

Discussion paper

The Guelph
difference:
economic
growth and
prosperity



Making a Difference

July 2014

Guelph is a city with a lot of heart.

People in Guelph care about each other and about their community. Frequently recognized as Canada's safest city, Guelph enjoys a vibrant social life with great entertainment and events, arts and food, and sports and other live events. It has a diversified economy with strengths in advanced manufacturing, agriculture and education. And, unlike many similar-sized cities, it has a viable downtown supporting a mix of uses with significant residential, educational and commercial developments in planning or underway.

One of a group of cities being targeted by the Ontario government for significant growth in the coming decades, Guelph is setting new directions and getting notice from its peers. Its focus on wellbeing, energy initiatives and urban renewal have put it in a leadership position across North America. It is building platforms for economic development and open government that will propel it in new and promising directions for years to come.

All of this is happening at an interesting time. The world's eyes are now on its cities. After two centuries of focus on the nation-state we are returning to the wisdom of millennia — the city as the source for social, cultural and economic well-being. Cities, it turns out, hold the key to our future.

And Guelph's future is especially bright. In the competition for talent, resources and investment, Guelph and its surrounding region are already well-placed to succeed. Guelph is making a difference and being noticed. It is re-defining the model for planned renewal and development in today's changing world. The City has partnered with organizations from the cultural, educational, health care and business communities, as well as Wellington County and neighbouring cities, Cambridge and Kitchener-Waterloo, to build a solid plan for the future.

The Guelph promise

To be the city that makes a difference...Acting locally and globally to improve the lives of residents, the broader community and the world.

– City of Guelph Corporate Strategic Plan

The City of Guelph is in a competition. The competition is for talent, commitment and investment. And that competition is now global. The best and brightest of our youth are increasingly being lured away by jobs around the world — as is money for investment in business, education and innovation.

When a young family looks outside the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) for a better place to raise a family, why would they commit their futures to Guelph? When a business in China, Japan or Germany looks for a community in which to put its Canadian or North American operations, why would it invest in building its business here? And when our children finish their schooling and are looking for a career in a great community, why would they commit their talent and energy to staying put? How do we keep tomorrow's entrepreneurs, artists, and visionaries from going somewhere else?

If you know Guelph well, the answers to some of these questions are easy. Others may surprise you. Canada's safest city is known by many to be a great place to raise a family. But did you also know that important international companies have invested here because of the lead the City has taken on energy? Or that plans to create opportunities for youth by piloting new approaches to education, learning and entrepreneurship are getting significant support from Conestoga College, the University of Guelph and the provincial government?

Many of Guelph's assets and advantages did not happen by chance. From the preservation of the Arkell Springs to its commitment to maintaining a vibrant downtown core, Guelph has been fortunate over the years to have municipal leadership that looked to the future and planned Guelph's development carefully. That promise to develop with care, and with future generations in mind, is part of the municipal vision and planning that continues today.

A good place to grow

Rapid urban sprawl is often accomplished at the cost of smaller cities in the region. Many cities in the GTA, while providing affordable housing to residents that work elsewhere, are virtually lost in thousands of acres of new housing. These bedroom communities suffer economically because businesses and jobs are elsewhere. The youth tend to move away for education and careers. With an aging population and little growth in local businesses, their tax base is eroding rather than growing.

The first decade of the Millennium saw efforts at the provincial and municipal levels to reverse some of the planning mistakes made in the previous half century that had led to much of the sprawl. In 2005, the Province announced its *Places to Grow* legislation, which promoted urban densification and mixed use development to encourage less time in the car and more walking. Development in the Green Belt around Toronto was frozen, and those municipalities directly outside the Green Belt were targeted for future population and economic growth. Guelph and the rest of the Golden Horseshoe were the focus of the future.

Fortunately for Guelph, and unlike some other municipalities, it was ahead of the curve. In the years before 2005, there had been intensive consultation with the citizens of Guelph over what kind of future they saw for their city. The City's planners took the Province's guidelines in their stride. It took them another 4 years, but the Guelph Official Plan, accepted by the Province in 2009, reflected a thoughtful balance between the new policy priorities of the province and the consensus that had resulted from the local consultations.

