

**DATE November 19, 2009 – 6 p.m. in Committee Room B (Rm 132)**

Please turn off or place on non-audible all cell phones, PDAs, Blackberrys and pagers during the meeting.

## **Prosperity 2020- Economic Development & Tourism Strategy Strategic Development of the Guelph Agri-Innovation Cluster Council and Senior Staff Team Workshop**

- 6:00 p.m. Welcome & Purpose
- Welcome – Mayor Farbridge
  - Meeting Purpose and Agenda – Lynn Morrow
  - Introduction – Peter Cartwright
- 6:10 p.m. Project Directions – Prosperity 2020 – Economic Development & Tourism Strategy – John Genest
- Questions & Clarity – Lynn Morrow
- 6:25 p.m. Project Directions – Strategic Development of the Guelph Agri-Innovation Cluster – David Arthurs
- Questions & Clarity – Lynn Morrow
- 6:45 p.m. Facilitated Roundtable Discussion – All / Lynn Morrow
- 8:00 p.m. Wrap Up & Next Steps – Peter Cartwright
- 8:15 p.m. Thank You & Adjournment – Mayor Farbridge

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*Prosperity 2020*

**Phase 2:**

**Economic Development and Tourism Strategy -  
Directions Paper**

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**DRAFT**

*Submitted To:*

**The City of Guelph**

Economic Development Services

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- A – Mayor’s Task Force on the Economy – Statement of Principles
- B – Economic Base Analysis
- C – Consultation Summary

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

In 2007 the City of Guelph adopted an ambitious 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.*”—a vision that underpins the *Prosperity 2020* initiative. *Prosperity 2020* is about sustaining and enhancing the City of Guelph’s position as a competitive and prosperous location for private and public sector investment.

Economic change and a rapidly evolving competitive landscape have brought Guelph to a crossroads. The City must reassess its competitive position and prepare a strategy for finding a new economic equilibrium within the *Prosperity 2020* timeline.

Looking back, Guelph has been very successful in attracting private and public investment to the City. Automotive parts suppliers and other manufacturers established themselves and flourished. The University of Guelph developed into a Canadian institution with global reach, offering exceptional research and programs in agriculture management and animal, food and environmental sciences. If past successes were a reasonable predictor of the future, Guelph would emerge from this economic recession well positioned to attract the private and public investment required to prosper. Growth forecasts call for the City to accommodate approximately 1,300 jobs and 2,150 new residents per year during the implementation of *Prosperity 2020*.

But today’s economy gives no guarantees. As is often stated, the pace of change is accelerating, and so is the speed with which competitors move. Ensuring that the forecast employment growth occurs, and optimizing its benefits to the City, demands that Guelph do everything it can to actively shape the conditions that will sustain growth. This demands that the *Prosperity 2020* Strategy is visionary and transformational. It must define the path forward to 2020 and beyond. Ultimately, the Strategy must define economic objectives, prioritize strategic initiatives, identify the contributions expected of key stakeholders, and describe metrics for progress.

### 1.1 Objectives

The objectives of this Directions Paper are to:

- Bring synthesis and structure to the key issues, challenges and opportunities confronting Guelph, as identified through the Phase 1 Economic Base Analysis and stakeholder consultation; and,
- Outline the directions, goals and objectives proposed for strategic response to these conditions.

These directions are intended to define the basis for the *Prosperity 2020* Strategy. They are advanced for review with the Mayor’s Task Force on the Economy to address the question:

- Are the directions appropriate and responsive to the identified issues and challenges and to the Statement of Principles prepared to guide the Strategy; or,
- Are modifications required?

The Statement of Principles is attached as Appendix A for ease of reference. Upon confirmation that the proposed directions (or revisions), best represent the approach the City of Guelph should take they will be expanded to define the recommended actions, priorities, partnerships and performance indicators necessary to implement the strategy and measure progress towards its objectives.

The recommended directions reflect:

- The consultants’ consideration of the baseline conditions described in the Phase 1 Report; and,
- The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats and priorities identified through the stakeholder workshops; as weighed against
- The vision and success measures identified in vision and directions setting workshops with the Mayor’s Task Force and Council and senior staff, and the Task Force Statement of Principles, and as filtered by
- The consultants’ understanding of external trends, market requirements and best practices.

## **1.2** **Report Structure**

The remainder of the report is divided into two sections and two supporting Appendices , organized as follows:

**Section 2.0 – Strategic Directions** presents the proposed strategic directions, goals and objectives for economic development, as introduced supported by the consultants’ synthesis of the key issues/opportunities that must be addressed by the City, and;

**Section 3.0 – Next Steps** outlines the steps intended for moving forward from this Directions Paper to a draft *Prosperity 2020* Economic Development & Tourism Strategy for the City of Guelph that is responsive, visionary, transformational and actionable.

**Appendices B – Economic Base and C - Consultation Highlights** respectively summarize the key considerations identified in the Phase 1 Economic Base Analysis, and the key messages and themes identified in the study’s consultations.

## 2.0 STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

This section turns to the synthesis of challenges and strategic directions for *Prosperity 2020*. These are the consultants' distillation of the issues considered most critical to the City's future, and the responses recommended to address them, in alignment with the City's Vision and the Mayor's Task Force's Statement of Principles.

The economic development & tourism strategy is organized as seven areas of initiative supporting one over-arching imperative. They are organized as discrete but nonetheless mutually reinforcing directions, and stated as cryptic calls for action. They are further supported by statements of their focus, and supporting goals and objectives describing what success would look like at 2020. Most require new levels of engagement and collaboration with partners and stakeholders. The recommended directions are:

- **Diversify Guelph's Economy:** target growth in strategic sectors;
  - **Re-position Guelph:** target becoming known as "sustainably business friendly";
  - **Invest in People and Ideas:** make Guelph a community of choice for talent of the future;
  - **Invest in Hard, Soft and Green Infrastructure:** enhance Guelph's foundations for future growth;
  - **Invest in Tourism:** develop tourism products and experiences and establish a destination marketing and management organization (DMMO);
  - **Invest in the Downtown:** target icon status for a vibrant, transit connected, mixed use downtown; and
  - **Elevate Guelph's Profile and Reach:** collaborate with partners and reach out to more distant markets.

They are summarized graphically in Figure 2.1, and described in the remainder of this section. Each direction is addressed by first summarizing the issues and challenges making responses imperative, then outlining the directions considered most effective to pursue. Connections back to issues identified in the Economic Base report and consultations or to best practises are identified.

## **2.1**

### **Diversify Guelph's Economy**

As described in the Economic Base report, and as commonly recognized in all consultation sessions, over 40% of employment in Guelph is concentrated in the manufacturing and education sectors. Both represent high knowledge, skill, pay scale and value-added employment that every municipality is anxious to attract. Manufacturing comprises 30% of total employment, and is undergoing dramatic re-structuring and job losses. In Guelph it is concentrated in the auto sector, and dominated by a single very successful employer. These concentrations represent a potentially high risk factor for Guelph as the economy evolves.

Employment growth to and past the 2020 horizon must target strategic sectors that generate similar levels of wealth to bring more diversification to the City's economic portfolio. Guelph has positioned itself as a potential leader in benefitting from the surge in interest in "being green" through its adoption of its Vision statement "*To be the city that makes a difference...Acting locally and globally to improve the lives of residents, the broader community and the world*" and its Community Energy Plan.

However, communities everywhere are also targeting growth in green sectors, and by virtue of earlier starts, greater mass or bigger profiles are arguably already ahead of Guelph. Guelph must act with urgency, focus and speed if it is to carve out a competitive space for itself in crowded markets.

#### **Recommended Strategy:**

Diversify Guelph's economy: target growth in strategic sectors.

#### **Focus:**

Attract job growth through facilitating the development of the organizations, networks and facilities that will support growth in new directions, reducing Guelph's reliance on the manufacturing and education sectors.

#### **Goal:**

By 2020, Guelph's strengths in manufacturing and education are balanced by growth in target sector employment.

#### **Objectives:**

- By 2020, growth in target sectors has exceeded 5,000 jobs;
- By 2020, Guelph has established globally recognized Centres of Excellence in Agri-technologies and Enviro-technologies.

### **Actions**

1. Focus economic development efforts on growth sectors in which Guelph can maintain current and establish new sustainable competitive advantage:
  - Agricultural sciences and food production, in part by creating a Centre of Excellence/Incubator that helps new, innovative businesses develop and reach global markets<sup>1</sup>;
  - Environmental (including energy) technologies, again supported in part by creating a global Centre of Excellence/Incubator;
  - Advanced Manufacturing, Professional, Scientific and Business Services and Information, Culture and Communications Technology industries in support of the above as enablers and creators of innovation;
  - Tourism and Film, which, while having direct employment impacts in the accommodation and food services, arts, entertainment and recreation industries, is in fact both a measure of and contributor to the success factors in support of most all these imperatives.
2. Put in place the commercialization and capitalization networks necessary to converting ideas to sold products;
3. Define a “green” niche that Guelph can dominate, and grow into that position of dominance as quickly as possible;
4. Ensure that manufacturers are a part of these initiatives to ease transition out of declining product lines and into expanding lines;
5. Align the City's investment policy, spending and other initiatives with a green niche strategy;
6. Define a peer group against which to benchmark performance, and define and implement a performance monitoring program;
7. Feed success in these initiatives back into messaging and imagery supporting the City's brand.

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<sup>1</sup> Note that highlighted items are the focus of the City's current Cluster Study for the Guelph Innovation District (GID).

Figure 2.1: Prosperity 2020 – Economic Development & Tourism Strategy



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**2.2**  
**Re-Position Guelph**

Discussions in the consultation sessions revealed the perception that the importance of business to wealth creation, to employment, the tax base, support for the arts and the City’s ability to fund services for the community is not generally understood or appreciated by residential ratepayers or by City Hall. Business prefers to locate where it is welcomed and has confidence its needs are understood and provided for.

Civic discourse in Guelph was also described as fractured among a number of different interests and viewpoints, with no over-arching focus on points of agreement on what is best for the larger community as a whole.

A new perspective on community is required, one that recognizes that:

- “Sustainability” requires economic, social, cultural and environmental health, i.e., a management focus on a “quadruple bottom line”;
- A true sense of community at the City scale requires agreement on common interests and how best to serve them.

**Recommended Strategy:**

Re-position Guelph: target being known as “sustainably business friendly.”

**Focus:**

Support job growth through improving Guelph’s attractiveness to current and potential new employers as a place to operate a business, in a context of meeting social, cultural and environmental objectives at the same time.

**Goal:**

By 2020, Guelph is regarded as the city that best manages all four of the economic, social, cultural and environmental pillars supporting sustainable development.

**Objectives:**

- By 2020, business surveys report a “high” satisfaction with Guelph as a business location;
- By 2020, Guelph has been featured as a “Best Location for Business”;
- By 2020, Guelph has at least a top three rate of new business location/formation among its peers.

**Actions**

1. Institute programs that will support Guelph positioning itself as “business friendly,” with clearly defined decision processes, requirements and timelines, quick approval turnarounds, “Rapid Response Teams” to move new business entrant approvals forward, and interactions with the business community designed to hear, understand and respond to business concerns (e.g., semi-annual

roundtables on the business environment in Guelph, a Business Retention and Expansion (BR+E) program);

2. Articulate an appreciation for the importance of a strong and flourishing business sector and the elements that sustain it, as one component of a quadruple economic, social, cultural and environmental bottom line. Incorporate these messages in dialogue with the community and re-frame debate in Guelph to develop a focus on common interests, and paths and action forward;
3. Adopt an integrated decision-making process into planning and approvals that simultaneously considers land-use, economic development, tourism, transportation and infrastructure requirements;
4. Define a peer group against which to benchmark performance, and define and implement a performance monitoring program;
5. Incorporate successes in establishing a “business friendly” profile into City branding and marketing.

