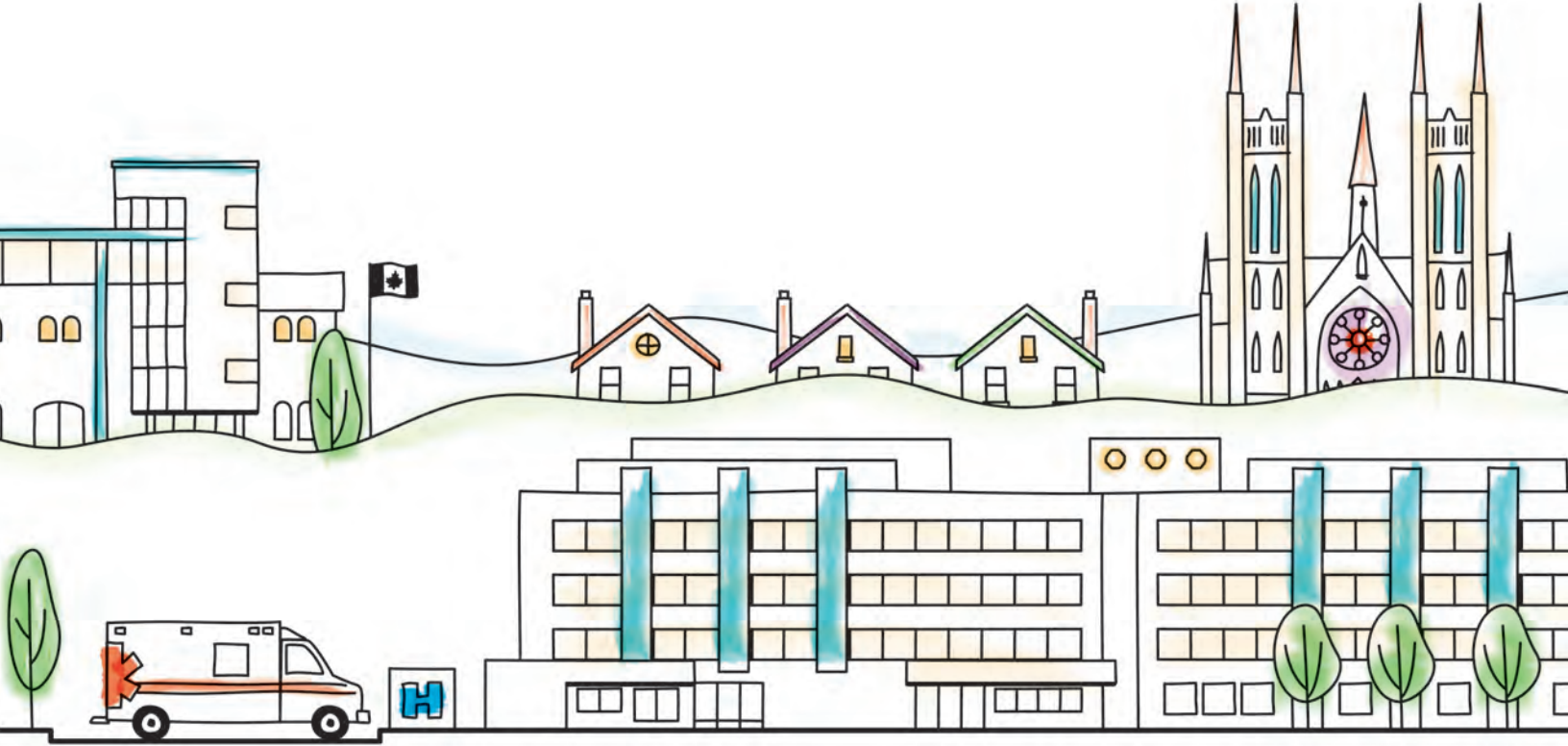



A United Vision:  
**GUELPH'S  
COMMUNITY PLAN**





**Guelph.** We're grounded in community and our deep connection to the environment. We look out for one another, celebrate our diversity and smile at each other in the streets. We are leaders who shape tomorrow. We tackle local and global challenges through innovation, art and action. And we're committed to inclusive prosperity—because together, we're stronger.