According to *Places to Grow* and the related *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* Guelph is targeted to increase its population to 175,000, including 30,000 more jobs, by 2031. And the Provincial legislation established that 40% of that growth has to come from "established areas." This means putting denser, mixed use developments into the existing built-up areas of the city.

Working from the basic principles of *Places to Grow* and the City's Official Plan, the City put together a strategic and economic implementation plan that indicated a number of platforms that would need to be in place to support the growth objectives:

- create an environment to attract new businesses to the city by, for instance, making new employment lands available and changing the way the City does business with the investment community
- foster mixed use development, which puts emphasis on the downtown and commercial nodes in the north, south, east and west
- create the resources and conditions for learning, skills upgrading, information resources and the integration of new talent so Guelph has a competitive work force
- densify in established areas, which puts a premium on brown- and grey-field lands or re-development of under-developed neighbourhoods
- improve public transit linking denser, walkable mixed use neighbourhoods within the downtown and key nodes and corridors throughout the city, as well as rail links within the region and to the GTA to give businesses access to the widest possible labour force
- continue development of economically and environmentally responsible water and waste management practices
- implement energy policies that not only reduce the city's carbon footprint, but give a bottom line advantage to businesses in Guelph

Unlike the post-war period, economic growth and increases in tax revenues to pay for all this development are not a given. The federal and provincial governments have been downloading responsibilities to the municipalities since the early 1990s and will be fighting to reduce their own deficits for years to come. So, the growth in residential units within the city has to be accompanied by equal growth in jobs and non-residential developments (includes commercial, industrial and institutional real estate). Timing of developments is critical to ensure that increased tax assessments from non-residential developments, as well as new residential complexes, will fund further developments.

This implies a careful balancing act for the municipal government. To this end Guelph is updating its strategic and long-term capital planning process to better align investment decisions. The Enterprise Framework is an approach to financial decision making that will link community return on investment with economic development and growth strategies such as the Downtown Secondary Plan. With the limited resources cities have at their disposal, making informed decisions on where to invest for maximum impact and leverage for the community will be key to maintaining a city's health, resiliency and competitiveness.

Prosperity 2020

With *Prosperity 2020* (published in 2010) Guelph's municipal government set the groundwork for ensuring that the non-residential tax base would grow to support other community priorities within areas such as culture, recreation, community programs and services, as well as the on-going delivery of municipal operations. Here, in 2014, Guelph is well on its way to realizing these objectives.

The economic priorities identified in the 2010 plan were to grow investment in specific growth sectors:

- advanced manufacturing
- agri-innovation,
- environmental and renewable technologies
- professional and technical services
- information, culture, communications and technology industries
- tourism and film production

Four years into the plan and the advanced manufacturing, agri-innovation and the culture and entertainment sectors are progressing well. Clean technology is off to a great start, and there is promise on the information and communication technology front, too.

Further progress towards a solid local economy rests on three further pillars:

- building better platforms for business growth
- creating support and services for workforce learning and training
- creating an environment for innovation and entrepreneurship to flourish

Building better business platforms

Guelph is widely seen as an agriculture centre because it has historically been the focus of the University of Guelph. While agriculture remains important, especially in the emerging areas of agri-tech innovation, Guelph has a solid, diversified economy. Its globally significant advanced manufacturing sector is the biggest employer in the city. Historically tied to the automotive industry, there is significant growth in other forms of advanced manufacturing today. Notably in 2013, Hitachi Industries committed to a \$32 million expansion to its heavy machinery operation, the largest industrial investment anywhere in Ontario that year. There is also a growing manufacturing sector around environmental/renewable technologies, one of the fastest growing economic sectors in Ontario.

Nonetheless, the City has recognized it will need to change how it is perceived if it wants to attract new investment at a faster rate than it has traditionally. Part of this is branding and reputation. Some of it is changing how the City works with businesses. An important aspect is making serviced employment lands available for business expansion.