### **2.3 Invest in People and Ideas**

It is broadly recognized that Canada’s ability to maintain its wealth will depend on attracting a steady stream of talented workers from other countries, and integrating them into our workforce as productively as possible. As noted in the Phase 1 report, while the City’s population may include a significant proportion of migrants to Canada, it is home to a lower proportion of visible minorities than the (Toronto-driven) average for the province.

Guelph needs to become a destination both compelling and welcoming to migrating talent, a need recognized and being responded to by the Guelph Inclusivity Alliance and City efforts to position Guelph as an immigration gateway.

Accreditation, labour training and re-training opportunities, and access to focused or specialized skills development are critical to attracting immigrant talent, retaining skilled labour in transition, and attracting /supporting business growth. The University of Guelph and an expanded presence by Conestoga College have a critical role in ensuring people have access to developing specialized knowledge and skills.

Creativity is itself the talent that underlies both artistic expression and the development of new ideas and concepts in science and business. Popular concepts like “the creative economy” highlight linkages between developing vibrant places and attracting creative talent. Guelph must also position itself as a place that nourishes and celebrates creativity in all its forms. There is an axiom that “80% of new business growth is home

grown” i.e., that it comes from creativity by people and business already in the community. The challenge is to put in place programs that can best support this growth, particularly if it is driven by new product innovation. There is significant senior government funding support for such small business, innovation and commercialization support programs.

**Recommended Strategy:**

Invest in people and ideas: make Guelph a community of choice for talent of the future.

**Focus:**

Attract and support job growth through: attracting and fully utilizing the skills of new migrants to Canada; increasing the range of access to education and training programs and their fit with economic needs; improving support mechanisms for growing enterprises, innovation and commercialization; creating a climate that celebrates creativity in the arts, sciences, business and community service.

**Goal:**

By 2020, Guelph is regarded as the model City for its solutions to welcoming and economically integrating new migrants, developing and celebrating talent, and building the places and organizations that nurture creativity.

**Objectives:**

- By 2020, new migrants to Guelph enjoy top three rates of employment and household incomes among the City’s peers;
- By 2020, Guelph is home to a Conestoga College campus;
- By 2020, enrolment continues to climb in new agri- and enviro-tech related programs at the Conestoga College campus and the University;
- By 2020, Guelph’s Centres of Excellence are repeatedly described in the popular, business and science media as models for supporting innovation and commercialization;
- By 2020, Guelph is repeatedly described in the popular press as an artistic, cultural and scientific hotbed.

**Actions**

1. Continue implementing initiatives underway to position Guelph as a gateway for new migrants. Develop immigration/cultural support networks in the City by engaging with leaders in Guelph’s different cultural communities to start a dialogue for what the City can do to become more attractive to migrants from those cultures. Follow

through with development of a Multi-Cultural strategy and initiatives responsive to the identified needs;

2. Heighten engagement with Conestoga College decision makers to promote and facilitate a stronger college presence in Guelph;
3. Collaborate with the University of Guelph and Conestoga College to develop programs to assist new migrants in gaining accreditation for their expertise, becoming a provincial/national centre in targeted areas aligned with capabilities and strategic needs;
4. Continue to collaborate with the University of Guelph and Conestoga College to develop new curricula targeted to trades, business and science needs in Guelph, particularly in support of the clusters underlying Centres of Excellence/Incubators and for programs that could be located in the Downtown;
5. Celebrate a culture of risk taking and entrepreneurship in a variety of realms, in part by celebrating the presence of successful scientists, business people, artists and community development entrepreneurs in Guelph. Maximize the extent to which City Hall is used to showcase creativity and innovation in Guelph;
6. Continue to monitor/participate in discussions shaping delivery of new funding programs in support of micro and small business growth, innovation and commercialization. Ensure that the city continues to invest in joint initiatives to maximize its leverage of senior program funding;
7. Implement best practice models of small business/innovation support, with the Town of Markham's Innovation Synergy Centre as one example;
8. Define a peer group against which to benchmark performance, and define and implement a performance monitoring program;
9. Make "Guelph" synonymous with high creative expression and business success. Incorporate success stories into City branding and marketing.

#### **2.4 Invest in Hard, Soft and Green Infrastructure**

As described in Section 6.0 of the Phase 1 Report, Guelph has plans in place to ensure that services will be available to enable a steady supply of serviced lands. Consultation sessions identified past issues with the City's ability to bring serviced lands to market or "shovel-readiness". Guelph needs to ensure it continues to have a ready supply of serviced employment lands, with strong access to road, rail, water and air transportation networks, and to high capacity communication services.

Similarly, the City and its advisory committees need to sustain its commitment to putting in place other infrastructure elements such as the Guelph Innovation District and new cultural facilities.

“Soft” infrastructure here refers to organizational structures and mandates. There are a number of organizations in Guelph engaged in one aspect of economic development or another, and no mechanism by which their efforts can be best focussed and coordinated. At the same time, the City’s Economic Development and Tourism Services department seeks advice from an Economic Development Advisory Committee that, regardless of the strengths of its members, is not structured in a way that connects to other stakeholder organizations. A more effective means of coordination, consensus-building and gaining commitment to action is required for Guelph to improve the effectiveness of its economic development and tourism efforts.

“Green” infrastructure encompasses both hard assets (e.g., district energy plants, heat recovery from sewer installations, etc.) and such softer examples as water and energy conservation/efficiency programs, trail systems, tree canopy enhancement programs, a “pollen park”, bio-fuel substitution programs, etc. Investment in such infrastructure is considered important to economic development for several reasons;

- It creates investment streams that can help support new product and expertise development and business growth;
- It creates assets which improve quality of life, sustainability and community attractiveness to new talent or green industry; and
- It substantiates the City’s branding as the city that makes a difference.

**Recommended Strategy:**

Invest in hard, soft and green infrastructure: enhance Guelph’s foundations for future growth.

**Focus:**

Support job growth by putting in place the infrastructure necessary to support it, with sufficient lead time to drive demand.

**Goal:**

By 2020, Guelph is regarded as a best practise model for leading demand with hard infrastructure, for effective multi-stakeholder management of economic development, and for strategic, multi-objective-driven investment in green infrastructure.

**Objectives:**

- By 2020, Guelph continues to have a sufficient supply of serviced and “shovel ready” lands in settings including the Guelph Innovation

District to accommodate forecast demand;

- By 2020, Guelph's transportation and communications networks and modes provide easy access to external markets and contacts;
- By 2020, Guelph's Economic Development and Tourism Services Department has been repeatedly consulted on how it structures and manages its collaborative economic development management model;
- By 2020, Guelph has repeatedly been profiled as a success story for integrating sustainability and economic objectives in investment decisions.

### **Actions**

1. Ensure that land (including brownfields), services and transportation infrastructure necessary to sustain growth is in place to lead demand;
2. Establish and promote investment in the transportation and communication infrastructure and linkages that connect Guelph to larger markets (e.g., commuter rail through GO Transit, freight movement through CNR/Guelph Junction Railway/CP Rail, by water via Hamilton Harbour or Port Colborne, transit/rail connections to surrounding international airports, construction of the West GTA and Mid-Niagara corridor links to Guelph, fibre-optic connectivity, etc.);
3. Explore opportunities for a food distribution/rail terminal in Guelph;
4. Restructure the City's Economic Development Advisory Committee so that it is comprised of representatives of other agencies engaged in economic development in Guelph, with executive authority to commit their respective organizations to courses of action collaboratively developed around the advisory table. Establish protocols to define lead agencies and responsibilities for engaging with senior governments and other external stakeholders.

Agencies that might be represented on the committee include:

- Guelph Chamber of Commerce;
- Guelph Partnership for Innovation;
- Conestoga College;
- University of Guelph;
- A local or regional tourism Destination Marketing and Management Organization (see Section 2.5);
- Agri-Technology Commercialization Centre;
- Guelph-Wellington Enterprise Centre;
- District School Boards;
- Downtown Guelph BIA;

- Guelph Food Technology Centre; and
  - Advanced Foods & Materials Network, among others.
5. Define and implement a land inventory and network bottleneck/resolution tracking program;
  6. Incorporate successes in creating new infrastructure and attaining integrated objectives into City branding and marketing.

**2.5**  
***Invest in Tourism***

The contributions of tourism to Guelph’s economy and cultural life are not fully understood. The industry makes a substantial contribution to the City economy, across such sectors as accommodations and food services, recreation and entertainment, retail, and in attendance at cultural and sports events. Recent expansion of the accommodations base has brought more capacity than demand to fill it at current levels of visitation. More visits to Guelph must be generated, which will require new product development and packaging.

The Premier-ranked Tourist Destination study concluded that Guelph/Wellington’s tourism product typically draws visitors from within a two-hour drive or less, and is weighted to experiences geared towards adults. While some collaboration in tourism occurs, there is no one organization fulfilling a destination marketing and management function (a DMMO), in Guelph, Guelph-Wellington or a larger geography. There is also uncertainty around the nature and extent of such entities pending articulation of new initiatives from the province.

Consultation stakeholders do not perceive Guelph as having a distinct tourism brand, which makes the City more difficult to sell as a compelling destination.

**Recommended Strategy:**

Invest in Tourism: develop the tourism product/experience base and establish a destination marketing and management organization (DMMO).

**Focus:**

Attract and support job growth by increasing Guelph’s attractiveness and profile to short and longer haul visitors.

**Goal:**

By 2020, Guelph has successfully positioned itself as a longer haul destination in its own right and as a preferred accommodations provider for visits to surrounding rural destinations.

**Objectives:**

- By 2020, Guelph is achieving steady growth in tourism visitation and expenditures, traceable to its participation in a successful Destination Marketing and Management Organization;
- By 2020, visits to new tourism products and experiences have brought hotel occupancy levels to at least 65%;
- By 2020, Guelph is home to a series of festivals and events recurring on weekly to annual cycles.

**Actions**

1. Undertake comparative research into Guelph's competitive strengths, weaknesses and product gaps relative to specific potential market segments, including sports and business tourism. Examine the business case for targeting those segments and invest accordingly.
2. Invest in making Guelph a "must see" destination by strengthening and strategically leveraging the key visitor themes identified in the Premier-ranked Tourist Destination Project:
  1. Outdoor/Nature/Scenic;
  2. Downtown Heritage;
  3. Entertainment/Sports;
  4. Festivals and Events;
  5. Campus/Educational;
  6. Agri-tourism;
3. Develop products responding to those themes through visitor-focused product development strategies with a specific emphasis on using the Downtown's assets (e.g. Loretto Convent House, River Run Centre, riverfront). Use a three-pronged approach by:
  - Enhancing existing product / experiences with an emphasis on hosting festivals and events compelling to different cultures;
  - Activating dormant visitor opportunities – new emerging markets;
  - Developing new products and experiences;
4. Ensure product development is research-driven through reliance on existing data by:
  - Sharing new primary research and market intelligence of opportunities, product requirements and likely investment returns;
  - Targeting tourism businesses that would complement Guelph's tourism products mix; and
  - Facilitating and hosting tourism partner networking opportunities;

5. Collaborate with the University to identify gaps in the facility mix supporting sports tourism and define who should fill these gaps;
6. Develop and nurture a “Culture of Tourism” where-in the importance of tourism to the City, and that of the community role in supporting destination attractiveness are widely recognized;
7. Develop and implement a fact-based community awareness campaign to promote the importance of business and tourism to the City;
8. Identify the City’s role in festivals and events and develop a service delivery model and operational processes;
9. Seek a tourist DMMO model that will best serve the needs of Guelph’s tourism industry;
10. For tourism marketing:
  - a. Encourage greater collaboration among industry leaders and local municipalities to develop and implement a “joint tourism agenda”;
  - b. Limit the City’s marketing role to developing and maintaining information services (visitor centre, tourism portal and databases) and providing support for festivals and events;
  - c. Ensure marketing is strategically focused, research-based, visitor centred and leveraging the use of new technology;
  - d. Provide up-to-date information about City offerings when and where visitors want to access it.
11. Define a peer group against which to benchmark performance, and define and implement a performance monitoring program.