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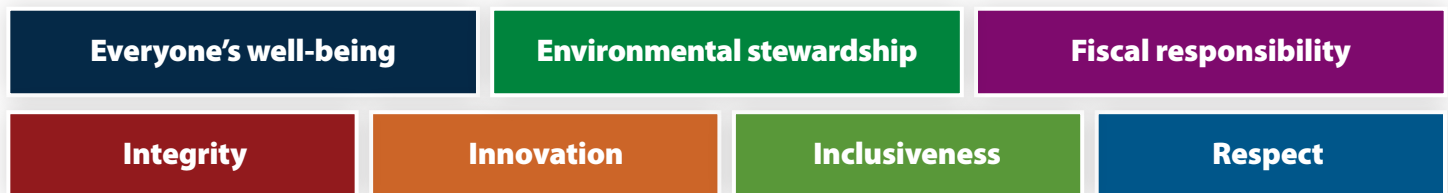
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# Our Community Plan at a glance

## Our community vision

Guelph. We're grounded in community and our deep connection to the environment. We look out for one another, celebrate our diversity and smile at each other in the streets. We are leaders who shape tomorrow. We tackle local and global challenges through innovation, art and action. And we're committed to inclusive prosperity—because together, we're stronger.

## Our values



## Our focus themes and strategic directions



Learn more at [guelph.ca/communityplan](http://guelph.ca/communityplan)

# Introduction

Guelph is growing at one of the fastest rates in Canada, with the population projected to increase from 130,000 people today to 169,000 by 2030. As our community grows and changes, we need a well-planned approach that steers us in directions we want to go.

To do that, the City of Guelph, community members and a wide range of organizations have built a plan that will shape what Guelph will look like over the next 10 to 20 years. This aspirational document captures our vision of the future and will inform, inspire and guide us as we move forward. As a plan that affects us all, it was shaped by the community, is owned by the community and will be implemented collaboratively by the community.

The Plan lays the foundation for a strong, welcoming and prosperous future for Guelph—one where everyone feels like they belong, can access essential services and earn a good living. It will guide the work of local government and agencies that serve our community.

It also provides a framework for monitoring and reporting on progress toward our common goals, sharing what we've learned and shifting directions when necessary.

## Guelph's Community Plan is:

- **Comprehensive.** Our Plan addresses all aspects of community development, including economic, cultural, educational, environmental, social and health issues.
- **Long-range.** Our Plan identifies community-wide priorities and issues over a 10- to 20-year time horizon.
- **Relevant to the entire city.** Our Plan identifies the issues that reflect the needs and priorities of the diversity of residents, neighbourhoods, businesses and institutions that make up the whole community of Guelph.

After a year of listening and research, several things became clear. Guelph is a special place for the people who live, work, study and visit here. Regardless of who we are, what we do or which ward we live in, we are passionate about protecting the things that set Guelph apart.

As a community, we also recognize there are challenges, and we're committed to working together to tackle them so everyone in Guelph can enjoy a good quality of life. Like any community, we have differences of opinion. However, Guelphites expressed a remarkable degree of consensus on how we want our future to unfold.

## The Plan groups these into six broad themes:

- We are home
- We protect our environment
- We create value
- We feel well
- We play and explore
- We move around freely

In the pages that follow, you'll find the key results from the engagement and research process, what we want to achieve within each theme, and what the next steps are.

This is your Plan. It is a document that will continue to change as our community keeps moving forward. Please spend some time with it. Share it with others. Use it as a starting point when defining your own organization's goals.

And, let's keep talking—share your thoughts, priorities and stories with us.



## Strong foundations

Guelph has many strengths. Our employment numbers are growing at one of the fastest rates in Canada. Our residents enjoy a long life span, with many people living well beyond 85 years. Our environmental efforts have won us awards for leadership, sustainability and water conservation. And 97% of us report having a good quality of life. There are plenty of reasons why so many people are proud to call Guelph home.

- The city has a unique natural environment that the community cares deeply about.
- Located in Canada's innovation corridor, Guelph is a powerhouse of discovery and innovation in a changing world.
- Guelph enjoys a vibrant arts and culture scene.
- Guelph has a diverse variety of recreational, fitness and nature-focused opportunities.
- We want to make the world a better place—creating more circular, sustainable and equitable opportunities—and we're doing that on a daily basis.