Even before *Places to Grow* and *Prosperity 2020*, the City had begun taking important steps to re-position Guelph as a premier business investment location. The creation of the Hanlon Creek Business Park began in the 1990s with the purchase of land, and in 2005 City Council approved the subdivision plan for the area. A showcase for what public-private partnerships can achieve, the goal for the Park was to generate 10,000 jobs by 2031, which would become an important part of meeting the City's obligations under *Places to Grow*.

One of the first public-private partnerships, part of the Community Energy Initiative, resulted in the District Energy Project, a key differentiator for the Hanlon Creek Business Park. A thermal energy system is currently being developed for the entire Park, with tenants drawing heating and cooling generated by an Envida Community Energy thermal energy plant, as well as pumping their waste heat into the shared system. This has attracted the attention of companies working in the alternate energy sector, such as the German firm, Würth, which is re-locating its Canadian headquarters to the Park. They not only want to be associated with a city that is innovating in energy, but recognize that this will lower their energy costs and give them a cost advantage over time.

The City has also over-hauled its internal processes and practices to make it more responsive to business investment opportunities. It has sought out new sources of investment through trade missions to North and South America and Europe, with a goal to bring strong companies with similar values to the community. It is also reaching out to existing organizations with strong business connections to create partnerships such as with the Ontario Clean Technology Alliance, Ontario's Food Corridor and provincial and federal international trade commissions.

Broadening the delivery of local economic development beyond City Hall, one of the most important local economic development programs is Innovation Guelph, an initiative of the Guelph Chamber of Commerce in 2010. Hosting one of the Ontario Government's Regional Innovation Centres, Innovation Guelph provides support for the needs of entrepreneurs, community organizations, researchers and existing businesses looking to expand and grow. Since launching, Innovation Guelph has advised 350 companies, created 160 new jobs and helped retain another 200 — and their momentum is growing.

Mixed use nodes

One of the key policy directions of *Places to Grow* was to end the separation between residential and commercial. This artificial separation creates dead zones at different times of the day, in residential neighbourhoods during working hours and, in commercial zones, after working hours. Cities that mix residential and commercial not only don't create these zones but seem to have greater community spirit and life overall. Mixed use, intensive developments also meet current objectives for transportation, energy, health and housing diversity.

The Official Plan for Guelph identifies nodes for mixed use development and densification in the North, South, East and West corners of the city. The nodes are currently at different stages of planning and development, and urban design plans will be guiding their future evolution. The most important node and the one that is already rolling is the Downtown. More than \$85 million of private development money is already committed to the Downtown and the planning and infrastructure changes are further advanced there.

The goal in the Downtown is to increase both jobs and residents. Studies of other downtown cores worldwide indicate that for long term health of a downtown core, there has not only to be a good mix of residential and commercial, but scale as well. To this end, the goal for the Downtown area is to increase the population by 6,000 people and bring in 1,500 more jobs. And, as with Hanlon Creek, the Community Energy Project plans to have shared heating available to future developments in the Downtown, making it especially attractive for businesses looking to improve their competitive advantage through lower utility costs.

Current projections for downtown developments already underway or in the planning stages, see the tax assessments for the area growing by 3 to 4 times their current levels. This will provide funding for further developments throughout the city.

Following quickly on the development of the downtown area, the next exciting project is the Guelph Innovation District, which will be situated on either side of the Eramosa River in the block defined by York, Watson, Stone and Victoria Roads. Adjacent to the University of Guelph Arboretum and a pleasant walk or quick bicycle ride to the campus, the Innovation District is being designed as a mixed use district that will provide for a range of live-work opportunities. Plans include a knowledge-based innovation cluster, intended to appeal specifically to the agri-innovation, clean and high-tech businesses, as well as the health and related science sectors. An urban village is planned at the district's centre (College Avenue extension) linking residential and commercial areas. It will be pedestrian-focused, well served by public transit with quick links to downtown, and, like the downtown and Hanlon Creek areas, part of the Community Energy Initiative.