**2.6**  
***Invest in the***  
***Downtown***

Downtown Guelph is a critical asset and the subject of significant planning efforts by the City. As described in the Phase 1 Report, there is in place today a Community Improvement Plan (CIP), and a Downtown Development Strategy guided by a Downtown Board of Management. Planning policies under the Growth Plan mandate substantial increases to the population and employment densities within the Downtown Urban Growth Centre. These increases will intensify residential land uses and provide a more vibrant commercial area. A Secondary Planning process is underway to define how this is to be achieved.

Notwithstanding these efforts, the consultation sessions revealed a perception that the Downtown is not viewed as a particularly attractive or safe destination, and that more needs to be done to fix its problems. The area is both disconnected from the Speed River, a major community asset, and rich with heritage architecture, wide streets, iconic streetscapes,

transportation links, civic and other institutions and retail and office space with potential to house more small businesses, and to attract the community and tourists to the Downtown as a compact, walkable destination.

The vitality of the Downtown and its importance to economic development and tourism objectives stems from its role as a symbol of what the whole of Guelph is (i.e., vibrant and attractive, or not so), for its strength as a higher density employment location, and as a place which generates both civic pride, and attraction to new residents and talent at executive and lower levels. The municipal focus on improving the Downtown, its vitality and its contribution to achieving City-wide economic development efforts must remain a top priority, with more elements added to the tool kit.

**Recommended Strategy:**

Continue to invest in the Downtown: target icon status for a vibrant, transit-connected, mixed use Downtown.

**Focus:**

Attract and support job growth by enhancing the attractiveness of the Downtown as a destination for business, investment and tourists, and as an urban place offering the lifestyle and quality of life enhancing amenities found in a vibrant downtown setting.

**Goal:**

By 2020, Guelph's Downtown defines success in attracting mixed use development and a new vibrancy to a downtown.

**Objectives:**

- By 2020, downtown Guelph's population has grown by 2,250 people;
- By 2020, employment in downtown Guelph has increased by 20% over its level in 2011;
- By 2020, downtown Guelph is home to a series of festivals and events recurring on weekly to annual cycles;
- By 2020, downtown Guelph has repeatedly been profiled as a success story and an attractive tourist destination.

**Actions**

1. Continue to follow through on the City's investments in improving the Downtown;
2. Position and program the Town Square at City Hall along the lines of Toronto's Nathan Phillip or Dundas Squares - an iconic venue for performance, celebration and community engagement, with links to the forthcoming library and museum, the River Run Centre and the Sleeman Centre as appropriate to different events or festivals;

3. Expand the Farmer’s market in an improved venue better connected to the Downtown (e.g., as a street/tent based event at the Town Square/ Carden Street, or at the Armoury building); perhaps with a chef’s market element;
4. Promote the Downtown as a preferred location for new University and College space requirements (considering trade-offs with competing aspirations for the Guelph Innovation District) and small business start-up space;
5. Explore the costs/returns of making wireless internet access available throughout the Downtown;
6. Complete the riverside trail system links between the River Run Centre, Eramosa River and Downtown;
7. Consider municipal purchase of significant problem or opportunity properties where strategic to developing a vibrant Downtown Urban Growth Centre;
8. Ensure that the community is aware of plans in place and progress made with improvements to the Downtown through a downtown-specific communications plan;
9. Define and implement a development and performance monitoring program;
10. Incorporate successes in improving the Downtown into City branding and marketing.

**2.7**  
***Elevate Guelph’s  
Profile and Reach***

In the context of the Greater Toronto Area, the Greater Golden Horseshoe and broader southern Ontario, Guelph is a significant but less than dominant centre. With global development trends highlighting the importance of large scale city regions (vs. nations) as economic entities, and despite notable exceptions, Guelph does not have, and will forever be challenged to achieve, a global profile by itself.

At the same time, discussions with staff and comments advanced in consultation sessions identify that the City is somewhat insular, and could play a more active role in regional partnerships.

There are a number of provincial and federal funding programs in support of innovation and the commercialization of ideas, most of which are structured through evolving regional organizational frameworks (e.g., Regional Innovation Networks or “RIN’s”, including the Guelph Partnership for Innovation (or “GPI”). The Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario) is a new initiative formally launched in August, 2009. FedDev Ontario will provide

tools for regional partners to build on their strengths and position Southern Ontario to succeed in the knowledge-based economy. With \$1 billion of funding over five years, its future focus will be on creating a leading-edge manufacturing sector; supporting innovation and commercialization; and sustaining community economic development activities.

Various regional development partnerships and/or sector cluster initiatives also exist or are being considered (e.g., the Toronto Food Cluster, the GTMA's EN2 Energy and Environment initiative, Canada's Technology Triangle). Their geographies touch on Guelph.

Guelph needs to extend its "reach" – its ability to get products to and attract buyers and capital from more distant markets. The City needs to do everything it can to find presence on provincial to global stages and markets with an identity, linkages and products.

A critical element of that effort is to extend the City's "Making a Difference" brand to embrace a number of attributes and key messages. Despite the City' investment in developing this brand, consultation stakeholders do not perceive Guelph as having a strong brand – a well known identity that captures what Guelph stands for or offers to its residents, businesses or visitors. This makes the City difficult to sell as a compelling destination to migrating talent and to businesses seeking places to expand or locate in.

Guelph needs to extend its brand to position the City as a compelling destination for making a life and succeeding in business. To maximize its clarity and impact, the City should use the one "Making a Difference" brand and tag line as the core element in all City marketing efforts, including economic development and tourism. The City's branding and marketing efforts also need to recognize that the nature of marketing communications is itself evolving rapidly, particularly as it intersects the use of technology generally and in reaching the young.

**Recommended Strategy:**

Elevate Guelph's profile and reach: collaborate with partners and reach out to more distant markets.

**Focus:**

Attract and support job growth by increasing Guelph's profile as a compelling place in which to live, work and invest.

**Goal:**

By 2020, success in attracting new business growth is traceable to Guelph's role in contributing to more successful regional partnerships, and, to the City's profile for "making a difference" on a number of dimensions.

**Objectives:**

- By 2020, Guelph is following through on the strategic choices it has made about partnering with regional organizations, and is known as a strong advocate for its interests and a solid and strategic contributor to the larger effort;
- By 2020, Guelph is widely recognized as a place making a positive difference to global challenges, to its residents' lives and to its businesses' and institutions' successes;
- By 2020, Guelph is making focussed, efficient and impactful use of the communications media at hand to promote the City as a best location to target markets.

**Actions**

1. Establish or maintain cost-effective partnerships with collaborative innovation and marketing networks that create vehicles for heightening the City's profile and /or fulfilling stakeholder needs. Examples include the Greater Toronto Marketing Alliance (GTMA), Canada's Technology Triangle, possibly an expanded Guelph Partnership for Innovation (GPI) or Communitech (the Waterloo Region counterpart to the GPI), Networks of Centres of Excellence or the Toronto Food Cluster;
2. Determine how to best structure the marketing, development and local coordination efforts in economic development across regional local and municipal organizations;
3. Define and implement a performance monitoring program tracking enquiries and committed investment decisions from contacts made through participation in regional entities;
4. Expand on the City's tag line with messages and imagery responsive to the themes running through this paper:
  - a. Leadership in making a difference;
  - b. A truly "green" place with global renown;
  - c. A destination for talent and growth, providing attractive opportunities for a culturally enriched and rewarding life, and success in business and creative pursuits; and
  - d. A distinct entity with its own strengths and reasons for visiting or locating in, but one that also gains from the complementary attributes of and its access to the larger region;
5. Improve Guelph's brand by making it a bigger part of the City's presentation of itself to the community and to prospective new businesses and visitors;

6. Explore communication channels used for marketing Guelph with consideration of emerging web and social media to target different audiences.

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**3.0**  
**NEXT STEPS**

The *Prosperity 2020* Economic Development & Tourism Strategy project continues to move forward with the completion of this Directions Paper. The Mayor’s Task Force on the Economy is now charged with the task of confirming whether these strategic directions represent the best way forward for Guelph, or suggesting modifications to better position Guelph for prosperity.

With feedback from the Task Force, the consulting team will modify and expand the strategic directions to recommend implementable action items in a draft Strategy document. It will articulate an economic development and tourism vision, define objectives for core elements of the strategy, identify priorities and recommended timing recognizing constrained resources, and delineate performance measures.

Implementation of the Strategy will require shared responsibilities. Recommended roles and responsibilities for City staff and the Economic Development Advisory Committee, the Guelph Chamber of Commerce, Guelph Partnership for Innovation, University of Guelph, Conestoga College, Downtown Guelph Board of Management and other stakeholders will need to be clearly articulated.

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**APPENDIX A:**

**Mayor's Task Force on the Economy  
Statement of Principles**

## Mayor's Task Force on the Economy Statement of Principles

The City of Guelph is developing a new economic development and tourism strategy called *Prosperity 2020*.

*Prosperity 2020* will be a transformational plan that will uphold Guelph's vision of being "the city that makes a difference" while supporting the City's strategic goal of having "a diverse and prosperous local economy." It will reflect the community's commitment to economic, social, and environmental sustainability.

As part of the process to develop *Prosperity 2020*, a Mayor's Task Force on the Economy has been established. We are a small cross-section of community leaders representing the private, non-profit and public sectors.

We understand our role is *not* to identify the strategic priorities for Guelph, but rather, our role is to draw upon our collective experiences to help articulate the opportunities that need to be considered by those creating *Prosperity 2020*.

This is our challenge.

1. Guelph is well positioned as an excellent place to live and work.

***Prosperity 2020* must ensure Guelph takes full advantage of our economic, educational and cultural strengths, assets, resources and opportunities to create an enhanced knowledge-based economy.**

Opportunities to do this include:

- Becoming an acknowledged Centre of Excellence in sectors in which Guelph has particular strength, such as agriculture and agri-food; biotechnology; information technology; and advanced manufacturing so that Guelph can attract investment, jobs, and government funding
- Building an integrated system to commercialize research and innovation and increase the skills of entrepreneurs while attracting global investors
- Promoting Guelph's character, culture, and tourism assets to make the city a magnet for the world's best and brightest and generate jobs and investment
- Leveraging Guelph's reputation as a green city; leadership in energy, waste and water management; and commitment to triple bottom line thinking as competitive advantages in attracting knowledge-based and green jobs.

2. Guelph is known as a leader in many areas.

***Prosperity 2020* must identify ways to build on Guelph's reputation in order to attract new businesses, diversify, build resilience for periods of economic volatility, and position Guelph as the place to invest when the economy recovers.**

Opportunities to do this include:

- Investing in and promoting Guelph's transportation networks, excellent infrastructure, and well-managed land supply
- Ensuring the municipal government's customer service is exceptional, that its approvals processes are efficient, and its tax rates and development charges offer good value for the investment
- Successfully transitioning to a "post Places to Grow" city, with 40% of growth directed in the downtown and built-up areas instead of greenfields.

3. Guelph has a highly skilled and educated pool of talent.

***Prosperity 2020 must identify strategies to recruit, retain, and develop talented people and support entrepreneurship to fuel our economy.***

Opportunities to do this include:

- Enhancing our first-class educational system from early childhood through to college and university
- Becoming a recognized leader in attracting skilled new Canadians, recognizing that net workforce growth will be driven by immigration
- Investing in human capital by supporting leadership development and educational opportunities in academic and skilled trade fields, recognizing that for every two people retiring in Canada, there will be less than one person to take their place.