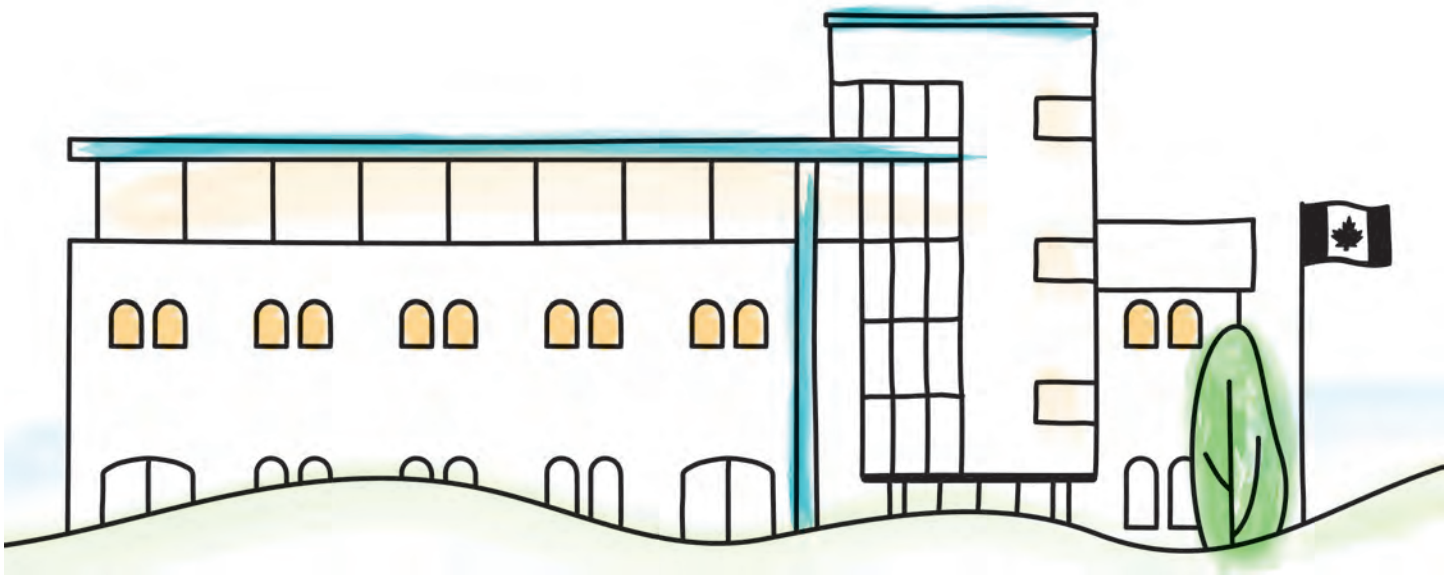
To ensure a prosperous and inclusive future, we need to continue investing in these distinctive strengths and building on the work we've already begun.

## More work to do

In many ways, Guelph is very much on the right track. However, our community still faces significant and complex challenges. These include:

- Providing access to affordable housing
- Creating jobs for our young people
- Attracting, training and keeping talented people
- Building strong and resilient youth
- Embracing diversity and ensuring everyone is welcomed and included
- Investing in greater sustainability for our arts and culture sector

Guelphites believe that addressing the symptoms and the root causes of these issues now will help us create a more resilient community. Overall, we are hopeful and united in a vision for a great future—and we're already making strides toward it, with many plans, projects and collaborations in place that we can build on. And we have a track record of success: Guelph has a reputation for "punching above its weight."



# Creating a community vision

Building our Community Plan involved three key components:

- **Listening** – community and stakeholder engagement
- **Observing** – the Village of 100 People data project
- **Researching** – the strategic plan scan



strategic plan scan

## Listening – community and stakeholder engagement

To make sure this Plan truly reflects the needs, priorities and values of the Guelph community, City staff embarked on a year-long engagement process. Between January 2018 and February 2019, they asked individuals and organizations across the city four key questions:

1. What do we want Guelph to be?
2. What matters most to you?
3. What's in the way? What are the barriers?
4. Where are the opportunities? What are our strengths?

More than 10,000 community members, visitors and City staff provided input. They did it in person, online and through “do-it-yourself” conversation starters. They participated in more than 100 focus groups, events, casual discussions and targeted workshops. They spoke up on social media. And 600 took part in a statistically-valid telephone survey.

events, meetings,  
workshops  
**110+**

sector  
workshops  
**5**

strategic  
plans scanned  
**38**

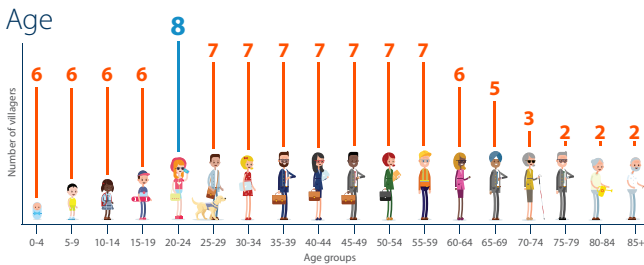
visits to  
engagement platforms  
**4,200+**

people  
talked to  
**6,200+**

visits to  
website  
**5,000+**

## Observing – the Village of 100 People data project

The Village of 100 People data project saw the City produce an infographic-based community profile. This easy-to-digest summary document captures key data points from sources across the community. It shows you what Guelph looks like as a village of 100 people so that our conversations can be based on key demographics and trends.

