright. “Manufacturing is integral to the success of our other sectors as well, creating important components and business relationships that supply and support other markets.”

Guelph, Ontario is taking a holistic approach to its growth: keeping intensification concentrated to key mixed-use nodes; supporting infrastructure for alternative forms of transportation; creating places that encourage social and business connectivity; and looking at different funding structures that ensure that City-owned assets are being used to their best capacity. Guelph is seeing a shift in its position as land developer, enabling the City to focus its efforts on business growth

in those areas they know to have competitive advantages. In this way Guelph is solidifying its position as a great place to live, work and play well in to the future. ■





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