4. Guelph has committed leaders in the private, public, and not-for-profit sectors.

***Prosperity 2020 must demonstrate a sense of urgency, bring leaders together, and recognize that intelligence sharing is key to our economic future.***

Opportunities to do this include:

- Building partnerships with local, regional, provincial, national and international governments; business; educators; community organizations and citizens
- Ensuring a responsive and accountable governance that establishes priorities, seeks the highest return on investment, and monitors performance against benchmarks
- Developing Centres of Excellence that are aligned with local, provincial, and national objectives and distinguish Guelph as a national and international leader.

Our challenge to those charged with the creation of *Prosperity 2020* is to identify strategies that will capture these opportunities, and then to set priority to those strategies based on the resources available within the community to implement them.

We also ask the authors of *Prosperity 2020* to identify key indicators that will allow us to measure our success in creating jobs, generating wealth and establishing the foundations of a strong and resilient local economy.

Members of the Mayor's Task Force on the Economy include: Mayor Karen Farbridge; Guelph MP Frank Valeriote; Guelph MPP Liz Sandals; Alastair Summerlee, President, University of Guelph; Mark Goldberg, President, GlobalTox International Consultants Inc.; Mike Bouk, Executive Director, Ag Energy Co-operative; Michael Annable, industry representative; Lloyd Longfield, President, Guelph Chamber of Commerce; Kevin Hall, Vice President (Research), University of Guelph; Dave Smardon, President/Director, BioEnterprise Corporation; Don Drone, Director of Education, Wellington Catholic District School Board; and Kathy Bardswick, President & CEO, The Co-operators Group Ltd.

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**APPENDIX B:**  
**Economic Base Analysis**

**APPENDIX B:  
ECONOMIC  
BASE**

This summary appendix describes the highlights of the Phase 1 Economic Base Analysis Report, as partial foundation for the paper's recommended Directions.

The Phase 1 report is intended to describe and assess the context and foundations shaping economic growth prospects for the City of Guelph. It identifies the business sectors driving economic growth to 2006 (most current Census information), those expected to continue to do so into the future, and the City's competitive advantages and disadvantages.

*The Importance of  
Economic  
Development*

Economic development is fundamentally focussed on attracting and retaining business and institutions in a community, and on making the community a compelling place to be for employers and for the labour pools they depend on. It is important because of the importance of business to community viability and vitality, through the generation of employment, wealth, contributions to tax revenues and philanthropy. Economic development is also competitive, in that other communities have similar goals and are investing to realize them.

Success in economic development will accrue to those communities best able to create a compelling set of reasons for business and institutions to stay or locate there. As the economy evolves, success will accrue to those places offering competitive advantage for the employment sectors expected to grow into the next economic cycle or era.

Municipal investment in economic development has traditionally focused on several areas. A broader set of tools that have emerged include: Cluster initiatives, attracting the "creative class" and building a "creative economy", and a focus on downtown placemaking.

Consideration of future directions for economic development in Guelph must consider both the "traditional" and emerging approaches to economic development.

*Growth Expectations*

Several trends operating at global and more local scales will influence Guelph's future economic prosperity:

- Globalization and shifting economic and demographic patterns;
- Green/clean technologies growth; and
- Diverging trends in agricultural production.

The City can benefit from understanding these trends and strategically positioning itself or partnering with the appropriate regional economic development players to leverage Guelph's assets.

### Regional Employment

Statistics Canada July 2009 data indicate the labour force has expanded and unemployment in the region has risen over the previous year. The data describe the Kitchener-Waterloo-Barrie Economic Region, which includes Guelph, to have a labour force of 713,400 people and an unemployment rate of 9.3%. In July 2008, this region had a labour force of 702,400 people and an unemployment rate of 5.9%. Comparatively, the Province's unemployment rate increased from 6.8% in July 2008 to 9.8% in July 2009 and Canada's unemployment rate increased from 6.0% to 8.6% during the same time period.

Much of the rise in unemployment has been driven by contraction in the construction, manufacturing and building and other support services (e.g. appraisal services) industries and the increase in unemployed youth between the ages of 15 to 24 years of age.

### Guelph's Growth Expectations

In 2006, 119,950 people lived in Guelph and 66,460 jobs were located in the City. By 2031, the City's population and employment are forecast to increase to 175,000 residents and 100,390 jobs by 2031.

### *Baseline Conditions*

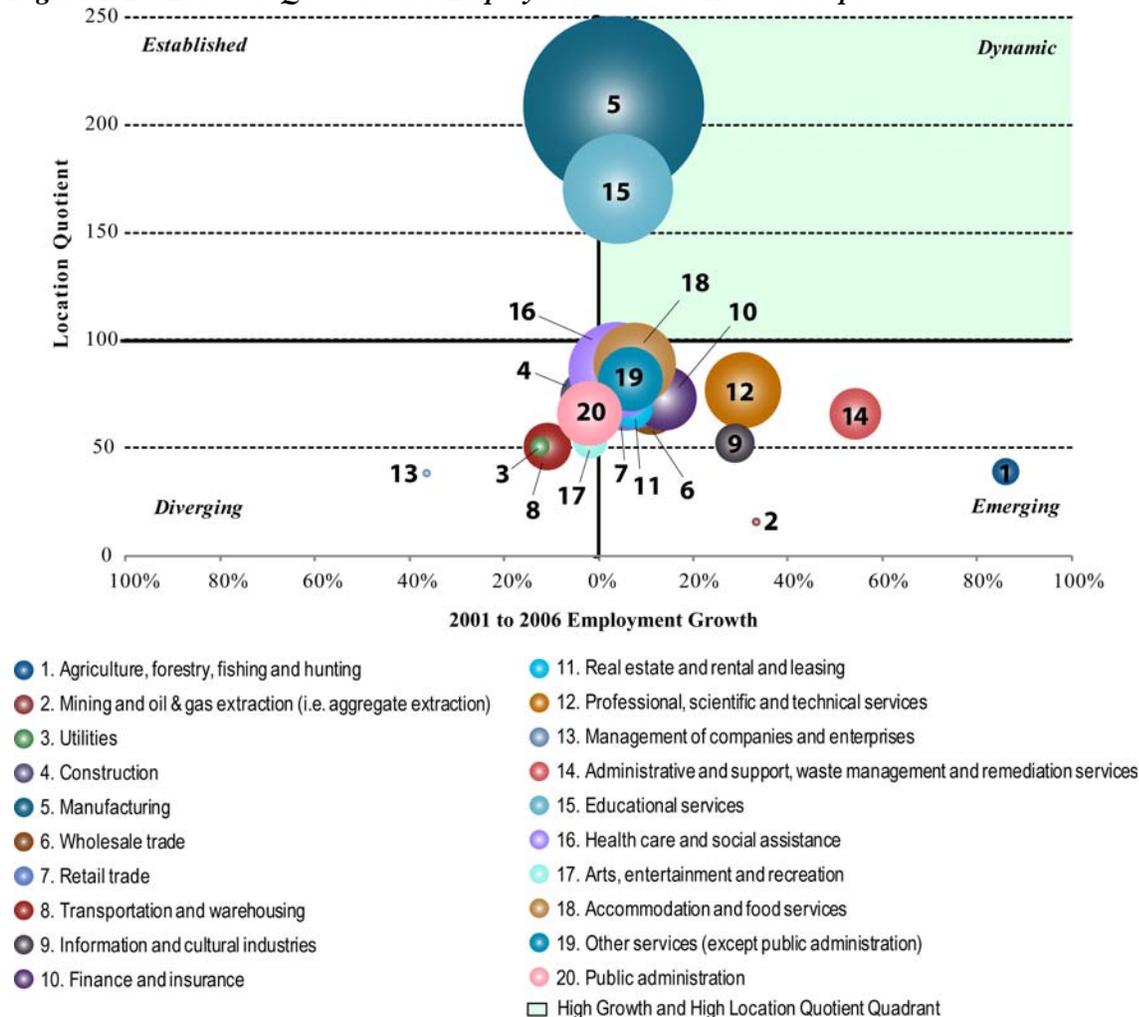
Baseline Conditions provide insights into the current employment structure and growth prospects in Guelph.

### Employment Structure

Activity rates indicate the relative strength of employment in a community compared to its population. An activity rate of 0.5 is a target figure for many municipalities as it shows the community to have one job for every two residents. Guelph's activity rate is 0.554, significantly higher than Ontario's 0.440 and Canada's 0.439.

A comparison of Guelph's employment structure to that of Ontario, coupled with analysis of employment growth rates by sector over the 2001 – 2006 period highlights areas of employment concentration and growth in the City (see Figure B.1). Guelph has very high proportions of its total employment concentrated in the Manufacturing and Educational Services Sectors. These sectors respectively provide 31% and 12% of employment in the City, or more than 2.1 and 1.7 times the provincial average.

Figure B.1: Location Quotient and Employment Growth Relationships



While employment in a number of industry sectors is increasing in Guelph, the four with the highest growth rates between 2001 and 2006 were:

- Administrative and Support, Waste Management and Remediation Services Industries;
- Professional, Scientific and Technical Services Industries;
- Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting Industries, driven largely by support activities for agriculture; and
- Information and Cultural Industries which includes publishing, telecommunications companies and internet service providers.

#### Commuting Patterns

Three-quarters of the jobs held by Guelph's labour force (75.3%) are located in the City. The highest percentages by sector occur in the Accommodation and Food Services (86.6%) and Retail Trade (82.3%) industries. Lower percentages occur in the City's Wholesale Trade (50.4%) and Transportation and Warehousing (54.3%) industries. Labour

force jobs located in Guelph for both the Manufacturing and Educational Services sectors are at the average 80% level.

#### Labour Force Education Levels

Labour force skill sets differentiate Guelph from other communities. Of Guelph's population aged 15 years +, 15% have a Bachelor's degree and an additional 10% have a university degree above a Bachelor's. By comparison, the proportion of this population with a Bachelor's degree and a university degree above a Bachelor's degree is 13% and 8% for Ontario residents and 12% and 7% of Canadians respectively.

#### Ethnic Diversity

While ethnic origins in Guelph have high representation by people citing heritage in the British or Western European countries, common source regions for new immigrants to Canada are Asian and Pacific Rim countries. Only 14% of Guelph's residents are considered visible minorities, significantly less than the 23% recorded for the Province of Ontario in 2006 and the 16% recorded for Canada.

#### Affordability

Household income levels provide an indication of spending capacity for a community in terms of housing, retail and personal expenditures and the presence of household poverty in a community. Guelph has a higher percentage of households in the \$100,000 or more (25%) and in the \$60,000 to \$99,999 (29%) income brackets than Ontario or Canada.

#### Guelph/Wellington County Tourism Sector

The Premier-ranked Tourist Destination report (P-rTD) determined that Guelph and Wellington County together are still an emerging tourist destination. The University of Guelph was identified as the only core attraction that can attract visitors from a long-haul market of five hours or more travel time, primarily through sporting events drawing visitors from across Ontario and Canada.

Travel statistics<sup>1</sup> (2007) show slightly more than 2.2 million people from Canada, the U.S.A. and other countries took overnight or same-day trips to Wellington County, representing about 2% of the total volume of tourism in the province. In 2007, about one-quarter (0.6 million or 27%) of all trips were made for "pleasure" and more than two-thirds (67%) were made to "visit friends and relatives." Visitors to Wellington County spent in excess of \$188.0 million on transportation, accommodation, food and beverage, recreation / entertainment and retail.

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<sup>1</sup> Statistics Canada (2008). *Travel Survey of Residents of Canada and International Travel Survey 2007*.