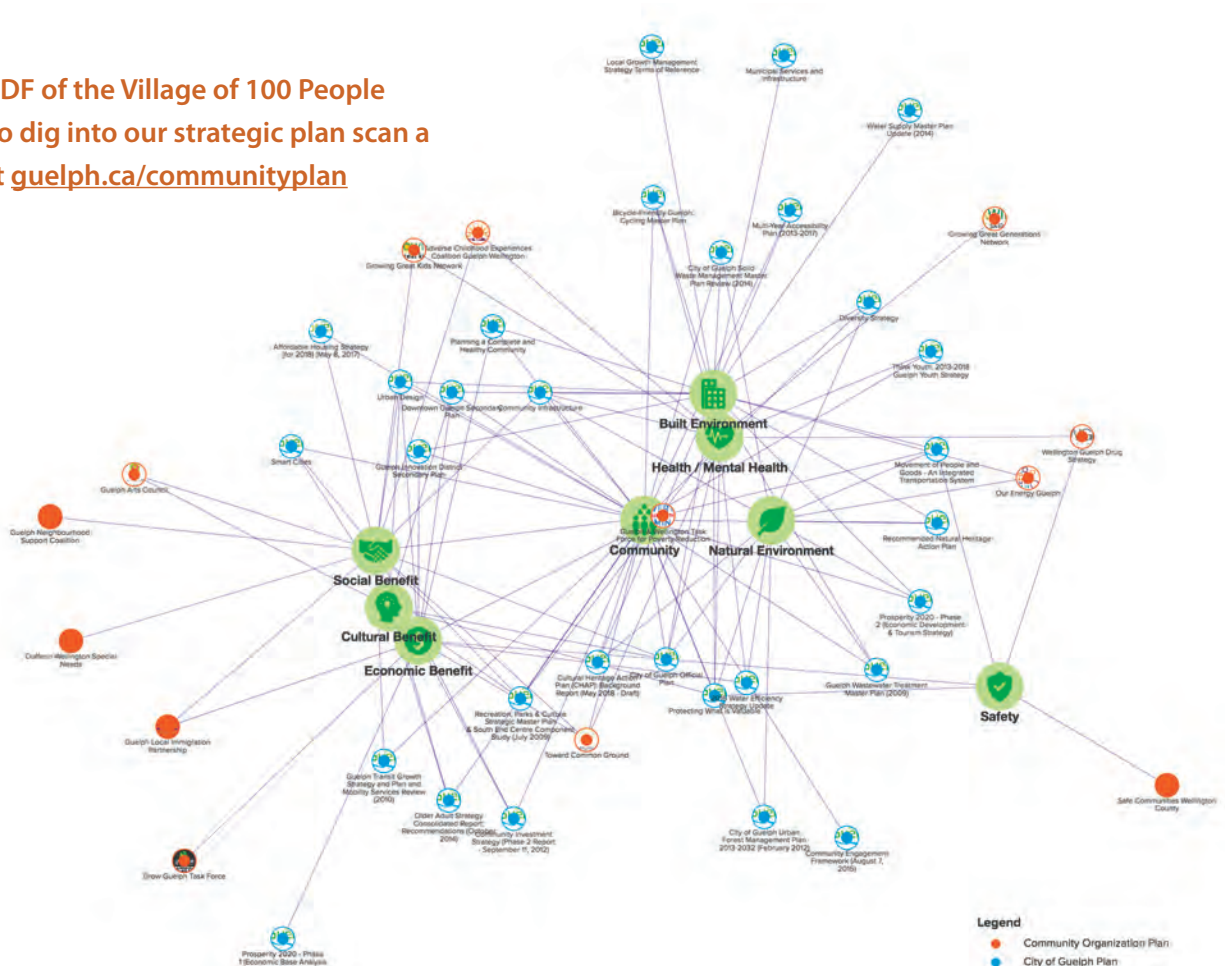


To view the full PDF of the Village of 100 People data project, or to dig into our strategic plan scan a little further, visit [guelph.ca/communityplan](http://guelph.ca/communityplan)

## Researching – the strategic plan scan

A strategic plan scan was conducted to better understand existing goals, priorities and strategies within the City and community organizations. The plan scan looked at 80 City and collaboration-based plans, narrowed down to 38 plans for an in-depth study. The scan helped to identify and incorporate existing priorities, uncover new opportunities, understand the relationships and overlap of existing plans, and help people easily navigate and understand the maze of existing plans.

Of the 38 plans included in our scan, 24 are owned by the City of Guelph, one belongs to the County of Wellington and 13 are collaboration-based plans. The City of Guelph is involved in 10 of the 13 collaboration-based plans, which include more than 125 partners from across the public, private and non-profit sectors.







# Our year of listening



A United Vision:  
**GUELPH'S**  
**COMMUNITY PLAN**  
 MAKE YOUR MARK.

