

# Welcome

## Purpose of the Study

The City of Guelph initiated the preparation of a comprehensive new Official Plan, or Secondary Plan, for Downtown in anticipation of significant changes due to Provincial and City growth policies, recent and planned public investments, and ongoing community interest in revitalization. The Secondary Plan will:

- Describe an overall strategic and physical vision and objectives for downtown
  - Guide municipal and private sector actions and reinvestment decisions
  - Contain policies and guidelines regarding land use, built form and the public realm
  - Outline a list of priority projects and implementation strategies
- The goal is to ensure Downtown Guelph grows and evolves in a meaningful and relevant way as a vibrant focus for civic, business and cultural life for all of Guelph's citizens and as a complete community unto itself.



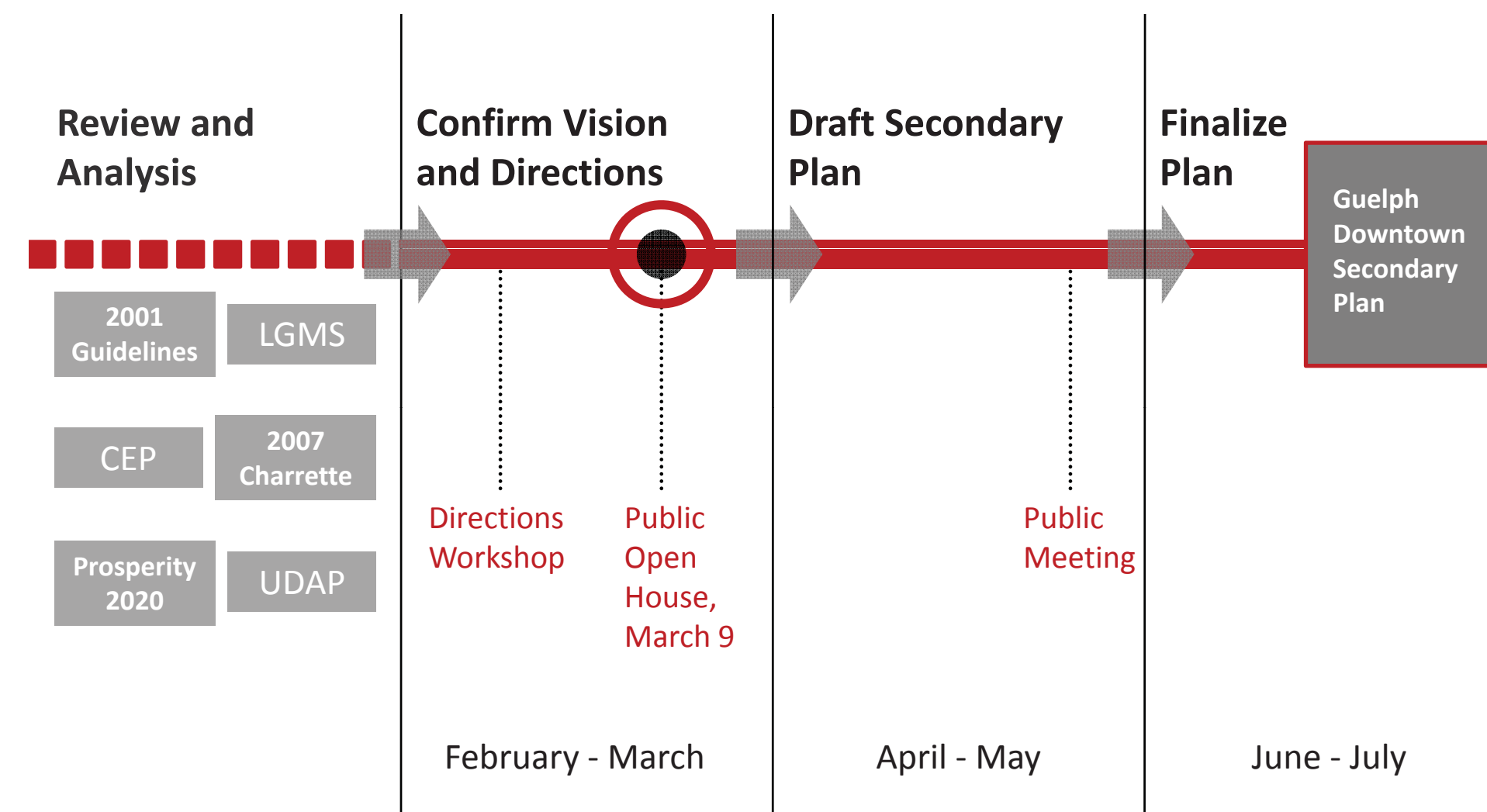
Guelph's last comprehensive plan for downtown was prepared in the 1970s. A new long-term plan is needed to ensure public and private investments are coordinated holistically to achieve broad community objectives for a vibrant, sustainable downtown.

## Study Team

The Secondary Plan study is being led by Urban Strategies Inc., a Toronto-based planning and urban design firm that has recently been involved in a number of planning initiatives in Guelph. The engineering firm of Halsall is assisting Urban Strategies with the energy-related aspects of the plan. The consultant team is working closely with City staff and being guided by a multi-disciplinary Steering Committee comprised of senior staff.