### Investment

Building permit activity indicates the City's success in attracting investment in the residential, commercial/industrial and institutional sectors. Guelph has accommodated substantial residential investment, with construction values ranging from \$126.7 to \$142.8 million annually over a four year time period (2005-2008).

Private and public sector investment in non-residential sectors has been more variable. Industrial construction was \$63.2 million in 2007 and \$19.3 million in 2006. Commercial construction was very strong in 2006 at \$90.2 million. In the following two years commercial investment was approximately half of the 2006 value. Institutional construction was very strong in 2005 at \$86.6 million and strong again in 2008 at \$69.2 million.

In relation to other communities, Guelph has lower industrial development charges over the short term; however, the City will lose this cost advantage during the implementation of *Prosperity 2020*. The industrial development charge of \$44.32 per sq.m. has been frozen to March 1, 2011 and will then increase in increments to \$106.65 by 2014. Currently, Guelph has lower industrial development charge rates in comparison to Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge.

The City has a higher industrial tax rate than its neighbours. The higher industrial property tax rates for Guelph have not hindered employment growth since Guelph's growth outpaced the Province. Looking at the balance between the City's residential and industrial/commercial assessment base, Guelph is very similar to neighbouring Kitchener and Waterloo with 85% residential and 15% commercial/industrial. Guelph receives 35% of its tax revenue from the industrial/commercial tax base, again very similar to Kitchener and Waterloo.

### *Operating Context*

The Operating Context describes the City of Guelph's employment lands structure, servicing infrastructure plans to accommodate growth, and transportation network improvement plans for the movement of people and goods.

The City of Guelph has seven core employment areas. It has a net vacant developable employment land supply of 718 hectares of which the largest tracts are found in the South Guelph Industrial Area (48 hectares serviced), the proposed Guelph Innovation District (161 hectares not yet serviced) and the new Hanlon Creek Business Park (153 hectares scheduled to be serviced). This is in contrast to the diminishing supply of employment land in Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo.

Ongoing investment in municipal servicing infrastructure will be required if further employment growth is to occur. However, planned investments in water and wastewater treatment and distribution capacity indicate the City of Guelph is well positioned to service future growth areas during the implementation of *Prosperity 2020*.

Guelph benefits from a variety of transportation modes and is serviced by road, rail and air. GO Transit is carrying out an EA study for extending GO rail service to Guelph and Kitchener. This study is to determine the demand for rail service and identify station locations, layover facilities and track improvements between Georgetown and Kitchener over a planning horizon of 2011 to 2031. The existing passenger rail train station in Downtown Guelph is Guelph Council's preferred location for the new Guelph GO station.

Currently, transportation infrastructure improvements are contemplated by both the City and the province. Consideration of new transportation corridors linking the GTA to Guelph, and the Niagara region to the GTA possibly in proximity to Guelph indicate the city could come to enjoy a new strategic position at the nexus of these linkages.

*Competitive  
Advantages &  
Disadvantages*

Observations about Guelph's competitive advantages and disadvantages indicated by the economic base analysis are that:

1. Guelph has many assets "in place" or in hand to support further development of its economy. These competitive advantages include:
  - Commitment to leadership, innovation and sustainability
  - Location and accessibility
  - Available employment land
  - Well educated, skilled and lower cost labour force
  - Presence of educational services sector
  - Emergence of more diverse industrial sectors
  - Civic and tourism assets.
2. Guelph's economic potential is also constrained by several competitive disadvantages:
  - Concentration in employment structure and the labour force
  - Lagging employment growth
  - Higher costs
  - Lagging ethnic diversity
  - Limited reach of tourism assets.

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**APPENDIX C:**  
**Consultation Summary**

**APPENDIX C:  
CONSULTATION  
SUMMARY**

The stakeholder consultation provided insight and wisdom from Guelph's community leaders and other key stakeholders as input to the formulation of directions and strategy for *Prosperity 2020*. It included input from focused dialogue—with the Guelph Economic Development Advisory Committee (GEDAC), Mayor's Task Force on the Economy, Council and Senior Staff—three stakeholder workshops and an online survey sent out to over 900 business leaders.

While no two consultations were alike, respondents were frank, discussion was animated and some common threads were evident. The following sets out highlights drawn from the consultations based on common themes and consistent messages. These are extrapolated from the Consultation Summary Report, which includes a more fulsome overview of key messages, stakeholders' perceptions of Guelph's strengths and weaknesses, and the opportunities and challenges Guelph faces and participants' vision of what Guelph should look like if the strategy is successful.

*Key Messages*

All stakeholders acknowledged the challenges posed by the current economy and the need for Guelph to diversify and move toward a more global marketplace.

Stakeholders recognized the nature of manufacturing and distribution is changing and manufacturing jobs of the future will be very different than today's jobs. We heard about the need to diversify and grow the manufacturing sector and about a gap in high end service jobs.

Stakeholders also spoke about the need to accelerate growth in partnerships. We heard about a disconnect among the province, business community and educational institutes and the need to build a common understanding and to align goals and objectives.

Consistently, stakeholders told us Guelph's economy was resilient with three strong sectors underpinning it—education (University of Guelph), government (federal and provincial presence) and industrial sectors. While participants said this diversity would help Guelph weather any economic downturn, we heard the industrial sector, which is currently skewed to the automobile sector needs to expand beyond a single primary firm. Some thought there is a disproportionate emphasis on manufacturing and educational services to the detriment of small business. However, the importance of the University of Guelph and to a lesser extent Conestoga College satellite campus to leverage opportunities was clear.

While there were variations among participants in each consultation there was considerable consistency about critical challenges: downtown revitalization, brand identity, infrastructure capacity, little appreciation for the role of business in the community lack of commercialization, underutilized river system and lake, lack of local buzz, no unified tourism voice, no destination marketing fund, lack of demand generating attractions and high-end products, signature festivals and events, sustainable funding for festivals and events and things to see and do for children, reliance on VFR market, absence of a festival and events policy and plan and long-term marketing plan and Guelph's absence in the global marketplace.

Similarly across all stakeholder groups, competitive advantages were seen in the strength of Guelph's agriculture sector, its critical mass of entrepreneurs, the local agri-food and innovation network and presence of the University of Guelph, access to labour and employment lands, Guelph's unique festivals and events, its strong arts and cultural presence and extensive trail systems, its highly educated labour force, attractive quality of life, lower development charges than neighbouring communities, and proximity to major transportation routes.

Any list of opportunities to enhance competitiveness always included location, presence of the University of Guelph and the Conestoga College satellite campus, growth in "knowledge economy" industry sectors, potential "hub" relationship with the surrounding area, transportation corridor to link the northwest GTA with Guelph, continued investment in Guelph by private and public sector employers and strong agricultural presence to create a platform for culinary and agricultural related tourism.

When asked about challenges participants consistently told us about the current economic environment, lack of economic diversity with Guelph's high concentration of employment in the manufacturing sector, strong competition in other jurisdictions that are well funded and organized, disconnect between public's perception of being "green" and science, perception that Guelph is an over processed and business unfriendly location, industry fracture/self interest and the lack of cross sector fertilization/alignment across organizations.

#### Downtown Revitalization is Needed

With a great deal of agreement workshop participants and survey respondents indicated critical concerns with Guelph's downtown. About 58 per cent of survey respondents indicated that downtown revitalization is Guelph's most pressing infrastructure need. Participants in all workshops said addressing downtown issues should be a priority.

### Brand Identity is Missing

While participants said Guelph has lots of assets and a range of products, it is not perceived to have a brand identity. Participants said that Guelph has no brand as a manufacturing centre, no profile. Its business success stories are just not being told. Similar concerns were expressed regarding Guelph's profile in the tourism marketplace – while the City has many assets, there is no unifying brand.

### Strong Innovation Presence

Guelph has a strong agriculture presence—from the university's advanced research, local farms and the Saturday market to restaurants offering locally grown product—but participants told us no platform has been built to brand or market this.

Participants indicated that Guelph has a huge opportunity in advanced manufacturing and as a hub for food and should work to become identified as a Centre of Excellence in Agri-Technologies and Food Technologies and Environmental Technologies.

### Lack of Commercialization

While Guelph is rich in innovation and entrepreneurs, stakeholders said it needs to get better at leveraging ideas into products that create economic growth and jobs. There is a lack of commercialization and R&D is just not transferring to profit.

Participants suggested Guelph needs to understand what drives investment to create jobs and to attract members of the international community to Guelph to help lure international investment.

### Access to Labour and Employment Lands

Stakeholders were clear: Guelph has a significant advantage with its ready access to labour and employment lands as well as its relatively low development charges. Participants told us employers are aware of the available labour in the area and this is an advantage that Guelph needs to market.

### Location, Location, Location

We heard from workshop participants the Guelph's location is a huge advantage—easy access to markets, GTA municipalities, Pearson Airport and the Technology Triangle and with access to both CN and CP rail facilities. However, transportation infrastructure is needed such as trans-loading rail facility and trucking facilities, which tend to bring resident opposition.

From a tourism perspective, participants suggested positioning the City as a “hub” or “gateway” to other area destinations, many of which are Guelph’s competitors.

#### Lots of Competition

Guelph has lots of competition, especially from the U.S.; as a result participants said the City’s strengths are enough to enter the competition but not necessarily strong enough to win it. Some participants said that this is exasperated by organizations within Guelph competing against each other.

From a tourism perspective, we heard that everyplace is a competitor and Guelph’s competitors tend to be more tourism ready. As well, a number of these other communities have Destination Marketing Funds and can market themselves. The tourism marketplace is noisy and Guelph’s voice is just not heard. Every community is marketing itself and Guelph must find its voice to compete. Participants agreed that Guelph needs to define its own culture, not duplicate other communities.

On all fronts, participants told us Guelph needs to be better positioned in the marketplace. This requires understanding what the City really wants to do/be; understanding commercialization and the implications for the city and working with existing entrepreneurs to grow the sector. It also means working with identified regional strengths.

Guelph needs to build local buzz, which will help to draw foreign direct investment, participants told us. This may include a local brochure to communicate its technology success stories; or getting advanced manufacturers more engaged through the Guelph Innovation Partnership.

#### Beyond Open for Business

Everyone agreed the City needs to be seen as truly open for business and proactively engaged in attracting and retaining business. Guelph needs to develop a reputation as a business friendly city. Unfortunately, participants said, it is the negative messages that get communicated (e.g. Hanlon Creek Business Park) and this further delays the development process.

Participants indicated the importance of helping the public understand the role of business in the community and its contribution to community sustainability. Some participants thought this would help to mitigate local opposition to growth.

Diverse Mix of Potential Tourism Assets But Missing Product

Participants indicated a need for product development and for packaging and bundling of tourism product. We heard there are no signature events or attractions that draw people to Guelph from beyond the GTA and visiting families and friends market. It was also noted that the City's tourism assets are geared towards adults, with very little for children to see or do.

Assets, Events, Festivals Not Well Marketed or Understood

We heard that festivals and events are locally successful but disparate events lack cohesion and don't build synergy off each other. Long-term sustainable funding is a major problem for Guelph as with most area attractions and festivals and events, but there is no festivals and events strategy and the City's tourism budget is minimal.

No Unified Voice for Tourism

Participants argued that Guelph needs a unified voice for tourism. The industry is not working together collaboratively and not advocating for the City and telling its story. It needs to partner, collaborate and be cohesive within its own region; build on each other's products. In terms of branding it is Guelph; no one knows Wellington County. Without partnerships everyone goes on their own way.

Community Engagement Needed

Participants said an integrated approach to community and tourism needs to be developed. The community does not understand tourism and its benefits and the City needs to be able to show people the return on investment that tourism brings.