# Community values

Over the course of more than a year of listening, observing and research, several things became clear. Community members are proud to live here, and although we recognize that our community faces some challenges, the overall feedback was overwhelmingly positive.

Most strikingly, we agree on many values and priorities—regardless of how old we are, where we live or where we come from. The same messages came through again and again, on social media, at community events, in the telephone survey, in sector round tables and more.

The common community values people care about include:

## Everyone's well-being

We are a compassionate community concerned with nurturing healthy, active, happy people of all ages. We care about and want to provide support for those living with poverty, mental health concerns, homelessness and addiction.

## Environmental stewardship

We're passionate about our green spaces and the beauty of our natural environment. We understand the crucial need to take care of it. We are proud to be environmental leaders, helping address pressing national and international concerns.

## Fiscal responsibility

We believe that doing what's right for future generations includes making the right investments for the greatest return. We realize the challenges faced by many in our community who are struggling to make ends meet. Affordability, or more to the point, lack of affordability is a consistent theme through our engagement.

## Integrity

What we say matters, whether as individuals or organizations. How we behave matters even more. We believe in standing up for what's right and standing behind our decisions.

## Innovation

We value creativity and curiosity. We value the beauty that follows innovation in its many forms: how we collaborate, express ourselves and solve problems. We embrace the blank page, the whiteboard and the untouched canvas.

## Inclusiveness

Everyone here belongs here. We celebrate our differences and learn from each other. We challenge ourselves to look beyond our own experiences. We know that decisions are better when a diversity of voices are welcome, included and shared.

## Respect

For each other and the land we share. For civil discourse and picking up after ourselves. For our elders. For our life choices, our right of expression, our right to be heard and our right to have a say in the decisions that affect us.

# Guelph's community vision

Based on these values, our research and engagement, we've crafted a vision statement to define and guide our community moving forward.

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So what does that look like? In the pages that follow, we identify six themes that shape the kind of Guelph we want in the future. For each, we outline the directions we need to take and the goals we aim to achieve to help us realize our vision together.



# We are home

We love where we live. We love green, walkable neighbourhoods where we are connected to each other and can continue to live in our own neighbourhoods as we age. We don't want to lose our "Guelphiness" as our city continues to grow rapidly. Guelph needs more homes that are affordable, accessible and suitable regardless of income, age or situation. We recognize and support those who don't feel at home here. We know that issues surrounding homelessness, safety, poverty, addiction and mental health are inextricably linked and can only be addressed by a compassionate, collaborative, committed community.