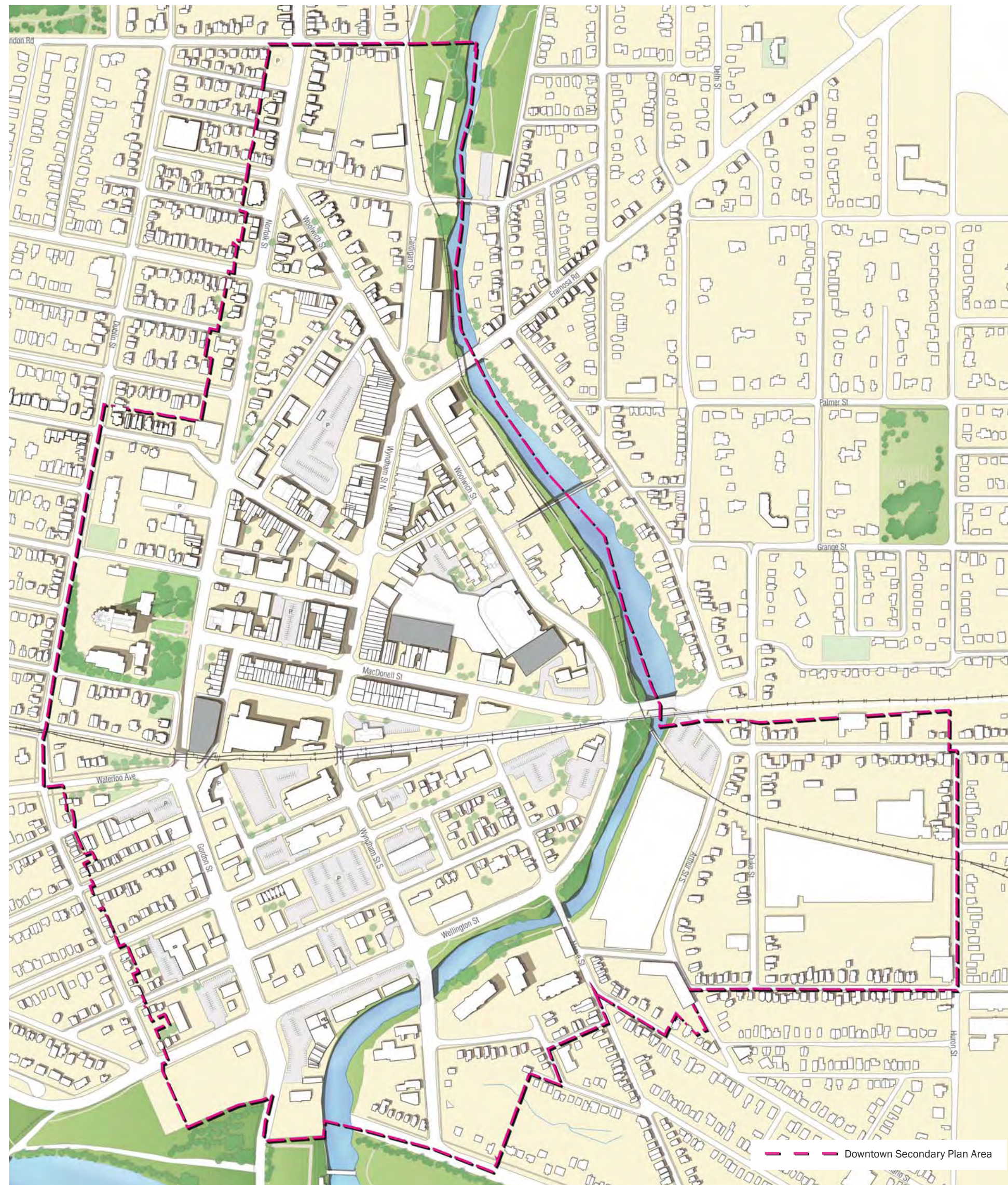
## Process

The study formally began in 2009 but builds on the results of a downtown visioning charrette held in September 2007, conducted in the context of the City's Local Growth Management Strategy and Urban Design Action Plan. Downtown stakeholders have been engaged throughout the process, and a stakeholder workshop was held with a broad group of downtown community representatives, City staff and councillors in February 2010 to help identify directions for the plan. Feedback from that event and tonight's open house will inform preparation of the Secondary Plan, expected to be completed and adopted this summer.



## Study Area

The study area corresponds to the limits of Guelph's Urban Growth Centre, generally defined by the City and the Province as part of the latter's Growth Plan exercise. It includes the area commonly recognized as the downtown as well as significant sites east of the Speed River expected to transition to new uses that will complement downtown and the surrounding neighbourhoods.





# Context

## Places to Grow and the Local Growth Management Strategy

As an Urban Growth Centre in the Province's Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe (Places to Grow), Downtown Guelph is intended to grow to a minimum density of 150 people and jobs per hectare by 2031. Downtown today has approximately 3,200 residents and 7,000 jobs, for a density of approximately 95 people and jobs per hectare. The City's Local Growth Management Strategy targets 2,500 - 3,000 new housing units and 1,500 new jobs downtown by 2031. Accounting for jobs expected to be displaced by redevelopment, this would result in a density of approximately 157 people and jobs per hectare.

The Downtown Secondary Plan needs to accommodate these significant growth targets while providing opportunities for additional growth, recognizing that not all underutilized lands will be redeveloped by 2031.

The Secondary Plan is being guided by growth targets that, if achieved, would almost triple the downtown population to over 9,100 by 2031.

## Community Energy Plan

Given its density, mix of uses, stock of older buildings and transit role, Downtown will play a critical role in helping to achieve the goals of the Community Energy Plan. Key strategies for the next 20 years most relevant to downtown include:

- requiring and encouraging more energy efficient buildings
- promoting energy performance labeling
- encouraging transit, cycling and walking
- developing local combined heat and power systems

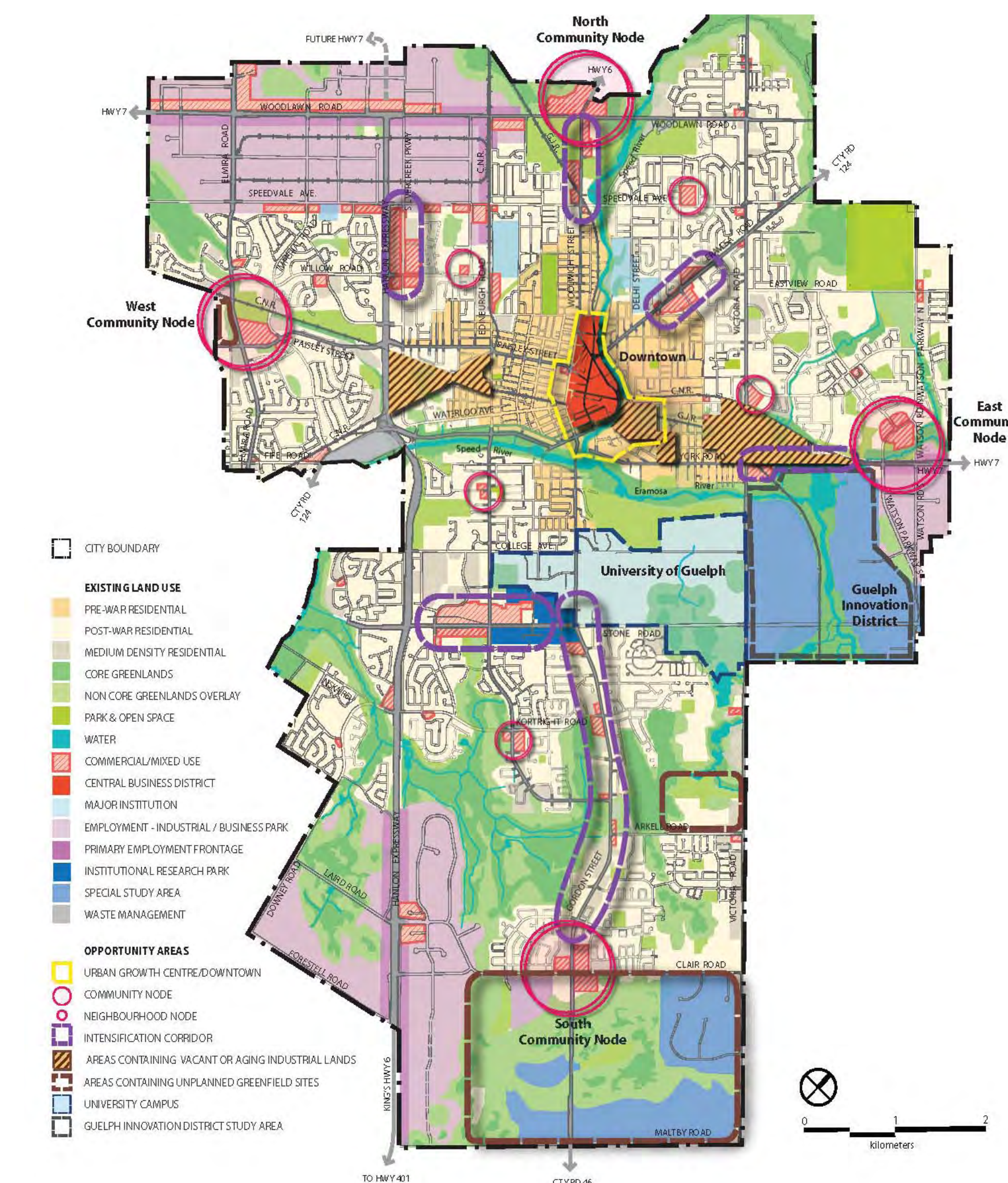
Regarding the last of these, Guelph Hydro, in partnership with the City and FCM, is currently studying the feasibility of district energy downtown.

A number of city-wide plans and strategies highlight the role of downtown in sustaining a healthy, prosperous Guelph.