All of these developments, from Hanlon Creek to Downtown and the Guelph Innovation District 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 clearly on research, innovation and knowledge-based workers, whether they are in the advanced manufacturing, education or professional/service sectors.

A learning economy

Since *Prosperity 2020* was released in 2010, the world has not stood still. There are new challenges and opportunities, as well as emerging priorities. After the great recession of 2008-2009, recovery has been slow and is generating fewer jobs than hoped. Youth unemployment in the developed world is twice that of the overall rate — and that is with many youth having stopped looking for work and electing to stay longer in school (the real rate is likely higher). It has become a priority to solve this problem.

Somewhat paradoxically, key industries, especially in sectors that thrive in Guelph, such as advanced manufacturing, are short of skilled workers. Too few jobs and too few skilled workers at the same time? This presents a golden opportunity for re-aligning the skills training of our youth.

The current misalignment between skills and jobs brings into focus some of the issues in our current education system, issues that both the University of Guelph and Conestoga College are eager to address. They recognize the need for schooling to be relevant, accessible and part of an ongoing life commitment, increasingly being done in parallel with a career and beyond.

Part of this new model of education is the recognition that learning goes beyond the classroom. The winners in the knowledge economy are often cities and regions that have encouraged innovation and attracted investment in local talent, often in association with local educational institutions. One thinks of the success of IT and Telecom businesses in the Boston (MIT), San Francisco (Stanford) areas and, even locally, in the high tech cluster around the University of Waterloo.

Entrepreneurship is foremost about being able to fail and learn from mistakes made — a model common in the educational system. As well, social networks of innovators help in mentoring, as does funding support from those who have gone before and succeeded. This close connection between innovators and educational institutions is all part of what many now see as our most promising future: the knowledge or learning economy.

Intrigue Media

When asked if Guelph was a good place to start a business, Rob Murray only had to stop and think for a few seconds before coming up with his answer.

The energetic founder of Intrigue Media and his partner, Paul DeMarco, who long-boarded to their first sales call with laptops in their backpacks, now employ 25 people in an innovative local media business. "Fantastic, it is hard to imagine better support and resources," said Murray, repeating a message he recently took to the Guelph Economic Summit in January.

"I'm not sure we could ever have gotten this business off the ground anywhere else," Murray admitted. "After all, where else would a couple of college kids in shorts and t-shirts have been taken seriously? Not Toronto. Guelph has this fantastic set of people and resources, but it isn't a closed community of insiders."

Murray and DeMarco's ride began by joining the Chamber of Commerce and attending a regional Chamber business expo back in 2007 where they were introduced by Lloyd Longfield to a sales trainer and picked up early investment funding. With this great push-off, they then made use of other experts at the Guelph Wellington Business Enterprise Centre, honed their public speaking and took active roles in the Chamber. With the business building, they began working with Innovation Guelph, where they received further coaching and built a board of advisors that are with them to this day.

It has of course helped that they had a great idea. Other than Yellow Pages, which was slow to adapt to new media, the big media companies had mostly mis-managed or ignored local markets, where there wasn't enough scale to justify their expensive broadcast approach. But the Internet, social media and electronic marketing are perfect for reaching smaller niche markets, and the upfront investment is very affordable. Intrigue Media not only made social media accessible for small businesses, but also added their own innovation, setting up a network of TVs in public spaces throughout the community featuring a mix of community-based content and advertising for their clients.

Although Intrigue Media is already rolling, with presence in 10 other communities across Ontario, they aren't content just to coast and enjoy the ride. They have ambitions to take the business across Canada. And where does all this confidence come from? Being active members of a supportive community such as Guelph is a big boost. Murray and DeMarco sit on numerous boards in the City and firmly believe that good will for their business comes from giving back to the community. The results speak for themselves. "The openness and collaboration across all Guelph's communities, business, non-profit and government, has been the key to our success and will continue to be a great platform for the future."

