

City of Guelph Outside Water Use By-law

Fountains, Ponds and Water Features

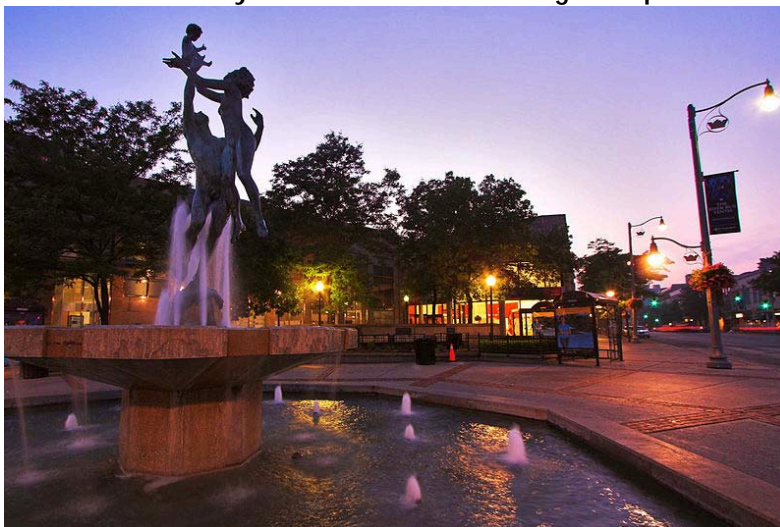
This fact sheet considers water use by outdoor public fountains, ponds and features in both public spaces and in residential yards.

Indoor fountains and water features, such as those that might be found in shopping centres or office buildings, are not assessed because these are considered indoor end uses.

Extent of End Use in City of Guelph

The City of Guelph has very few public water features. Examples include “The Family” fountain at St. George’s Square and “The Blacksmith” fountain at Priory Square on Macdonell Street. Both recirculate water and are operated seasonally.

“The Family” Fountain at St. George’s Square



Source: Tudor Costache, Wikimedia Commons

There is no data on the number of private residences with fountains or ponds. However, anecdotal evidence suggests that they are found in a minority of yards. The existing Outdoor Water Use By-law requires that decorative fountains recirculate water at all levels, including Level 0 Blue (Careful Use).

Fountains and ponds are not cleaned as frequently as pools, nor do they have water-consuming filtration systems. They typically have small surface areas, and as such lose less water to evaporation. Finally, much of the water they do use is recharged by rainfall. As a result, total water consumed through these end uses are small.

The Blacksmith Fountain at Priory Square



Source: Parks Canada

Best Management Practices for Efficient Use

While total community water demand attributed to water features is small, there are measures that public agencies and homeowner can take to reduce this further.

First and foremost, water features should recirculate water rather than consuming “once through” from the municipal supply. This is standard design for both custom-made public features and domestic ones sold through garden centres and hardware retailers. As noted above, recirculation is also mandated by the existing Outdoor Water Use By-law. Non-recirculating fountains will be the very rare exception.

Other best management practices include the following:

- watch for leaks (indicated by rapid drops in water levels, gaps or cracks in the feature’s shell or constantly damp soil around the feature);
- design ponds and fountains with small surface areas to minimize evaporation losses;
- locate features close to windbreaks (fencing or shrubbery) to further minimize evaporation;
- avoid designs that are likely to result in overspray due to wind;
- wait for rain (if forecast) to fill the feature naturally;
- use water efficient and drought tolerate plants for landscaping around features; and,
- given that water quality is not as great concern as with other end uses, direct runoff from roofs, downspouts, rain barrels and other sources to features (e.g., ponds).

In most cases, water features can be safely shut down for short periods during water supply shortages without causing them damage. This will result in little overall water savings. However, particularly with public features, it can be a powerful demonstration to the community of the severity of the situation. Use of prominent explanatory signage can enhance the impact of messaging.

Contribution to Overall Outdoor Water Use

Indicator	Impact
Portion of customers that practice the end use	Low
Average volume of water used each time the end use is practiced	Medium
Average frequency with which customers practice the end use	Infrequent
Contribution of end use to overall outdoor consumption	Low