## Urban Design Action Plan

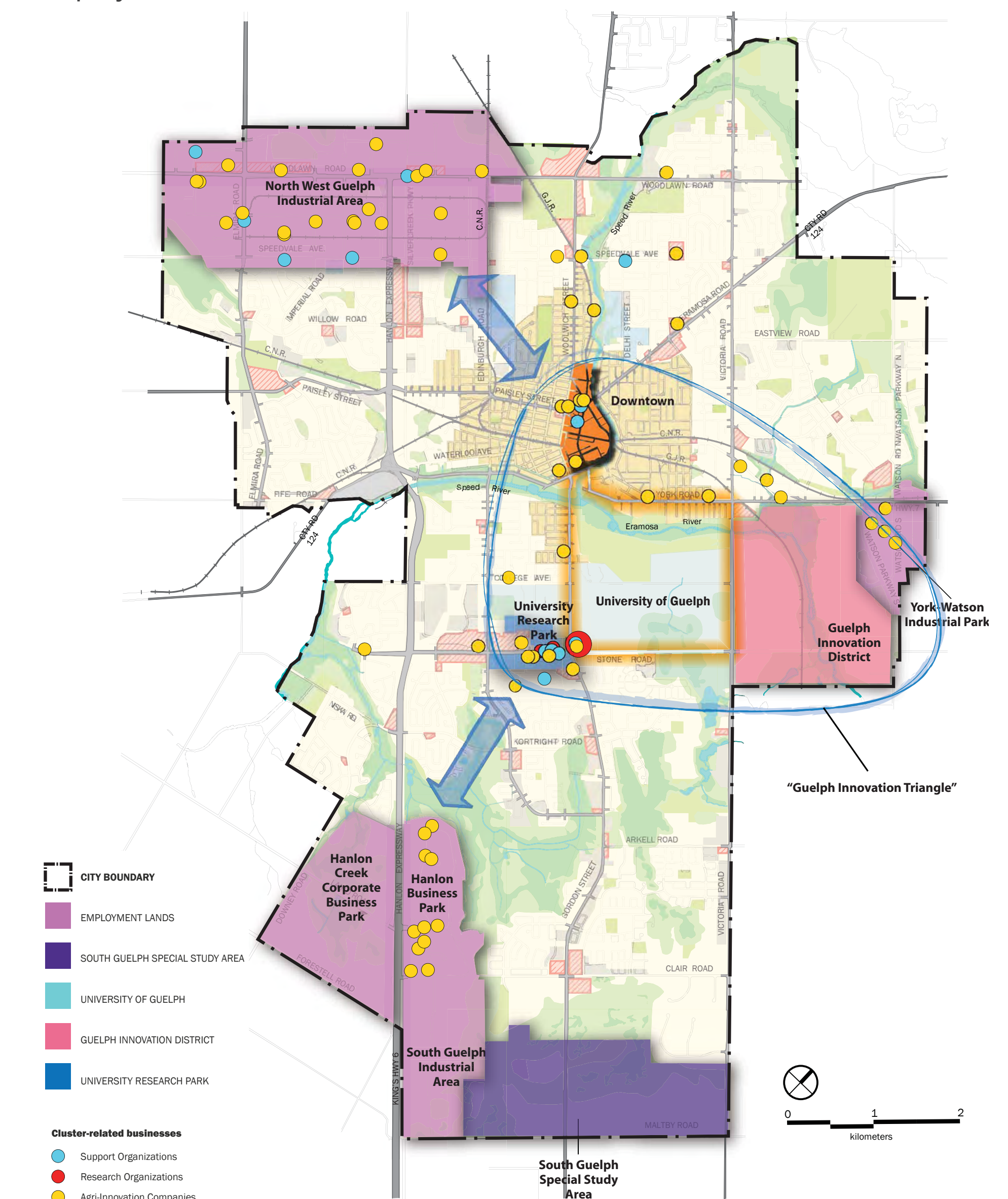
Adopted in 2009, Guelph's Urban Design Action Plan recognizes downtown as one of the city's greatest assets and its potential to grow and evolve as a distinct place and complete community. Among the actions recommended are the following:

- prepare and execute for a strategy for redevelopment of the Baker Street site
- complete a Downtown Community Improvement Plan
- work with landowners and developers on master plans for large redevelopment sites
- Continue the phased program of streetscape and infrastructure improvements
- prepare a riverfront public realm master plan



## Prosperity 2020 and the Agri-Innovation Cluster Strategy

Prosperity 2020, the City's soon-to-be-released economic development and tourism strategy, recommends ongoing investment in downtown, while the recently released Agri-Innovation Cluster Strategy places downtown at one corner of Guelph's "innovation triangle". Both documents highlight how important a distinct, vibrant downtown will be to attracting people and businesses that will diversify and grow the city's employment base.





# Recent and Planned Initiatives

This panel illustrates just some of the many recent and planned initiatives that are setting the stage for future private and public investments downtown. The Secondary Plan will place these into a comprehensive, long-term vision and allow the City to get in front of future opportunities.