Lifelong learning

The large parking lot in Baker District, behind the shops on the west side of upper Wyndham, has long been under scrutiny as a site for development. When the public library on Norwich and Paisley began looking for a larger space, and wanting to remain in the downtown, the Baker District lot was an obvious option.

Once the project became known to the community, an interesting set of partners stepped forward. Conestoga College and the University of Guelph had both been looking to integrate parts of their campus and operations closer to the heart of the city. With the transit system hub being downtown, Baker District is an ideal location for students. The co-presence of the larger public library will also be ideal as a resource for students at the downtown campus.

Meanwhile the YMCA has also recognized the limitations of a purely suburban presence and accessibility for young people without cars is a key concern in their current location. Baker District is a perfect location for a second facility, only yards from their old home across from the current library. And for Conestoga and University of Guelph students, having both library and exercise facilities available is also complementary.

Another partner, Innovation Guelph, has also committed to having a presence in the project. Given the new model of a learning economy, it is natural to have students moving seamlessly between the classroom and a networking environment where they can be exposed and introduced to the growing community of entrepreneurs in agri-innovation, clean technology and advanced manufacturing.

The Baker District proposal is seen by all the partners and various levels of government as a model for the future. Partnership is not only a way of funding what no organization alone could afford, but it is integrated, literally, from the ground up. In this proposed development, there is a unification of critical aspects of the community's life that should perhaps never have been so separate.

Engaged community learning, which is central to College education, improves quality of life and increases the capacity of the local work force. For those working in Guelph, as well as semi- and fully-retired third age learners, it will provide a very accessible resource for continuing their lifelong learning. For Guelph's youth, it integrates their education with future career choices, all the while giving them easy access to library resources and exercise facilities. Baker District will be a cornerstone for developing a more vibrant economic and learning environment that will give them lifelong options for participating in the future development of Guelph.

Integrating new talent

Creating jobs for our youth and providing them with the skills and training that employers need is critical for growing our local economy. But it won't be enough. As the population ages, there will be labour shortages. By 2025, Ontario expects to be running short of people to fill jobs to the tune of 364,000 positions! There will be strong competition between regions to attract these extra people, with the winners reaping non-proportional rewards as success breeds further success.

Immigration is often cited as an answer to these projected shortages, but there are challenges. In a recent survey, recent immigrants to Canada identified the following barriers to employment (in order of importance):

- Lack of Canadian experience
- Unfamiliarity with the employment system
- Credentials not being recognized
- Language barriers
- Discrimination and racism
- Transportation barriers

From the perspective of Guelph's economic development, solving these problems for immigrants will make a profound difference to the growth of Guelph's talent and employment base, as well as its ability to attract new businesses. It will be a competitive edge.

Language training is the first point to start, as well as upgrading of credentials. Many immigrants employed in service sector employment have degrees, educational backgrounds and job experience that are not being recognized or leveraged. Developments such as Baker District are critical to helping them with these issues by making training and language facilities more accessible. The real key is to integrate new immigrants more quickly into the community and help them to build personal networks. This means developing programs and partnerships between community groups and local businesses to put a special focus on recent immigrants.

The good news is that Guelph is already doing well at inclusiveness. Between 2007 and 2011, immigrants surveyed identified a sharp rise their sense of belonging — from 58% in 2007 to 87% in 2011. And this was at a time when the provincial average was virtually flat. Continued growth in community inclusiveness and opportunities for learning will directly benefit Guelph's economic future.

Open data and government

An important part of supporting a learning economy is opening up access to information. Big data is profoundly affecting businesses, and other organizations, such as government. As barriers to information fall, they are spurring innovation, which in turn is changing people's expectations about transparency and openness.

The City of Guelph has a large amount of data that can be widely useful. Mining and visualizing data is a competitive area for innovation. Opening access for the community to City data — responsibly and with full respect for the privacy of individuals — will provide a fertile platform for innovation and give rise to new start-ups, products and services. As an example, the current project to map energy end user data is helping in the implementation of the Community Energy Initiative.