*Conclusion*

While Guelph has its challenges, the foundation is in place to enhance its prosperity to 2020. First and foremost it has to now build the pieces and mechanisms to target competitive niches and diversify its economic base. It needs to give consideration to:

- Improving the commercialization process;
- Defining a brand;
- Defining its environmental technologies, agri-science and advanced manufacturing strengths;
- Aligning the community with shared goals.

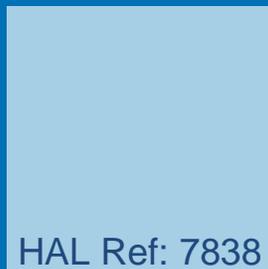
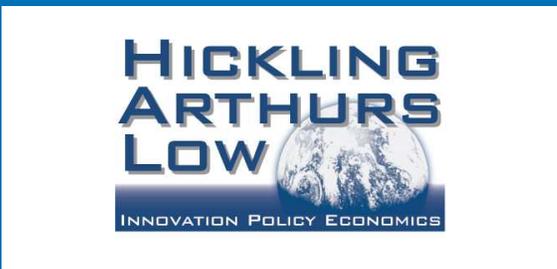
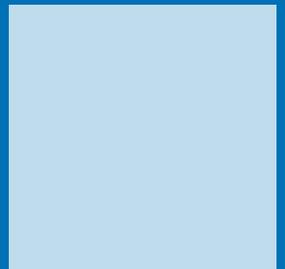
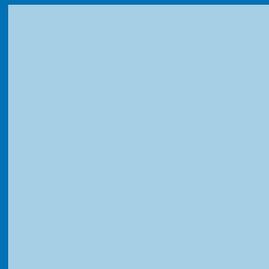
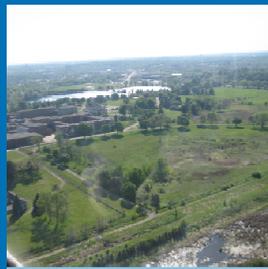
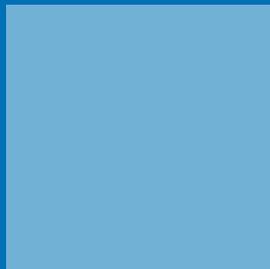
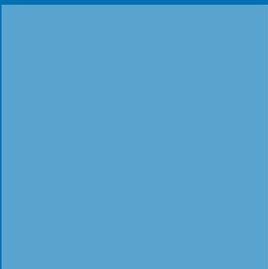
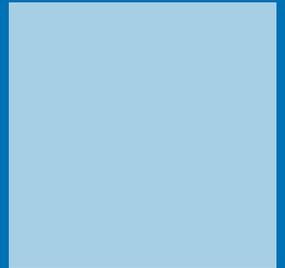
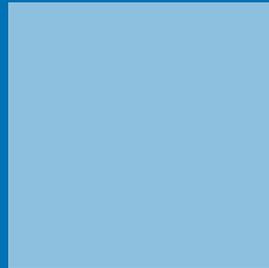
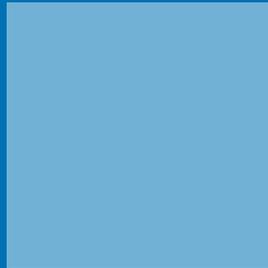
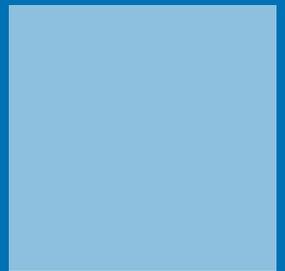
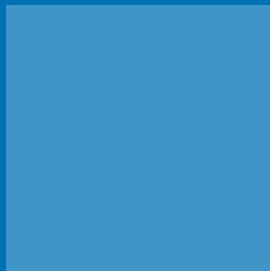
***The City must decide which combination of competitive strengths to brand and what its role will be in tourism.***

# Background Material

## Strategic Development of the Guelph Agri-Innovation Cluster

Prepared for:  
**The Corporation of the City of Guelph**

2009 November 13



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# 1. Study Background

## 1.1 Study Objective

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This study has so far assessed the Guelph cluster and analyzed its regional and policy context, the global market opportunities, and similar clusters and research parks in other parts of the world. The study is now developing a cluster strategy for the Guelph region. The objective of the strategy is to position the emerging cluster for success, helping build local resiliency, and attracting new investment and talent, to the cluster. The strategy will also identify how the Guelph Innovation District and other designated employment lands can best support the cluster's development.

## 1.2 Study Status

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The development of the strategy has involved the following four steps, the first two of which have been completed, with the third and fourth now in draft stage:

- **Involve:** Involve stakeholders within and external to the region
- **Assess:** Assess the region's assets underpinning innovation in the context of the opportunities and competition in the rest of the world.
- **Prioritize:** Decide on strategic priorities for the future from the range of possible visions.
- **Plan:** Define an action plan

As part of the first step, 40 stakeholders were interviewed. A web survey of approximately 120 companies was also completed, with 25 completions. The project team was also involved in a community information session regarding the objectives of this study and has spoken with key community representatives.

## 1.3 Defining the Cluster

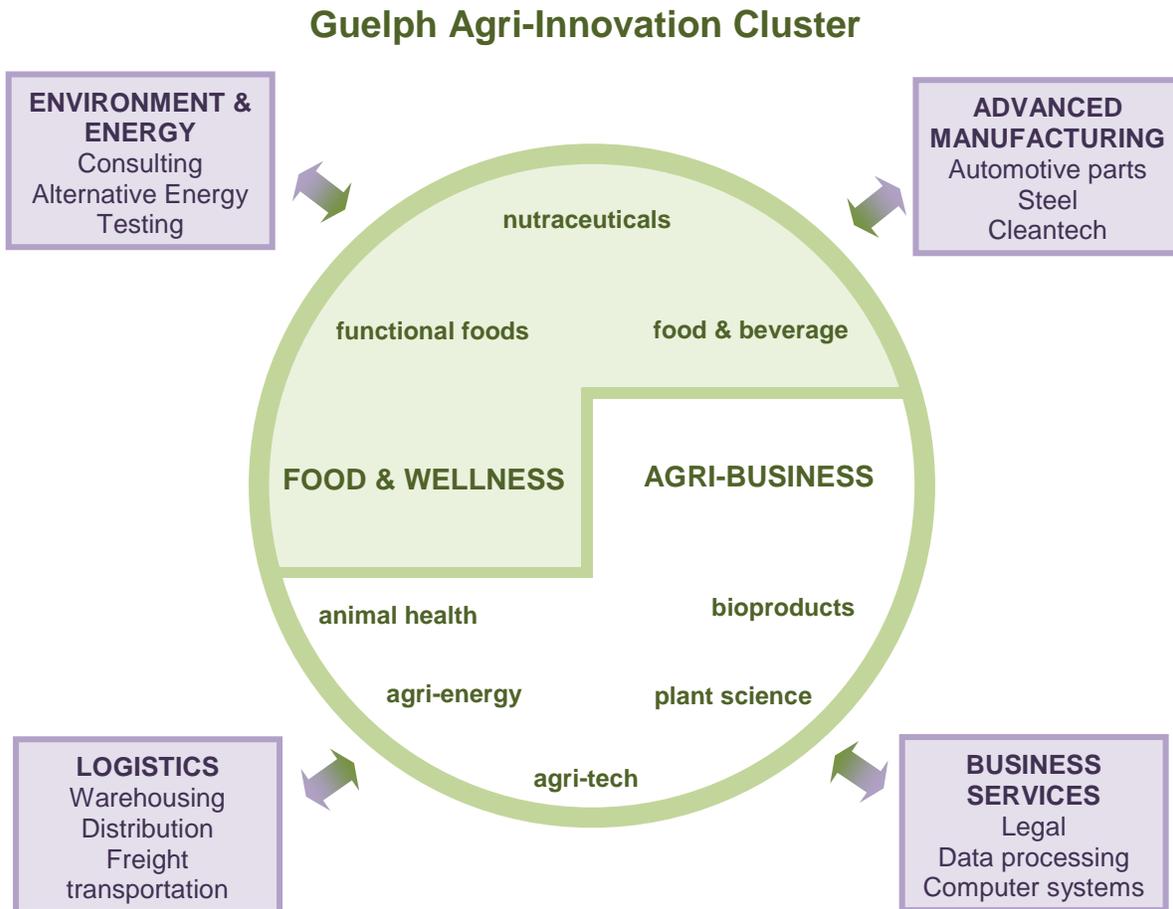
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The City of Guelph originally identified two broad economic sectors that were considered to offer a competitive advantage and which were to be a part of the cluster strategy: the life science sector, which was defined as including agri-technologies, agri-food, health, and biosciences; and renewable energy and environmental technologies. Also of importance were the convergence opportunities that could revitalize traditional sectors, and in particular automotive and related advanced manufacturing.

Focus, however, is essential for the success of a cluster; it helps ensure that there is enough in common among cluster firms and stakeholders to establish i) a consensus for strategic action, ii) a cohesive internal identity among firms and iii) a coherent external recognition of the cluster. HAL therefore recommends that the Guelph cluster definition be adjusted so as to simplify and help communicate to cluster stakeholders the essential expertise and capabilities that exist within the cluster.

To this end, HAL has defined the cluster as consisting of two main subsectors, each of which includes several niche areas (Figure 1). The first category, **food and wellness**, includes functional foods and nutraceuticals, as well as food and beverage firms; the second, **agri-business**, includes firms involved in bioproducts, plant science, animal health, agri-energy and agri-tech. These two subsectors afford many niche opportunities for value creation that align strongly with the infrastructural strengths of the region.

Figure 1: Subsectors of the Guelph Agri-Innovation Cluster



Advanced manufacturing, which is a significant cluster in its own right, is excluded from the definition. It is, however, considered integral to supporting the agri-innovation cluster, providing a competitive advantage as a local specialized supplier of manufacturing and as a local ‘demanding’ customer of agri-innovation goods.

As for environment and energy firms, those that have an agricultural component, such as agri-based bioproducts, are included in the cluster; the remaining environment and energy firms, which include consulting and testing firms, are classified as supporting the agri-innovation cluster in a manner similar to the advanced manufacturing cluster.

To ensure that the potential innovation opportunities related to these subsectors can be realized by agri-innovation cluster firms, this report puts forward recommendations to establish necessary linkages (Section 3).

### 1.4 Cluster Name Considerations

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The choice of ‘agri-innovation’ as a preliminary name for the cluster takes into account the following factors:

- Guelph’s strength in agriculture, which is generally well-recognized and which is a core area of expertise for the cluster;
- The preference to differentiate the Guelph cluster from the many clusters in Canada and around the world establishing themselves as ‘bio’ or ‘green’; and
- The preference for reflecting the emergent aspect of the cluster’s capabilities.