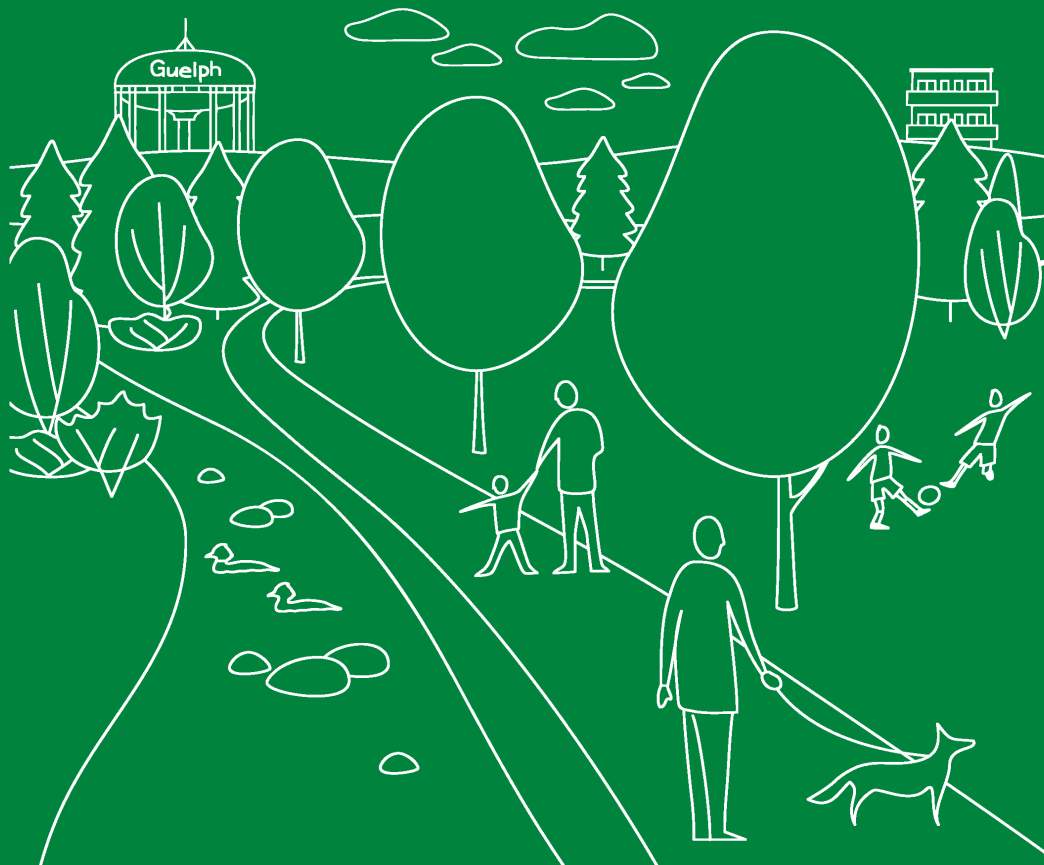


Strategic directions	Goals
<p><b>Have housing that works for us</b></p>	<p>Everyone has a safe home in Guelph that functions well for them.</p> <p>Permanent housing solutions are available for the most vulnerable.</p> <p>Affordable housing choices across the city are available for different household types and needs.</p> <p>Accessible housing options are more readily available.</p> <p>Young people can stay here, and new people can move here.</p>
<p><b>Keep Guelph a safe city</b></p>	<p>People are safe and feel safe too—the city has low crime rates, and its roads and trails feel safe for residents and visitors.</p> <p>Emergency response capacity keeps pace with growth.</p>
<p><b>Love our neighbourhoods and keep them strong</b></p>	<p>Social connections in neighbourhoods are strong, with many activities and community assets, including well-supported neighbourhood groups and hubs that foster a strong sense of belonging.</p> <p>People look out for one another, actively give back and participate in local decision-making to improve our quality of life.</p> <p>Our neighbourhoods are age-friendly and offer residents all the services, access and amenities they need.</p>
<p><b>Keep our big, small city vibe</b></p>	<p>Neighbourhoods are walkable and designed with Guelph character.</p> <p>We strike a good balance of streetscapes and parks that are beautiful and inviting for community use.</p> <p>We have access to good-quality core amenities and retail options.</p>



# We protect our environment

People in Guelph are fiercely protective of the environment and proud of our record in waste diversion, energy management and groundwater conservation. Now we want to go farther, continuing to lead our province and country. We honour the knowledge of First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. Our green spaces and wild places, our bees and our trees, must be protected and nurtured. We will make bold, innovative, collaborative decisions to face and reduce the impacts of climate change. We are stewards.





Strategic directions	Goals
<b>Protect and sustain what we have</b>	<p>Water sources are protected, and our water systems are managed in harmony with the environment.</p> <p>Our food system is sustainable.</p> <p>Our natural heritage—including the urban forest and biodiversity—is nurtured, not damaged.</p> <p>Our rivers, parks and green spaces are preserved, and the tree canopy is abundant.</p> <p>Development occurs in harmony with the natural environment.</p>
<b>Reclaim what might otherwise be wasted</b>	<p>Brownfields and underutilized sites are redeveloped.</p> <p>We recycle and upcycle, reuse and repurpose everything from food to furniture—we are a circular community with a circular economy.</p>
<b>Go further than any other city</b>	<p>We make bold decisions and take immediate action on how we will protect our environment.</p> <p>Guelph is a model city for energy and water conservation, waste diversion and sustainable development.</p>
<b>Prepare for the future</b>	<p>Climate change infrastructure is in place to create a resilient city.</p> <p>We minimize consumption of water, energy and other natural resources.</p> <p>We invest in innovation and technology that will reduce our impact on our natural environment.</p>
<b>Steward our resources</b>	<p>People understand the importance and value of the land we share and are connected to it.</p> <p>Our community learns from the past and each other to adopt sustainable practices and make better decisions.</p> <p>We support, celebrate and recognize great examples of environmental leadership and partnership.</p>

# We create value

Innovation is in our DNA. Our entrepreneurs and innovators create amazing ideas and products. And we tackle global challenges. We confidently assert our role and value within Canada's innovation corridor, leveraging our strengths in agri-food, clean tech and advanced manufacturing. We celebrate our unique cultural talent and our many businesses driven by social purpose. We believe in inclusive prosperity and creating opportunities for everyone to thrive. We recognize the challenges that high housing costs and low unemployment rates create for employers. And employers recognize that a more diverse, inclusive and vibrant community will help attract and keep talented people here.