Governance and policy frameworks, data management, the community facing framework using Web 2.0 and Social Media tools, all need to interoperate seamlessly. The City of Guelph is leading the formation of a community of practice to extend the reach and accelerate the scope of transformation for this initiative. It has partnered with the City of Toronto, Government of Ontario and the MaRS Discovery District in Toronto to bring the change makers together.

Open Data will make both businesses and municipal government more accountable to customers and citizens. It will encourage transparency and remove barriers to understanding and efficiency. It will create a platform for innovation, as well as greater cooperation and collaboration. And it is an important part of building a platform for a vibrant learning economy in Guelph.

Cleaning up the past

While preserving its small town heritage, Guelph also has to recover from some of its industrial past. Historically, Guelph's rivers, especially the Speed, were the location for industry. Most of these factories are long gone, but have left scarred, "brownfield" lands along the river and through the core of the city.

It has long been a priority to re-develop these lands, but it takes careful planning and policy changes, as well as incentives to attract investors, given the risks related to expensive clean-up and on-going liability. These have been put in place since 2010.

Fortunately, there is also a significant emerging market for denser, urban accommodation. Tired of time spent in their cars, many people, especially retiring baby boomers and young professionals, are looking to live in neighbourhoods within walking distance of essential services, culture, recreation and retail.

The Speed and Eramosa rivers, once cleared of their industrial past, will also make for great recreational, as well as active transportation corridors. They will link new, urban developments with retailers, entertainment, cultural and educational services.

This opportunity, which lies at the heart of current renewal efforts, has not been missed by developers. Private money is available and interested in Guelph. To date the following projects have either been completed, started or approved.

River House and River Mill Condominiums

The 18-storey building on the corner of Woolwich and Macdonell, holds 130 units of upscale accommodation and was sold out months before completion, proving that demand exists. The developer has already received approval for a second development across the CNR tracks, on the old Marsh Tire property. River Mill Condominiums will have 144 units and 5,000 square feet of commercial space.

40 Wellington Street

Development is also underway on the site of the old Rockwell Plant on Wellington Road, a brownfield site for almost a quarter century. The shopping plaza will provide 37,500 square feet in four buildings, for a natural health food store, coffee shop, liquor store, and a restaurant with patios overlooking Royal City Park and the Speed River. These services will help provide important services to the many who are moving into the area.

5 Arthur Street

Currently, the most ambitious development of a brownfield site is planned for 5 Arthur Street, the site of the former W.C. Wood factory. It will be a mixed-use development that will have over 600 residential units and retail space while preserving heritage buildings on the property. The development will also open up access to the public along that section of the Speed River.

All of these developments reflect a renewed interest in the residential marketplace for more urban lifestyles and fortunately will rehabilitate properties that were lying vacant because of the significant costs associated with cleaning them up. As an added bonus, they will bring new customers for businesses and open up the Speed to the public along significant stretches of the river.

There have also been some recent projects that have densified land in the downtown area that were not developed on brown-field sites but significantly upgraded vacant or under-utilized land.

Historic Stewart Mill

Located on the old Stewart Mill property across from the Guelph Youth Music Centre (which was also built on the Goldie Mill industrial lands), these attractive, limestone-faced condominiums provide 39 units of townhomes and lofts within easy walking distance of downtown services.

Market Square Commons

A six-story, 55-unit affordable ownership housing development being built on a small downtown site, it will support a car-share space, bike (commuter) parking, green-roof/bioswale stormwater management, triple-stream recycling/waste management and upgrade an adjacent community green-space.

All in all, current developments in the downtown area have brought in over \$85 million worth of spending and jobs into Guelph (with much more on the way). Under the current plan, tax assessments are expected to increase by four times in the downtown area, bringing in an extra \$120 million per year, once fully built-out. This will help fund the clean-up of other brownfield sites, as well as freeing funds for developing recreational and other services around the city.

Connecting people

With the kind of growth anticipated by the Ontario government outside the green belt, transportation systems will need to evolve as well.