Civic Museum



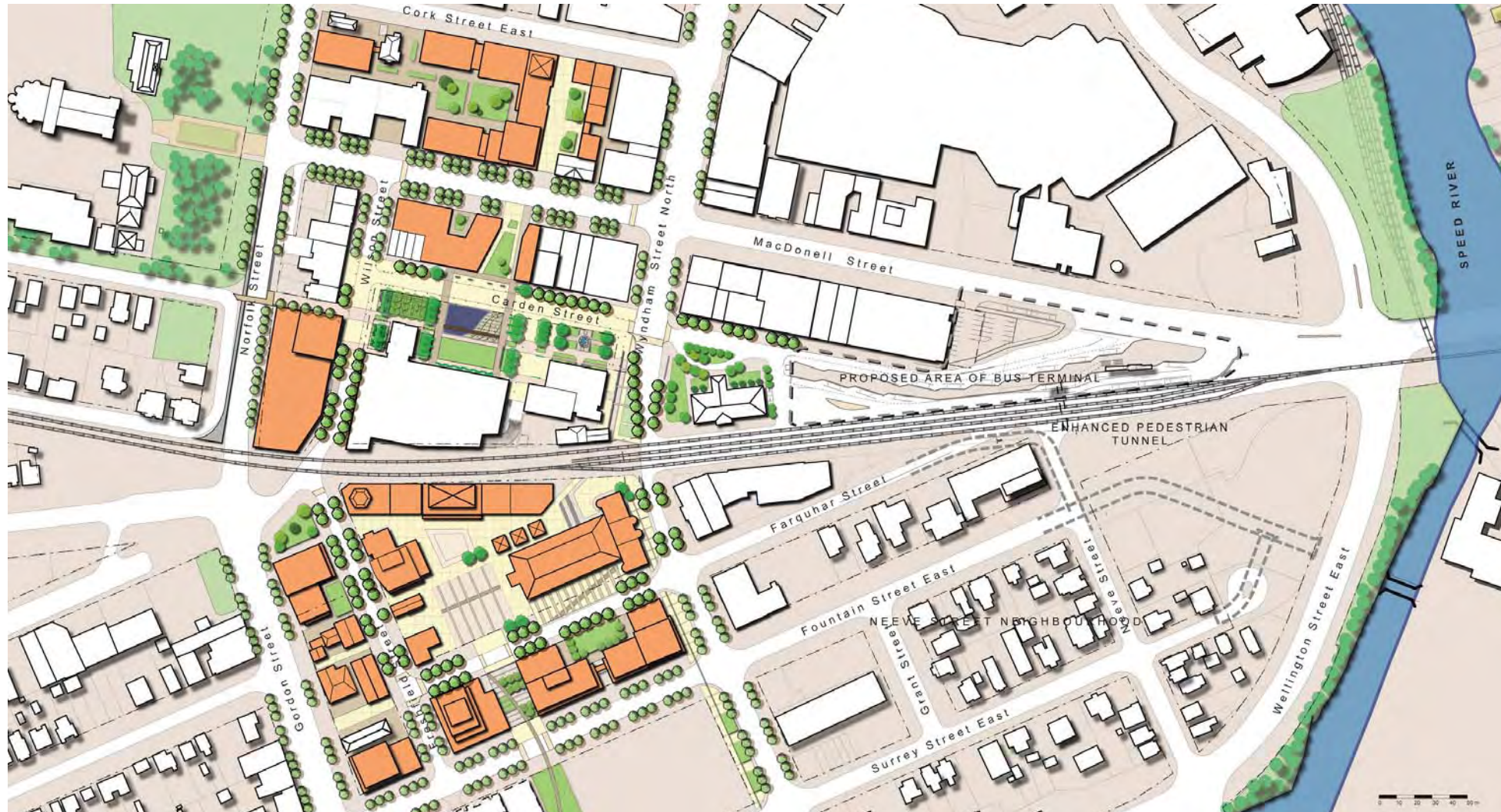
Civic Square



Wilson Street Parking Garage



Baker Street Urban Design Study

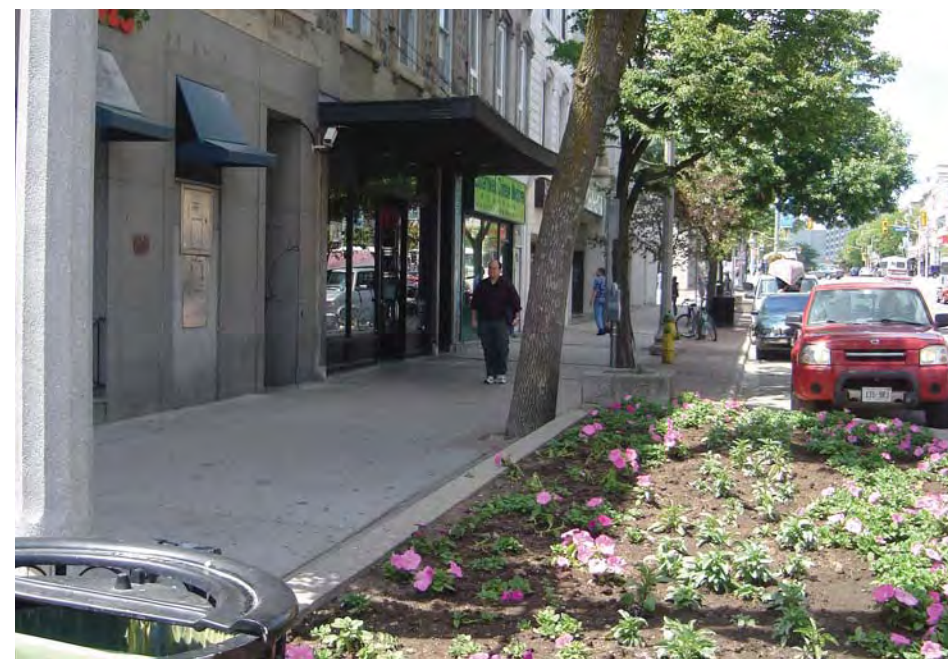


Market Place Strategic Urban Design Plan

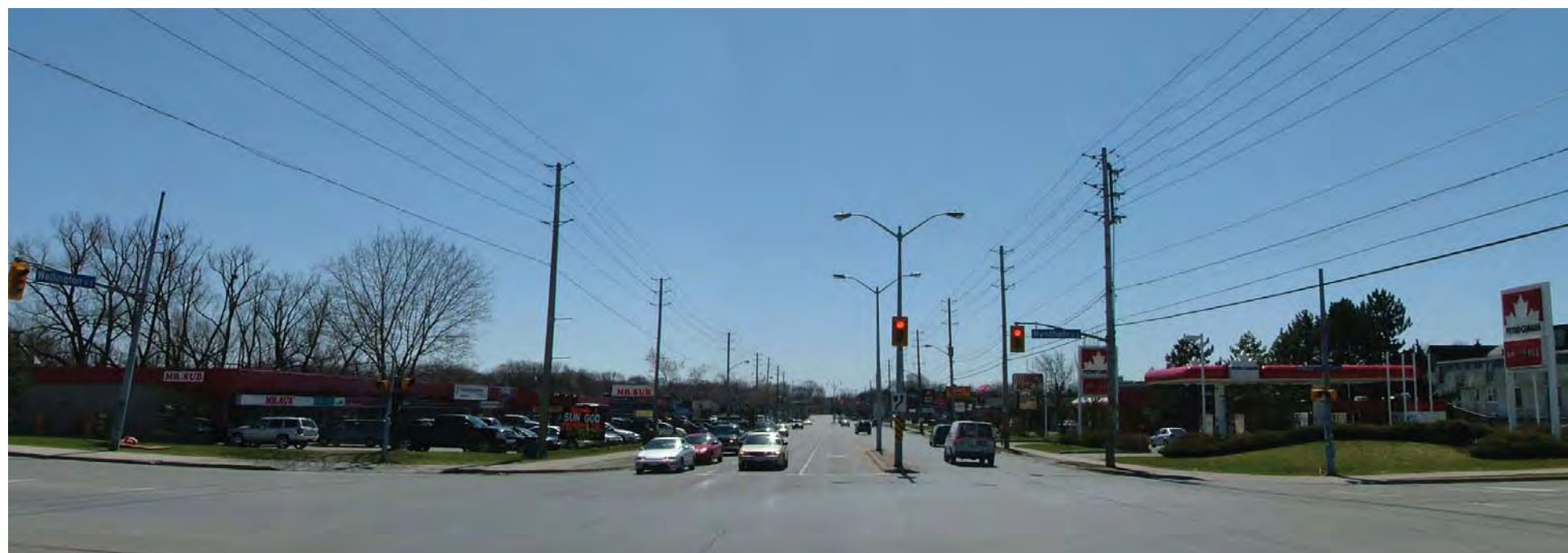


# Downtown today

Although Downtown's role as a central business district has declined as the city has grown outward, its heritage buildings are occupied by a variety of small businesses and it remains a shopping and entertainment destination. The Secondary Plan needs to encourage renovations while promoting the development of new office space and improvements to the retail environment.



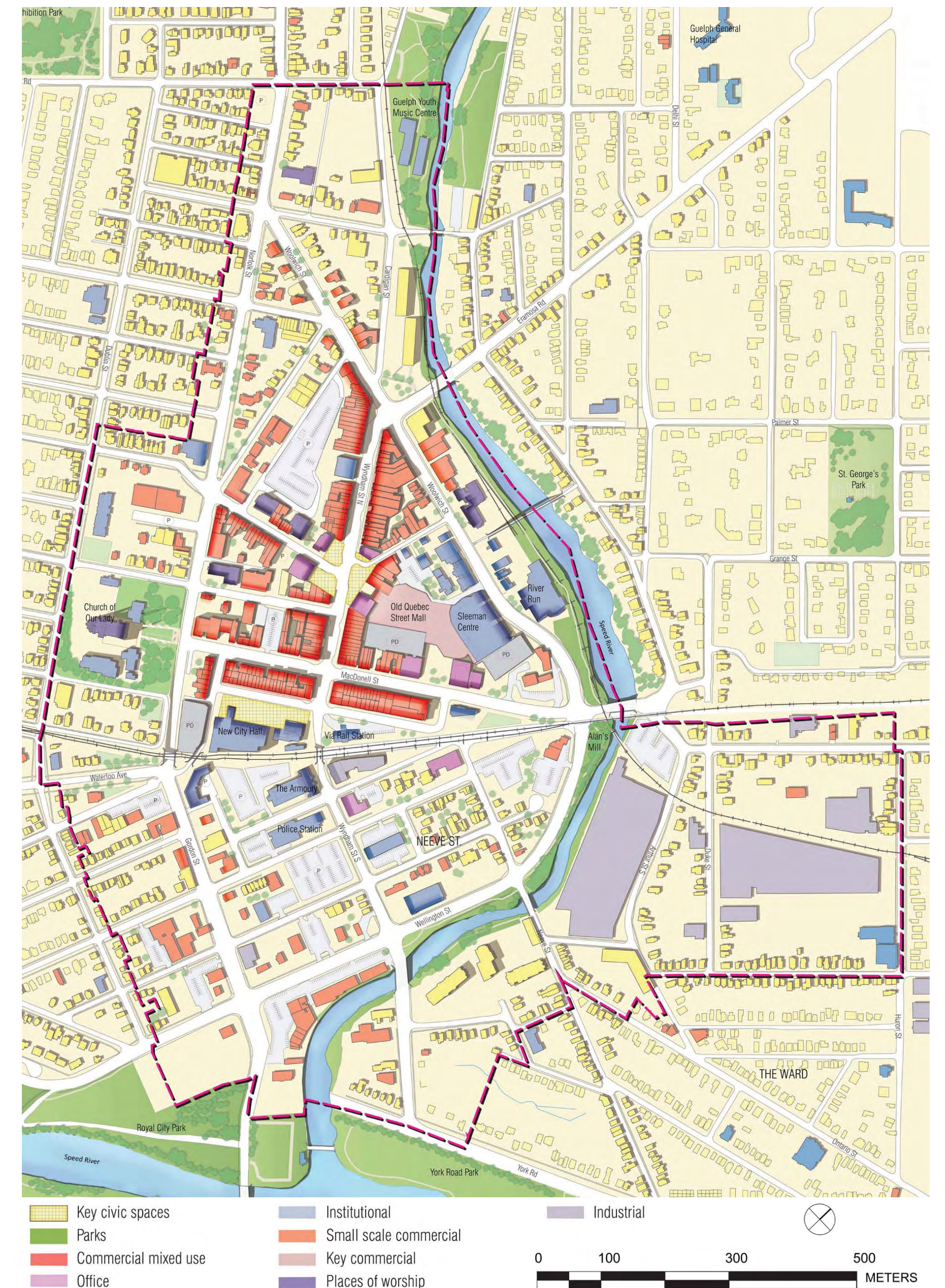
The Speed River is a wonderful asset, but in too many places downtown turns its back to the river.