Strategic directions	Goals
<p><b>Be a global innovation leader</b></p>	<p>Our position in Canada’s Innovation Corridor grows.</p> <p>Strong agri-food, clean tech, advanced manufacturing and the information and communications technology sectors fuel economic growth and create sustainable jobs.</p> <p>Continue to create “made-in-Guelph” innovations that solve local and global challenges.</p> <p>Better regional connections promote cross-pollination of innovation and make it easy for people to work together.</p> <p>Social-purpose-driven businesses (including B Corps and social enterprises) are thriving in our city.</p>
<p><b>Support collaboration and tell our Guelph story better</b></p>	<p>Our innovation and business-support ecosystem is strengthened.</p> <p>Entrepreneurs can easily access support for collaboration and investment.</p> <p>Barriers are reduced, making it easy for businesses to locate and expand in Guelph.</p> <p>Community leaders unite around a strong Guelph narrative and pick a lane (or three) that differentiates us.</p>
<p><b>Leverage our unique character</b></p>	<p>We recognize and support the value of our arts and cultural sector, attracting more visitors and artistic talent.</p> <p>More artistic/cultural businesses can get the help and investment they need to be self-sustaining.</p> <p>Downtown continues to grow as a destination hub of historic beauty and character, with unique retail opportunities, entertainment and tourist attractions.</p>
<p><b>Foster inclusive prosperity</b></p>	<p>There are decent jobs that allow people to live full lives.</p> <p>Everyone who wants to work—including youth, seniors, those with differing abilities, and new immigrants—can meaningfully participate in the workforce.</p>
<p><b>Harness our discovery engines</b></p>	<p>We collaborate with our world-class educational institutions and fully use their resources, knowledge and research.</p> <p>Guelph continues to offer tremendous learning opportunities from kindergarten on up that inspire exploration, discovery and solutions for the future of our city and world.</p>

# We feel well

Everyone belongs here. Our diversity is celebrated, and inclusion is a habit. Healthy families and close-knit communities safeguard against social isolation, a growing public health crisis. Because everyone deserves a great start, we recognize our role in preventing and reducing the effects of adverse childhood experiences. Older adults, immigrants and newcomers are valued and can fully participate and contribute to their communities. We tackle the root cause of physical and mental health issues. We support a sustainable, circular food system that nourishes ourselves and our families. And our health-care infrastructures have expanded to meet the needs of our growing population.





Strategic directions	Goals
<p><b>Give children and youth a great start</b></p>	<p>The needs of children and youth are met (socially, physically, nutritionally, spiritually, culturally and safety-wise).</p> <p>The community fully understands what adverse childhood experiences are and how we can work together to prevent them.</p> <p>Families have strong, nurturing relationships.</p>
<p><b>Foster good mental health</b></p>	<p>People feel they have good mental health.</p> <p>Poor mental health has less impact on our ability to earn a living, learn, connect to one another and achieve.</p>
<p><b>Ensure that everyone feels they belong here</b></p>	<p>Community members feel accepted for who they are and do not face any discrimination or stigma.</p> <p>There is a strong sense of community across the city, and people feel that everyone matters.</p> <p>We celebrate diversity.</p> <p>Social isolation is rare, and people have strong connections with friends and family.</p>
<p><b>Create a nourished community</b></p>	<p>We have a sustainable food system with no wasted food, energy or material resources.</p> <p>Everyone has access to the nutrition they need.</p>
<p><b>Build health infrastructure for the future</b></p>	<p>Guelph is full of amenities to support health and well-being—amenities that grow as the community grows.</p>



# We play and explore

Play fosters mental and physical health. In Guelph, it's easy to play anywhere at any time with anyone. We are given the space, freedom and encouragement to express ourselves, our cultures, our identities and our past. Arts and culture are valued and supported. And our arts organizations are innovative and self-sustaining. Through all seasons, recreation is part of every life at every age and every ability.





Strategic directions	Goals
<p><b>Play everywhere</b></p>	<p>We activate informal and formal spaces for play and expression across the city, both indoors and out.</p> <p>Free opportunities for play are plentiful.</p> <p>The city offers inclusive opportunities that reflect our diversity and new trends in recreational, sport and cultural participation.</p> <p>We have a strong network of connected cultural nodes.</p> <p>Individuals can easily find opportunities that are relevant to their interests and needs.</p>
<p><b>Grow talent</b></p>	<p>More educational programming in the arts exists.</p> <p>We grow and retain artistic, sporting and musical talent.</p> <p>A stronger, more sustainable and better-organized network of artists supporting artists exists.</p> <p>Passionate volunteers are abundant and help sustain meaningful arts, cultural, sport and recreational opportunities.</p>
<p><b>Explore and make sense of who we are together</b></p>	<p>Historical and cultural assets in the city are preserved, enjoyed and explored by everyone.</p> <p>Festivals, events and other opportunities take place across the city, helping us celebrate our diversity, build empathy, make sense of our past and build our future together.</p>
<p><b>Invest and innovate</b></p>	<p>Cultural, artistic, recreational and sports organizations are supported through innovative funding, investment and enterprise models (including collaboration between the private sector, social benefit enterprises and government).</p> <p>Arts, cultural, sport and recreational infrastructure supports the needs of the community across the city.</p> <p>Better data is available to help us understand the value of arts, culture and recreation to our community.</p>