On the highway front, increasing population means more cars and more congestion. The following projects are addressing some of the key problem areas:

- The Laird Road Interchange on the Hanlon Expressway is now complete, providing access to the Hanlon Creek Business Park and existing employment parks on the east side of the Expressway. There are also plans to complete other improvements to the Hanlon.
- The extension of the four-lanes along Highway 7, between Woodlawn Road in Guelph and Victoria Street, in Kitchener, has been approved and is slated for development by the Ontario government in its five-year plan. This will connect with the Hanlon at the North end.
- Renewed pressure from local businesses is being represented by the Chamber of Commerce with its proposal to have an extension to the Hanlon Expressway that would see it bypass Morriston and re-connect with Highway 6 to Hamilton below the beleaguered village, currently a bottleneck for truck traffic moving south from Guelph.
- On the other southern route, to Cambridge, there is also a plan awaiting approval to make Highway 24 into a four lane road.

More public transit needed

There are also plans in place to improve existing transit services, as well as:

- Better links along Highway 7 and 24, to integrate inner-city transit systems in Guelph, Cambridge and Kitchener-Waterloo
- Improvements to existing Greyhound and VIA services
- Implementation of HOV and bus lanes on the new Highway 7

GO and the Innovation Corridor

Companies looking to re-locate or start up operations in Guelph need to be able to access the largest possible labour pool. This means people living in the western GTA and Golden Horseshoe areas, as well as Guelph, Wellington County and the Region of Waterloo. While there is clear value in locating close to the universities and colleges producing the talent they need, Guelph is a relatively small labour market and companies investing locally need access to the larger regional labour pool, including Toronto.

At the same time, the 400-highway system and related arterial roads in the GTA have become a significant disincentive to commuting by car. Thus the need for a two-way, rapid rail system designed to move workers in both directions simultaneously. Such a system will open options to many companies to consider moving parts of their operations to mid-sized cities where wages can be lower. Add incentives such as the Community Energy Initiative and companies currently in the GTA may consider moving part or even all of their operations to Guelph.

A business case to create a two-way GO service between Toronto and Kitchener-Waterloo has been developed and presented to the Province by the cities of Guelph and Kitchener-Waterloo. The concentration of innovation-based businesses along this corridor has drawn parallels with the BART extension project that will connect San Francisco and the Bay area with San Jose in Silicon Valley in the next few years. There is significant movement between Kitchener-Waterloo, Guelph and Toronto, as well as Pearson and Waterloo Regional airports. Just as in the Silicon Valley–Bay Area corridor, a transportation resource like this will spur productivity, relieve already crowded highway systems and attract new investment to the corridor. The business case has resulted in commitments from the Province of Ontario to fund improvements to the current rail system.

Along with the Kitchener-Waterloo, Guelph, Georgetown rail corridor, proposals have also been made to extend the Milton GO service to connect with Guelph south of Morriston and then with Cambridge.

At a time when the world's attention is on rising temperatures, declining oil reserves, and lost time spent in cars, there is a renewed interest at all levels of government and society at large in finding alternatives to the automobile. But it turns out that the biggest driver for urban transit may be economic: the network effects of having an extremely mobile work force.

Energy to grow

In a time of uncertainty over global energy supplies and the sustainability of the current fossil fuel economy, one of the most important building blocks to sustaining Guelph's future success is energy. Starting over a decade ago, Guelph has been pursuing an integrated approach to finding sustainable energy solutions for the community. This integrated approach sets Guelph apart from other communities. By linking energy across land use, buildings, transportation, water, waste and related infrastructure, Guelph's Community Energy Initiative has facilitated investment, created jobs, attracted important companies to Guelph and created a platform for innovation in energy technology and solutions.