South of the tracks, low-density, auto-oriented commercial development discourages walking, creates barriers to the riverfront and detracts from the historic character of downtown.

## EXISTING URBAN STRUCTURE

The land use map below highlights the tight knit fabric of the historic core while revealing the disjointed pattern of development and extent of underutilized land south of the tracks.



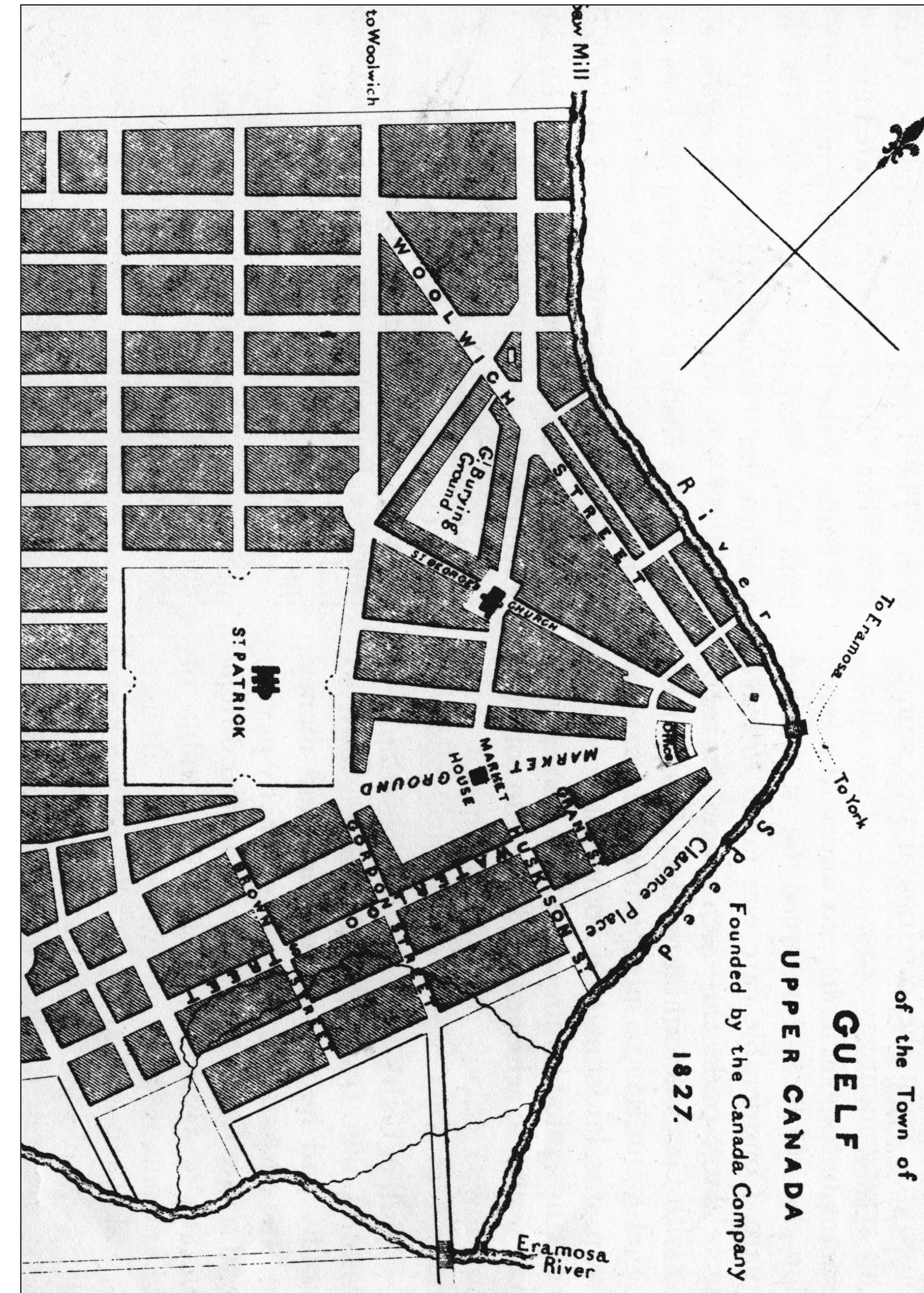


# Heritage

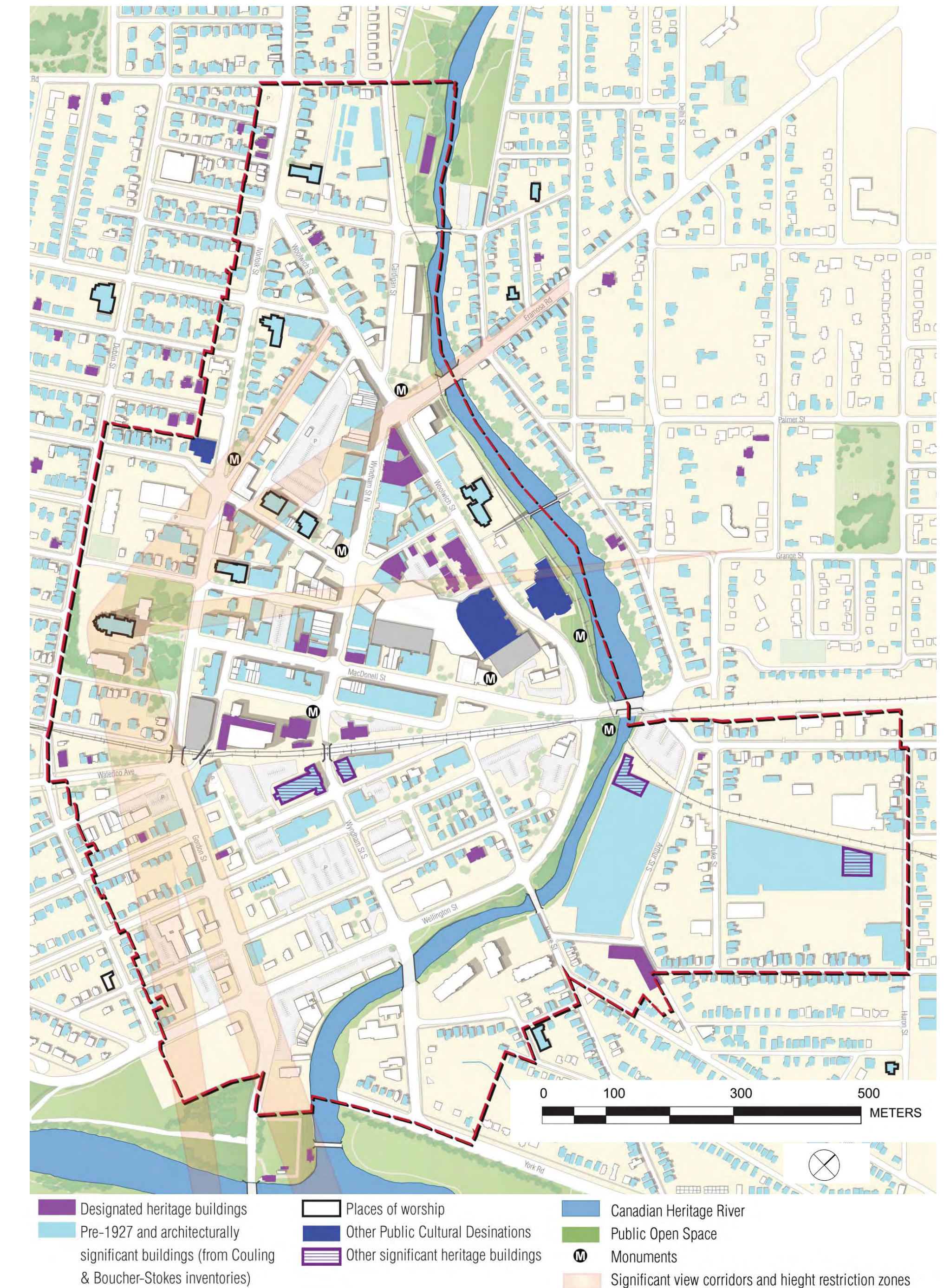
Heritage is downtown's greatest asset. Significant structures need to be protected and maintained. Inspired by John Galt's original plan for Guelph and the legacy of beautiful buildings, future development should demonstrate urban design and architectural excellence. While new buildings need to respect the scale and character of historic areas, there are opportunities for contemporary architecture that creates new legacies.