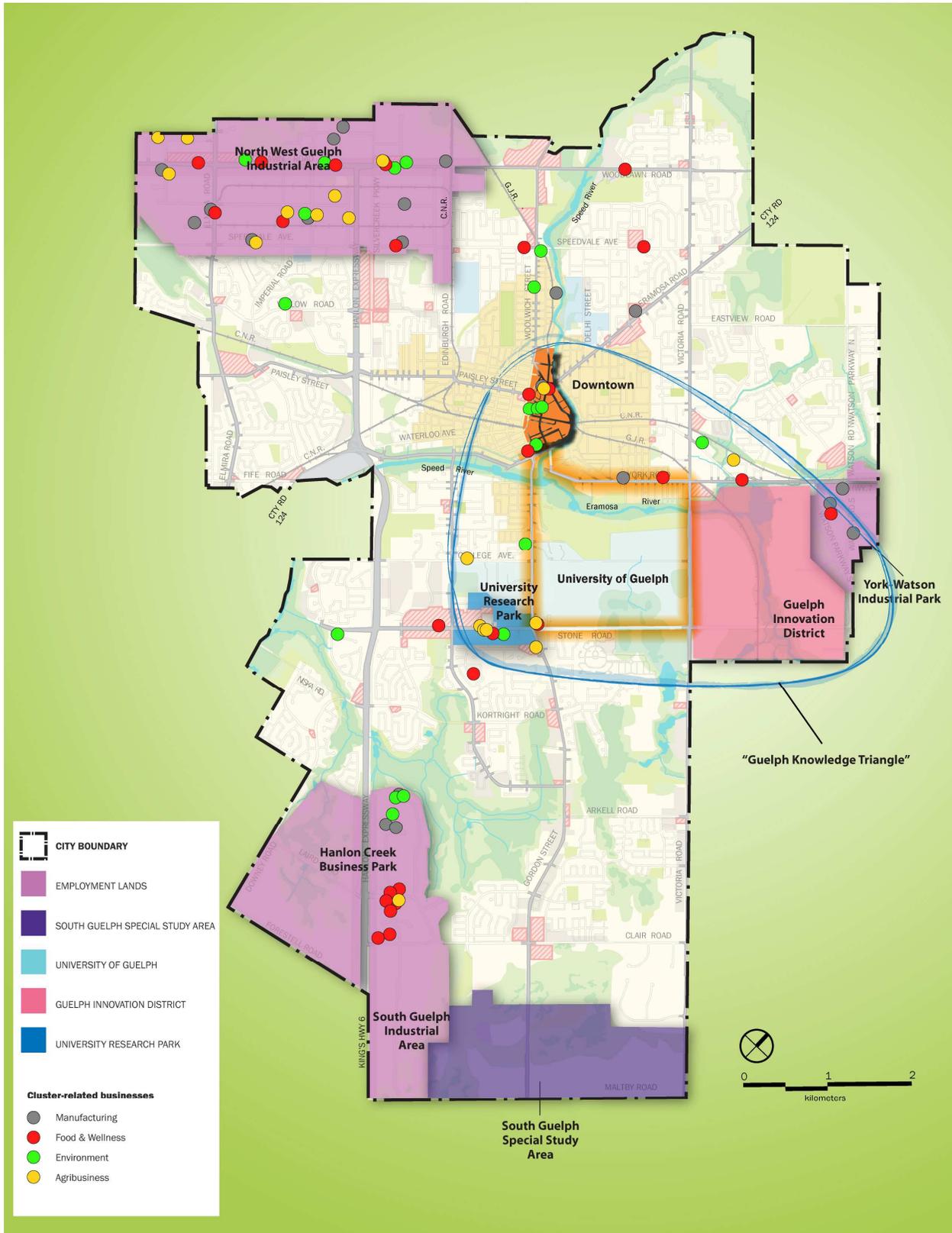
### 1.5 Urban Context

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The location of existing cluster firms within the urban structure demonstrates the close relationship between employment land and infrastructure for these business operations. Figure 2 illustrates the notable concentrations of existing cluster businesses in Guelph: the employment lands in Northwest Guelph, the Hanlon Creek and York-Watson Industrial Parks, the University Research Park, and along major access routes such as York Road and Woolwich Street.

A recommended geographic focus for the future of the cluster is the triangle formed by the Guelph Innovation District, the University Research Park, and the downtown core of Guelph. This area can meet the current and future needs of the cluster for land, accommodation, infrastructure, and amenities.

Figure 2: Geography of the Guelph Cluster



## 1.6 State of the Cluster

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A cluster develops when firms from interrelated sectors emerge or locate in a particular region, drawing a competitive advantage from the existence of specialized knowledge assets within the region. These assets – such as a university, a highly qualified labour market, a favorable learning and product development environment, or a leading ‘anchor’ firm – support inter-firm learning and connectivity, as well as overall innovation performance, allowing firms to compete more effectively in global markets. This fosters a self-reinforcing dynamic that attracts new firms and talent to the region, lifts wages, accelerates the growth and expansion of existing cluster firms and supports the creation of startups. As the cluster strengthens, the region as a whole becomes recognized for its expertise and establishes itself as a major generator of wealth that extends well beyond the regional boundaries as a result of thicker inter-regional linkages.

Clustering firms often exhibit a number of attributes that differentiate them from a group of firms that are simply concentrated in a given region. For example, cluster firms are often drawn together as a result of common need, be it to access research, talent, key suppliers, or value chains that are localized in a particular region. Also, clustering firms often exhibit interconnectedness with one another and with public research infrastructure, either formally through joint ventures or strategic alliances, or informally, through social ties that foster localized learning within the cluster. Clustering firms may also be members of other clusters, depending on the extent to which their products or services overlap with other industry sectors. Finally while geographic proximity is a key attribute of a cluster, the boundaries of a cluster are rarely rigid or readily definable. Indeed, they are often ultimately defined by how much time companies are willing to spend to travel for the purposes of meetings and networking with other firms or institutions.

Guelph’s cluster demonstrates a number of key strengths that make it a good candidate for strategic development. It is supported by a well educated work force that continues to grow; it builds on unique knowledge and infrastructural assets, not least an extensive research base whose areas of expertise are closely aligned with the cluster subsectors; it enjoys a diversified and competitive supplier base that meets a number of specialized industry needs; it is aligned with the broader policy environment at the local, provincial, and federal levels; and finally its broad direction supports community goals of environmental sustainability.

In order to capitalize on these strengths, a number of actions are recommended to help build the cluster’s critical mass and address areas of cluster weakness. These areas include a weak cluster identity among firms within the cluster, perceptions of a poor business environment, and underdeveloped cluster linkages.

## 2. Strategic Directions

Developing cluster initiatives favours an approach that simultaneously builds on regional strengths and unique assets while removing barriers to development. Getting the factors right for cluster development requires action and co-ordination among government departments, regional economic development agencies, universities, companies and others. Clusters are often business driven and they usually evolve somewhat spontaneously over decades. However, well-designed cluster initiatives can expedite the process and provide a much-needed initial platform. Central, regional and local government can play a leading role in stimulating networks and partnerships that create the conditions that encourage cluster formation and growth.

A Strategic Framework has been developed that has guided the subsequent development of initiatives for the Guelph Agri-Innovation cluster. The Framework identifies five dimensions (Figure 3). The first dimension corresponds to four facets of economic development. In building a regional economy, resources can be directed to:

1. Helping existing firms with **expansion** of their activities within the regional economy.
2. The **creation** of new firms within the region;
3. Helping established and mature industries with the **conversion** of existing products with cluster technologies so as to enhance their competitiveness by transitioning to a green economy; and
4. The **attraction** of firms from outside the region, either through re-location to, or expansion in, Guelph on the basis of the region's competitiveness and research infrastructure;

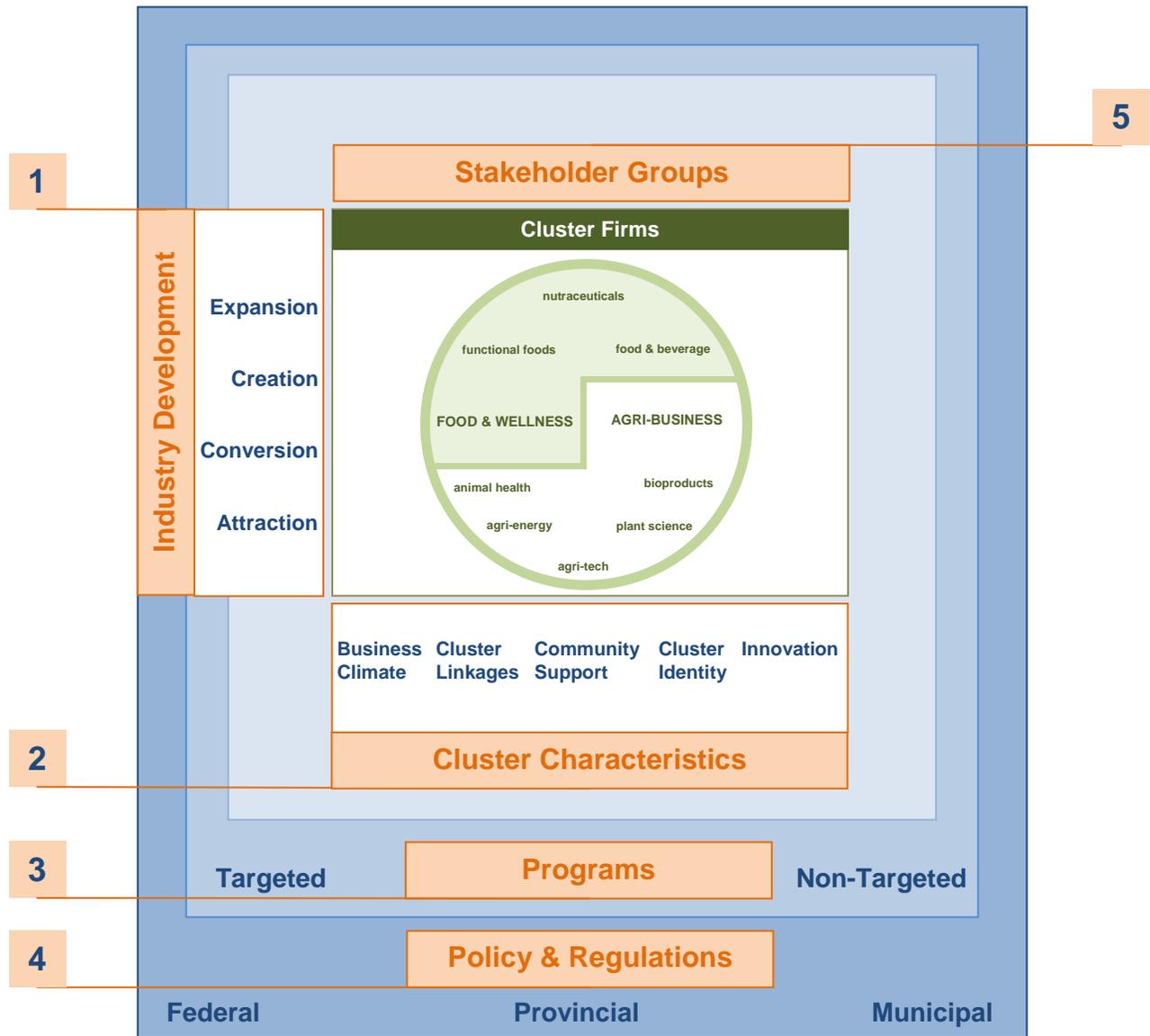
The second dimension captures the cluster characteristics, and in particular the business climate, cluster linkages, cluster identity and innovation.

The third dimension is that of public programs that support the cluster specifically (targeted programs) and innovation and entrepreneurship more generally (non-targeted programs).

The fourth dimension is the policies and regulations that shape market opportunities for the cluster at each level of government.

Finally, the fifth dimension of the Framework is the stakeholder groups that will have responsibility for the recommended initiatives to strengthen and build the cluster in the future.

Figure 3: Strategic Framework



# 3. Preliminary Recommendations

## 3.1 Cluster Characteristics

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### 3.1.1 Business Climate

An environment that is supportive of firm formation and growth, conducive to innovation, and which can attract and retain skilled labour is very important to the vitality and dynamism of the cluster as a whole. On this factor, the Guelph region is mixed due in part perceptions among cluster firms that the city is not as supportive of business as it could be.

**Recommendation 1.** Develop a ‘welcome kit’ for cluster businesses that identifies at a minimum:

- local and regional planning and regulatory issues relevant to cluster businesses,
- key contacts responsible for planning and regulatory approvals; and
- innovation support programs and organizations relevant to the cluster.

**Recommendation 2.** Engage collectively both the pro- and anti-growth groups as well as news reporters throughout the Guelph region to bring alignment, understanding and consensus around community goals and cluster vision and related initiatives.