# We move around freely

It's easy to get around our neighbourhoods, our city and our region. Transit is a priority—it's frequent, it's affordable and it can get us to work and to neighbouring communities like Kitchener, Fergus and Hamilton. And we can get to Toronto in less than an hour. People feel safe walking, jogging, wheeling and riding their bikes through all corners of our city. Smart, clean technology is embedded in our infrastructure. Increased use of transit and active transportation routes help address the traffic congestion that can follow rapid growth.





Strategic directions	Goals
<p><b>Facilitate easy movement within our city</b></p>	<p>It is easy for everyone to get around our city year-round to work, play and contribute to our community (inclusive of ability and exceptionality).</p> <p>There are viable transportation options that suit tight budgets and other needs, such as convenience and accessibility.</p> <p>Connected, integrated networks across the city—north, south, east and west—make Guelph feel like one city.</p>
<p><b>Facilitate active transportation—and connection to nature—via natural trails</b></p>	<p>Abundant trail corridors connect neighbourhoods seamlessly, making it easy to get around the city by active modes of transportation. These corridors allow people of all abilities to experience and enjoy the benefits of wild spaces, natural areas and tree-rich environments.</p>
<p><b>Embrace future-ready infrastructure</b></p>	<p>People can move peacefully and efficiently around the city.</p> <p>Smart and clean technologies are embedded in our infrastructure, making us resilient and eliminating our carbon footprint.</p> <p>New partnerships and models sustain our growing infrastructure needs.</p> <p>We make best use of all our assets, such as the Guelph Junction Railway.</p>
<p><b>Connect regionally</b></p>	<p>Guelph is well-connected to our region and beyond, including Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge, Toronto, Hamilton and the County of Wellington.</p> <p>High-frequency, reliable transportation options are accessible, affordable and get people to their destinations faster.</p>



# Building momentum and tracking our progress

Guelph's Community Plan presents a vision for the next 10 years and more—a vision shaped and co-created by the community.

This will be particularly valuable information as the City of Guelph transitions to creating a new Strategic Plan and starts multi-year budgeting. However, this Plan isn't just for the City of Guelph.

Spelling out the future we want to achieve will help guide our collective efforts as local organizations, agencies, government and community members. It will help us to understand who's working on what, highlight areas that need more attention, align different efforts and make priorities clearer.

To keep momentum, the City of Guelph will continue to work together with the residents, organizations and businesses that helped build the Plan:

- Tracking and communicating our progress: The Plan provides us with a blueprint of the future. This forms the basis to measure our progress as a community. We will use international frameworks (World Council for Cities Data ISO Standard 37120) and local frameworks such as Toward Common Ground and The Guelph Community Foundation's Vital Signs to establish a measurement framework that tells us what we need to know.
- Facilitating focused community action: The research showed that the community is already working hard to achieve the majority of the Plan goals. Where further effort would be valuable is to support dialogue or innovative problem solving in areas where there are significant challenges or when new opportunities come up.
- Learning and celebrating significant acts of community building and innovative problem solving: Working together and learning from each other is incredibly important. Sharing stories and examples of excellence can enable and inspire others.

This is the community's Plan—a Plan for all of us to help work together towards common ground.





# Thank you, Guelph.

We created this Plan together.  
And together, we will bring it to life.





# Community Plan resources

For readers viewing a digital copy of this report, the following links will take you to additional documents and resources related to our research, engagement and analysis.

For those viewing a printed copy of this report, the documents can be found by visiting [guelph.ca/communityplan](http://guelph.ca/communityplan)

[Community Plan website](#)

[Discussion Paper](#)

[Year of Engagement Analysis Report](#)

[Strategic Plans Scan Report](#)

[Household Telephone Survey Findings](#)

[Guelph as a Village of 100 People](#)

[1st Economic Sector Workshop Summary](#)

[2nd Economic Sector Workshop Summary](#)

[Environment Sector Workshop Summary](#)

[Social, Health and Education Sector Workshop Summary](#)

[Arts and Culture Sector Workshop Summary](#)

[Community Plan stories—a video playlist](#)

## Contact us

We invite your comments, feedback and questions:

1. Visit our engagement platform to give your thoughts about active City projects
2. Email the Community Plan team at [makeyourmark@guelph.ca](mailto:makeyourmark@guelph.ca)