THE GALT PLAN



HERITAGE RESOURCES





# Development potential

As identified on the accompanying diagram, there are many significant sites downtown with much more development capacity than contained in existing buildings. Based on building types that respect the character of the downtown core and densities that support transit, Downtown could potentially accommodate about 5,000 more housing units and close to 1 million square feet of commercial space (office and retail) and institutional development. Eighty percent of that potential is south of the tracks, on both sides of the river.

While the Secondary Plan needs to identify the many short-term opportunities to improve the historic core north of the tracks, it also needs to establish a framework and guidelines for development to the south that will support vitality in the core and reconnect downtown to the river.



Redevelopment of the Woods properties and other industrial lands east of the river would add significantly more residents to downtown.



Redevelopment of the Fountain Street parking lot could be a catalyst for broader renewal south of the tracks.

## POTENTIAL REDEVELOPMENT SITES



■ Potential redevelopment sites  
■ Sites allocated ground floor commercial density



# Movement

**D**owntown is a hub within the city-wide transportation network and therefore experiences steady volumes of car, truck and bus traffic, particularly on Wellington, Woolwich and Norfolk/Gordon, which skirt the heart of downtown. Fortunately, there is capacity in the road network for existing and anticipated traffic, and congestion is generally not an issue.

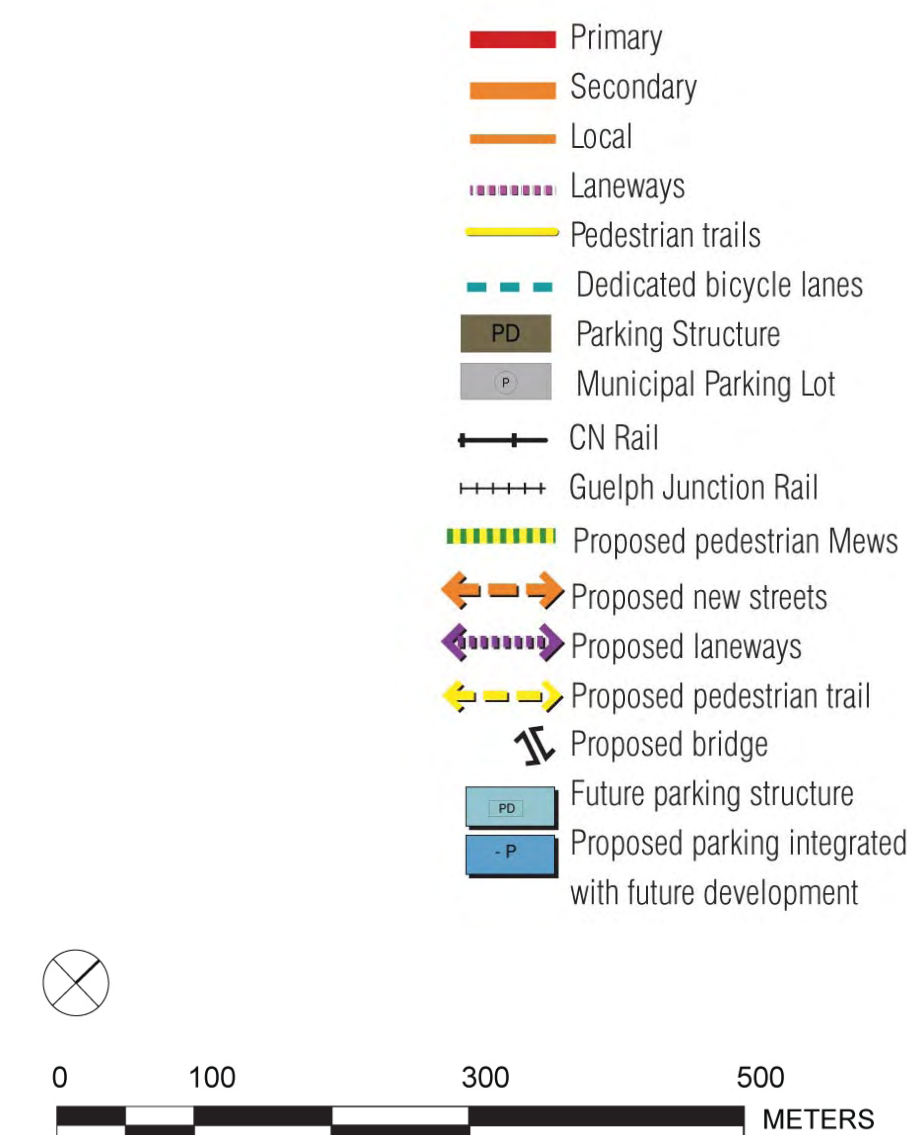
As downtown grows and evolves, the goal should be a balanced transportation network that facilitates more public transit and encourages walking and cycling while continuing to accommodate cars destined for downtown. The key is to plan for people who want to be downtown, not people who want to bypass it.