- The different agendas of factions within Guelph region have created an anti-business narrative that has amplified negative perceptions of Guelph’s business climate.
- This engagement, which will require strong and credible leadership, can transpire through a number of initiatives: bi-annual events; ‘joined-up’ participation in special decision-making forums.

### 3.1.2 Linkages

An important dimension of cluster dynamics is the network itself as shaped by functional linkages between firms collaborating with each other or between firms and public research organizations. In strong clusters, these relationships generate a localized dynamic process of collective learning and ultimately improved innovation performance. Overall there are weak horizontal linkages between cluster firms in Guelph. This is an indication that there is little in the way of collaborative research and product development occurring among firms. Moreover, there is no one firm in the cluster that stands out as an anchor firm, driving interconnectivity within the cluster.

**Recommendation 3.** Leverage funding programs to create multi-firm R&D and proof of concept projects that showcase cluster opportunities.

- These funds can help build local and functional linkages not only among cluster firms, but also between cluster firms and critical sectors such as advanced manufacturing and IT.
- The projects can also offer strong support for investment attraction efforts.

**Recommendation 4.** Develop a capital network in the region that taps into angel investors. Host information sessions on how interested participants can become accredited investors and on how to invest.

- Capital that is accessible to early stage companies is currently lacking in the region, but there is untapped potential, particularly in the agricultural community for investment in agri-bio products.

**Recommendation 5.** Develop a mentoring network that connects senior and experienced local business leaders and entrepreneurs with new firms.

- Start-ups need advice from local business leaders with experience to help them move beyond the R&D stage to product sales.

**Recommendation 6.** Establish a capability to identify and facilitate innovation and business opportunities with advanced manufacturing and environment and energy firms.

- These linkages can be supported through existing networking initiatives within the region.

### 3.1.3 Identity

Cluster identity reflects the extent to which firms - in and outside the cluster - recognize that there is an agri-innovation cluster in Guelph. It has implications for the visibility of the cluster and for investment and talent attraction.

**Recommendation 7.** Launch a major marketing initiative that:

- Positions Guelph's cluster expertise and success stories on the local, national, and world stage.
- Promotes Guelph's comparative advantages (e.g., access to innovation, clean and green city, affordable housing, local workforce, transportation links, etc.)

- Brands the cluster core as a triangle that is defined by: the downtown; the university; and Guelph innovation district.
- Subsumes the “Grow Guelph” brand within cluster vision.
- Efforts are required to develop a strong brand/identity of Guelph as an innovation centre; existing marketing efforts are too diffuse to attract new businesses and investment.

**Recommendation 8.** Engage university professors and prominent business leaders in helping tell the story of Guelph in Canada and abroad at conferences and other speaking events.

- University professors and company CEOs bring credibility and global exposure to Guelph expertise that can support investment attraction efforts.

### 3.1.4 Community Support

Community support is essential if the city is to maintain a long term development focus on, and commitment to, the cluster. Community support transpires in three ways, each equally important. First is the support from the Guelph community itself. It is important for the city, business leaders and the public to each be in agreement with the goals of the cluster and be enthusiastic towards supporting its growth. Cluster development is a long-term effort which cannot continue with weak commitment. The second aspect is having support from community leaders or champions. A community champion is someone who engages and mobilizes public officials, citizens, business leaders, and, or local groups, to take actions towards improving the public good or addressing problems, which in a cluster context would be related to developing the Agri-Innovation cluster. A third aspect to community support is having organizations that can support the leadership of community champions and foster a community’s efforts around the cluster’s development. Overall community support requires further strengthening if the region is to maintain its long term commitment to the development of the cluster.

**Recommendation 9.** <sup>\*</sup> Identify and support the development of a supporting organization that is capable of mobilizing stakeholders to take on strategic projects, providing cluster direction and resolving local and regional impediments to cluster development. Other functions for a cluster organization include:

- Engage and promoting alignment among innovation support organizations (local and provincial)
- Promoting alignment between cluster skill needs and local educational program offerings
- Leading on a proactive marketing campaign of cluster
- Promoting regional alignment of strategic direction and initiatives through regional coordination and collaboration

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<sup>\*</sup> Further data collection and analysis is currently underway to give greater specificity to this preliminary recommendation.

- Attracting and recruiting firms to the region that can strengthen the critical mass of the cluster

### 3.1.5 Innovation

Overall innovation performance in the Guelph cluster is relatively low for a knowledge intensive cluster. In terms of R&D, firms report expenditures of R&D equal to about 10% of revenues. Several explanations have been given for this modest performance, including the fact that though Guelph has a number of multinational subsidiaries, they generally have no R&D capabilities and are instead regional suppliers.

**Recommendation 10.** Promote the University of Guelph’s new Business Development Office, IP licensing policy, and technology transfer opportunities to local firms.

- The University of Guelph has undertaken a number of significant changes in how it manages its intellectual property as well as its relationship with industry. Very few in the business community are aware of these changes, the result of which is the perpetuation of the view that the University is part of the innovation problem.

**Recommendation 11.** Work with the province and industry stakeholders to establish leading edge strategic infrastructure related to agri-bio in Guelph that can support innovation and growth of the cluster as a whole and build visibility.

- This infrastructure, which may include a seed crusher or bio-fermentation plant, is critical if Guelph is to capture the economic activity associated with the agri-bio industry.

## 3.2 Industry Development

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Successful industry development within a locality typically requires effective and rapid responses to company concerns and issues so that necessary investment decisions can be made in a timely manner.

**Recommendation 12.** Develop rapid action group that can be called upon to support and influence business expansion, retention and attraction opportunities, which includes representatives from OMAFRA, City of Guelph, the University of Guelph, industry and venture capitalists.

- Such a group demonstrates strong commitment to prospective firms and signals that the region is supportive of business.
- Such a group can also help align economic development efforts between the city and different levels of government.

### 3.2.1 Expansion / Retention

As cluster firms look to expand it is important for the city to help ensure that their expansion needs can be met within the region. This engagement can also help foster a business friendly culture throughout the region.

**Recommendation 13.** Maintain strong and active relationships between the City of Guelph and cluster firms so as to be able to respond and support expansion and growth needs as they arise.

**Recommendation 14.** In collaboration with the University, engage multinational firms located in Guelph to make them more aware of research opportunities and accessible funding within the region.

- Guelph is home to a number of multinational subsidiaries whose only activities are related to sales. This is a missed opportunity for the region to expand its research base.

### 3.2.2 Creation

Though start-ups present the highest risk for the cluster's growth (i.e., high failure rate), they are more likely to remain in the region once established. Start-ups also act as an important mechanism for transferring IP from research institutes and can have a greater local economic impact than if this same technology is simply licensing to firms outside the region. For this reason, initiatives to improve the rate of new firm formation are critical to the success of the cluster.

**Recommendation 15.** Establish low-cost wet lab space that can be accessed by start-ups for research and development, and prototype scale-up activities.

- Wet laboratories are spaces where chemicals, biological matter or other material are tested and analyzed with processes that require water, direct ventilation, and specialized piped utilities. Wet labs are generally located within a building specifically designed to house them in accordance with regulatory requirements.
- The Guelph region currently has very little such space available, which is a significant deterrent to those firms that require wet labs from product development.

**Recommendation 16.** Identify existing low-cost, and, or, subsidized office space within the cluster triangle that is suitable for cluster start-ups.

- Guelph already maintains many excellent support services for new firms, which diminishes the value and urgency of establishing an incubator in the city. Having low

cost office space in proximity to the research base of the cluster is, however, valuable to new firms but which can be achieved without the expense of a new incubator.

**Recommendation 17.** Promote entrepreneur education through a new MBA stream at University of Guelph that is dedicated to technology entrepreneurship and which requires students to develop business plans on commercializing technology from the University's business development office.

- These programs help develop crucial entrepreneurial and managerial skills in the cluster.

### 3.2.3 Conversion

There are a number of examples of agri-bio products (e.g. agri-based plastics, lubricants, etc.) that have been successfully integrated into the auto and food processing industries, helping to not only modernize the industrial base, but also expand market share and employment. However, awareness of agri-bio opportunities is generally low, and without sufficient awareness and active outreach, the potential of agri-bio as a source of new products and industry solutions will not be fully realized.

**Recommendation 18.** Engage the advanced manufacturing and food processing sectors to promote opportunities where companies can take advantage of agri-bio and agri-energy technologies.

- These efforts can help Guelph realize the goals of the Community Energy Plan and support the image of Guelph as a centre for environmentally sustainable and innovative companies.
- Key collaborators include the Ontario BioAuto Council, which specializes in this area.

### 3.2.4 Attraction

If Guelph is to build critical mass in the cluster and achieve employment objectives, recruitment of firms to the region will be essential. Guelph is best suited for innovative small to mid-sized firms that are looking to leverage the cost of their innovation activities with public support. While these firms may not have the international recognition of a multinational firm, they can have strong growth potential that could readily be supported by Guelph's key cluster assets such as the GID.

**Recommendation 19.** Develop business / research partnership incentives & programs for attracting companies to the cluster. These partnerships provide an innovative way to enhance the comparative advantage that the region has to offer. This can include, for example:

- Strategic research projects carried out in collaboration with universities and local firms; and
- District energy agreements that offer competitive utility pricing.

**Recommendation 20.** Establish a group that can identify prospective small and mid-sized firms from outside the Guelph region that complement the expertise in the Guelph cluster.

- This group should comprise individuals actively involved in business attraction who are in frequent contact with prospective firms (e.g., OAFT, BioEnterprise, Toronto Region Research Alliance, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade).

**Recommendation 21.** Develop a rapid response process within the municipal government for arranging initial meetings with prospective firms.

- Ensuring a rapid response (e.g. 48 hours) by city officials to prospective investment opportunities demonstrates a commitment by the city and can help positively influence private sector investment decisions.

<b>LIST OF SYNERGIES BETWEEN PROSPERITY 2020 AND HAL STUDIES</b>		
<b>SYNERGY</b>	<b>PROSPERITY 2020</b>	<b>HAL</b>
Diversify economy through targeted growth in strategic sectors	Identified set of strategic growth sectors including agri-enviro technologies and advanced manufacturing	Focus on development and growth of a agri-innovation cluster for Guelph and environment/energy/advanced manufacturing cluster
Define a a specific "niche" within identified strategic sectors	Define and dominate a "green" niche for Guelph	Identifies several niche areas within the main identified cluster sectors
Leverage/focus on strategic partnerships and networks	Establish/maintain strategic partnerships with others - including regional economic development partnerships	Develop business/research partnership incentives and programs - leverage collaboration with local firms/education institutions
Raise Guelph's identity/profile in the global marketplace	Expand Guelph's global profile in targeted strategic sectors - review/extend its brand to position Guelph as place to live, work and visit	Develop strong brand/identity of Guelph as innovation centre - Launch major marketing initiative to position Guelph's cluster expertise
Invest in hard infrastructure	Ensure a sufficient supply of "shovel ready" employment lands to meet future demand - includes HCBP and GID lands	GID has an important role to play in the long-term future of the identified cluster - support attraction/retention of cluster businesses
Leverage funding programs	Establish commercialization/capitalization networks to convert ideas to sold products	Develop a capital network in the region that taps into angel investors
Invest in the Downtown	Continue to invest in Downtown Guelph - focus on improving the Downtown must remain a top priority	Brand the cluster core as a triangle defined by the Downtown, U of G and the GID
Business Climate	City discourse in Guelph described as fractured among different interests/viewpoints with no overarching focus on points of agreement on what is best for community as a whole - re-position Guelph as "sustainably business friendly"	Need to bring alignment and consensus around community goals and cluster vision and related initiatives - different agendas of factions in Guelph have created negative anti-business perception of Guelph's business climate