Some of the priorities of the Community Energy Initiative:

- **Keep Energy Dollars Local:** Guelph's increasing efficiency in per capita energy use is already keeping tens of millions of dollars within the city, supporting the production of local products and services that create jobs.
- **Provide Secure and Competitive Energy Services:** Thermal energy services are attractive to developers because of the compelling business case. Local distributed electrical generation also helps address regional supply constraints and brings added security to specific critical loads.
- **Attract Manufacturers and Service Providers:** Companies that are providers of products and services in the energy space see Guelph at the forefront of a large and changing market for those products and services. They are coming to Guelph to not only support implementation and showcase their offerings but also to locate their offices and factories.

Formed as part of Guelph Hydro's operation, Envida Community Energy Inc. is currently active in developing and/or implementing projects in the following three categories:

1. Taking the lead as developer and applicant to the Ontario Power Authority for solar photo-voltaic systems on City assets. Included are rooftops on City facilities, vacant land and brownfields, including a very large proposed project on the Eastview closed landfill site.
2. Combined Heat and Power projects to attract power purchase contracts with the Ontario Power Authority, as well as supporting the evolution of a local thermal distribution network, including a project in the Hanlon Creek Business Park.
3. The City and Envida have partnered to develop an energy utility that delivers thermal services to at least 50 per cent of the city by 2041. The inaugural project is the Galt District Energy System, located in and around the City-owned Sleeman Centre in downtown Guelph, with services slated soon for the Hanlon Creek Business Park and later for the Guelph Innovation District.

The Community Energy Initiative and Envida are giving the City of Guelph a competitive edge in retaining and attracting investment and jobs. Some companies that have located in Guelph as a result of this initiative around energy:

- **Canadian Solar Solutions** chose Guelph because of the Community Energy Initiative. Guelph is the home of its North American headquarters. It currently employs around 540 people and stimulates a significant network of secondary support businesses locally.
- **Wurth** is a German headquartered company with operations around the world. It chose Guelph and the Hanlon Creek Business Park to locate its 200-job Canadian headquarters, in large part because of the planned thermal energy distribution network currently under construction.
- **Polycon**, one of the Magna companies, wants to develop a facility that would serve both its thermal and electrical needs, bringing cost stability and supply reliability to their just-in-time production model. The City and Envida played a key role in advocating in support of the Polycon project to both the Ontario Premier's Office and the provincial Minister of Energy. If approved, the energy price and supply security brought by the proposed system will give Polycon the confidence to expand operations by up to 150 jobs and secure the existing workforce.

Guelph's century

“The century of the city will
change the way we do politics”

– John Rossant, Founder and Chairman of New Cities Foundation

A profound shift is happening worldwide. The world's population is moving to cities. And this, it turns out, is good for the planet. Urbanization stimulates economic growth, increases rates of literacy and education and improves women's rights. Cities are the centres of innovation, learning and wellbeing. Despite what we once thought, they are more environmentally sustainable and leave a smaller footprint on the planet's resources.

It turns out, that cities, not nations, are the engines of development and progress. Immigrants come to cities. Entrepreneurs locate in cities. Growth and opportunity are in cities.

Guelph is in good company globally. We are one in an exceptional group of mid-sized cities that are involved in an urban renaissance. In finding solutions to our own problems, we are inventing ways for others to solve their problems too. The organizations and companies partnering with us to find these solutions are prospering as a result, bringing jobs, investment and talent to Guelph, which will only help us grow as a community and be ready for tomorrow's problems with more innovation.

The key components of Guelph's renaissance are reflected in the plans and priorities of the City of Guelph, and shared by key partners in business, education, transportation and energy. The municipal government is also working closely with the County and the Province, as well as collaborating with its partner municipalities in Cambridge and Kitchener-Waterloo.

These collaborations and partnerships are creating platforms for youth training, lifelong learning, innovation and improved wellbeing. Programs, policies and funding have created a positive climate for private investment, which with a new market for denser urban accommodation are helping us to renew our city and convert older industrial properties into vital new neighbourhoods. Initiatives in the areas of transportation and energy, among others, are helping to ensure we can support the predicted growth in a sustainable way that will preserve what we most cherish about Guelph, today and tomorrow.

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