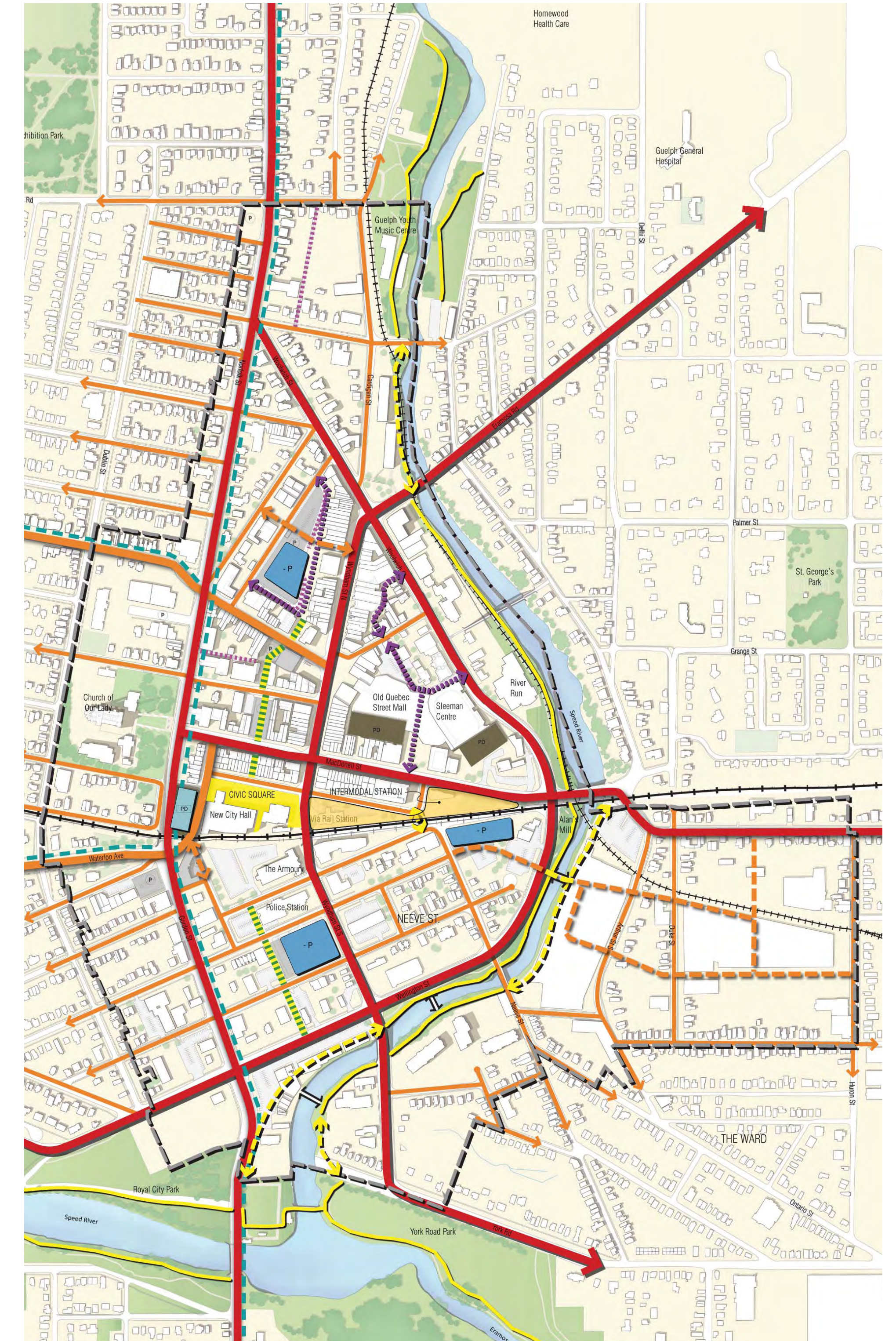
Public transit has long played an important role downtown. The new intermodal transit station planned for Carden Street and the return of GO rail service to Guelph will significantly enhance downtown as a mobility hub.

## Opportunities

- Establish an attractive inter-modal transit hub
- Establish new local streets on large redevelopment sites east of the river
- Build a new pedestrian bridge linking the Woods site to the downtown core
- Create mid-block pedestrian links to enhance connectivity and break up big blocks
- Enhance cycling infrastructure -- trails, bike lanes/routes, parking and storage facilities
- Integrate public parking with redevelopment on strategic sites
- Facilitate car share and bike share programs
- Tie reduced parking standards to travel demand management plans



## MOVEMENT OPPORTUNITIES





# Public Realm

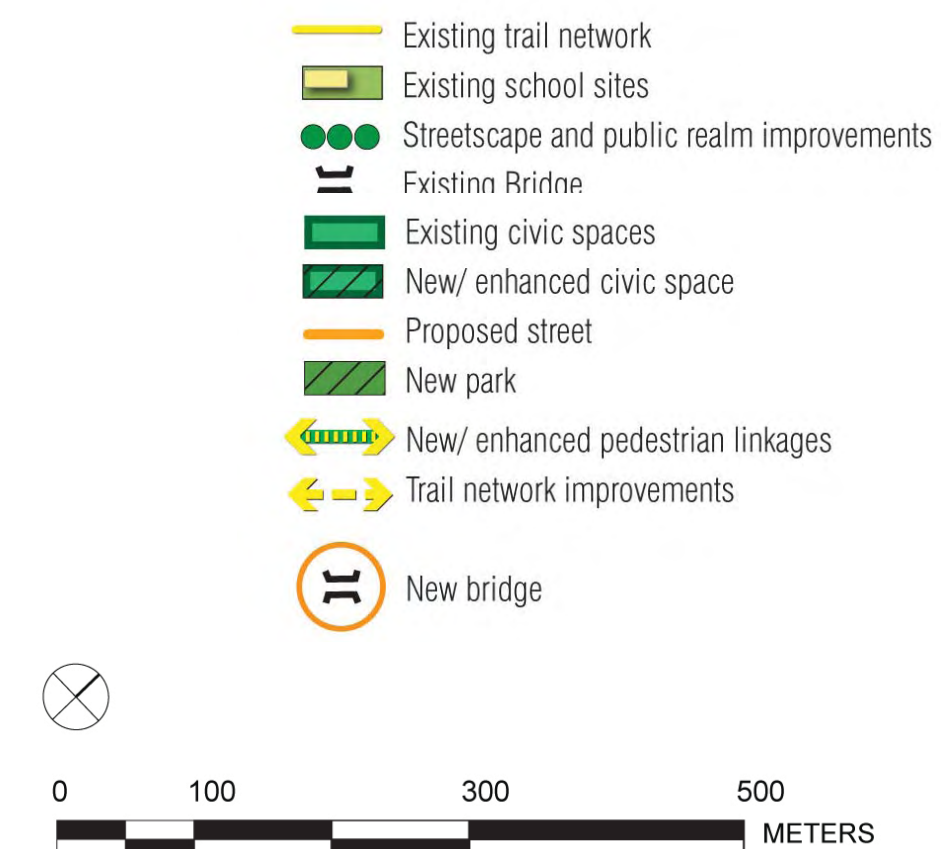
The downtown public realm includes parks, streets, other open spaces and public buildings. The quantity and quality of public spaces will be fundamental to making downtown more attractive and livable. Today, there are a variety of open space features in the city centre. However, while residents do have access to Exhibition Park and riverfront parks to the north and south, downtown itself is deficient in green space. Today, there is approximately 1 hectare of parkland for every 450 homes. To ensure this ratio does not decrease significantly as downtown grows, more parkland will need to be acquired, and the best location for new parkland is at the river's edge.

As green spaces are created, streetscapes and other public spaces should be improved. As a potential signature street, Macdonell should be a priority. St. George's Square, soon to lose its function as a transit hub, and the buildings that frame it require a special design study.

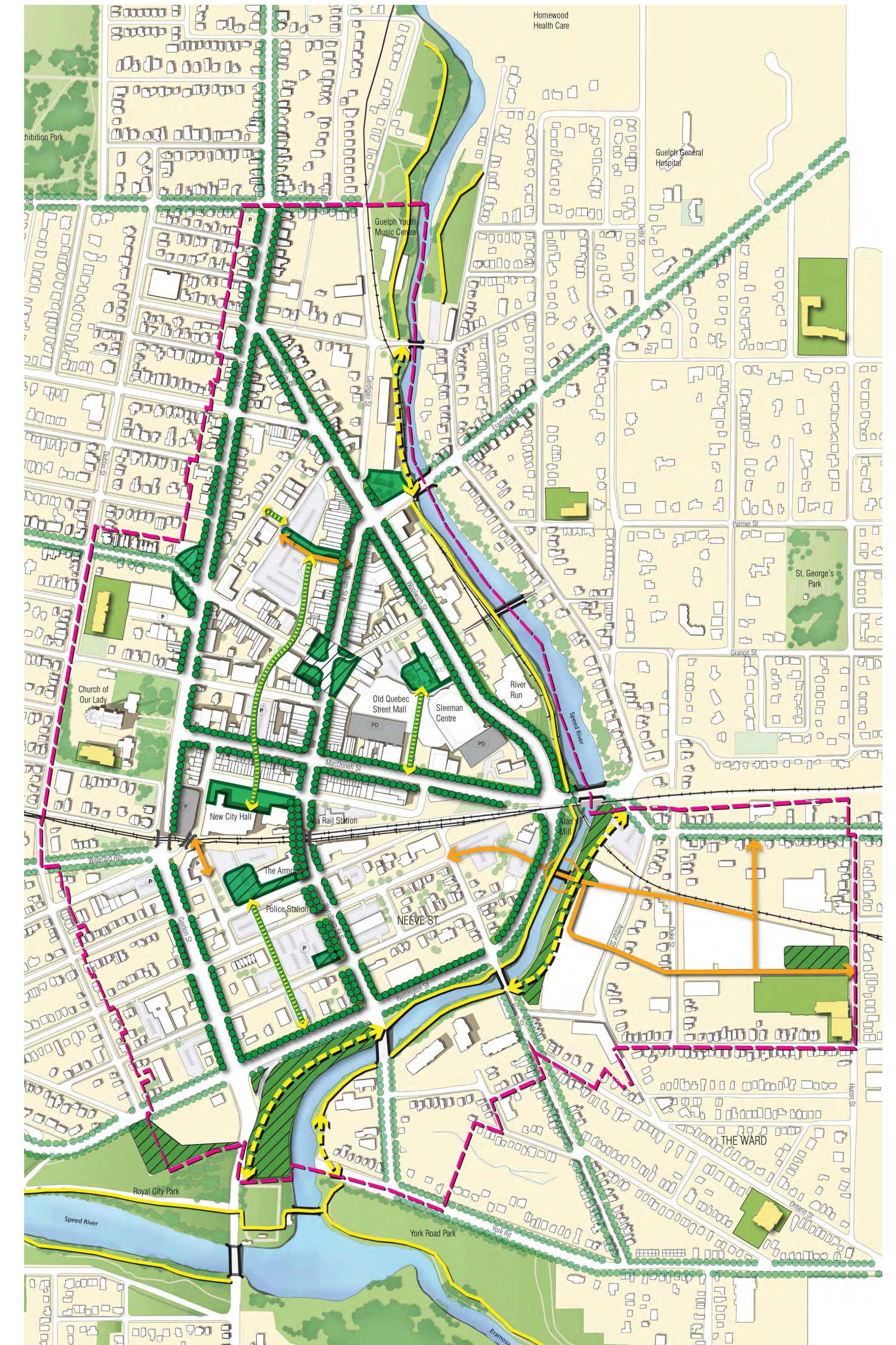


## Opportunities

- Enhance pedestrian realm and landscaping on Macdonell
- Re-design St. George's Square
- Develop crescent park at Paisley and Norfolk in conjunction with redevelopment to recall element of Galt Plan
- Create new "Market Square" with reuse and redevelopment of the Armoury parking lot
- Build new neighbourhood park on Huron Street
- Create new mid-block open spaces with adjacent redevelopment
- Create a second front to the Sleeman Centre
- Program regular events in the Civic Square
- Create riverfront parkland south of Wellington and on Woods property



## PUBLIC REALM OPPORTUNITIES



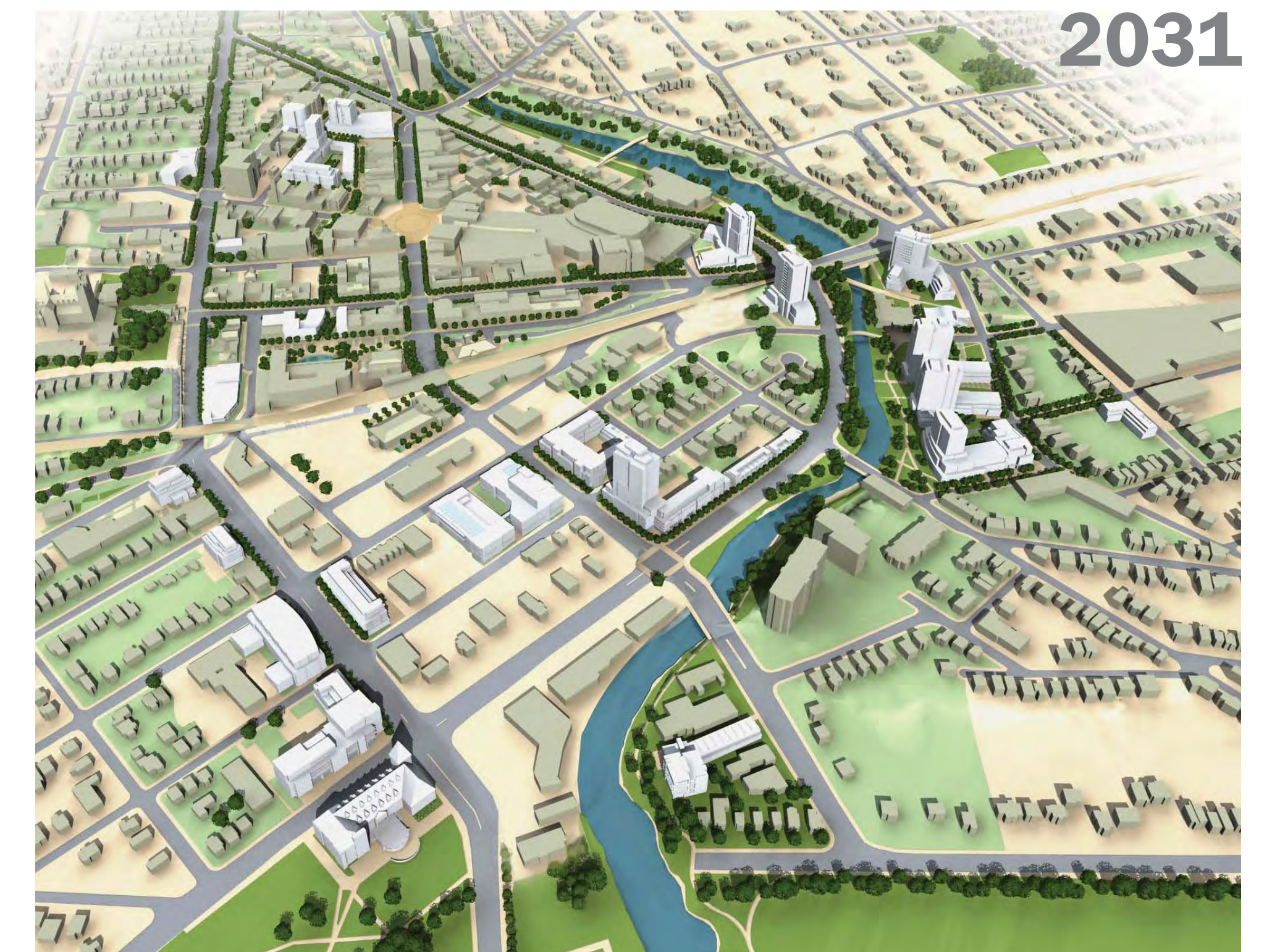


# Principles and Long-term Vision

Below are the principles that informed the long-term vision for downtown and are guiding the Secondary Plan. They emerged from the analysis of opportunities and consultations with downtown stakeholders.

1. Protect, respect and enhance core assets and heritage resources
2. Create new and better connections and relationships to the River
3. Beautify signature streets and create comfortable walking experiences across downtown
4. Add a critical mass of residents downtown
5. Promote a stronger retail and restaurant environment
6. Provide opportunities for new civic, cultural and educational institutions
7. Create transportation options that work for everyone

In the illustrations of the long-term vision below, existing buildings are grey and future buildings are white. The purpose of the model is to illustrate the potential for change as well as the urban design principles and built form policy directions for the Downtown Secondary Plan.



The image above illustrates what downtown might look when the 2031 targets of 6,000 more residents and 1,500 new jobs are achieved. The image below illustrates a “full build-out” scenario based on the proposed directions for the Secondary Plan.





# Vision for Upper Town

## Key features and initiatives:

- Infill development and additions sensitive to the existing heritage fabric and distinct character of downtown, injecting new businesses and new residents into the Upper Town.
- The Baker Street site redeveloped with a new library, apartment buildings and public parking.
- Macdonell Street transformed into a tree-lined, pedestrian-oriented street with ample sidewalks for strolling and patios.
- Mid-block open spaces, creating opportunities for small gathering places and pedestrian connections
- A re-designed St. George's Square, changing it from a traffic hub to a signature, people-oriented civic space - a place to meet and greet, see and be seen.



PRECEDENTS



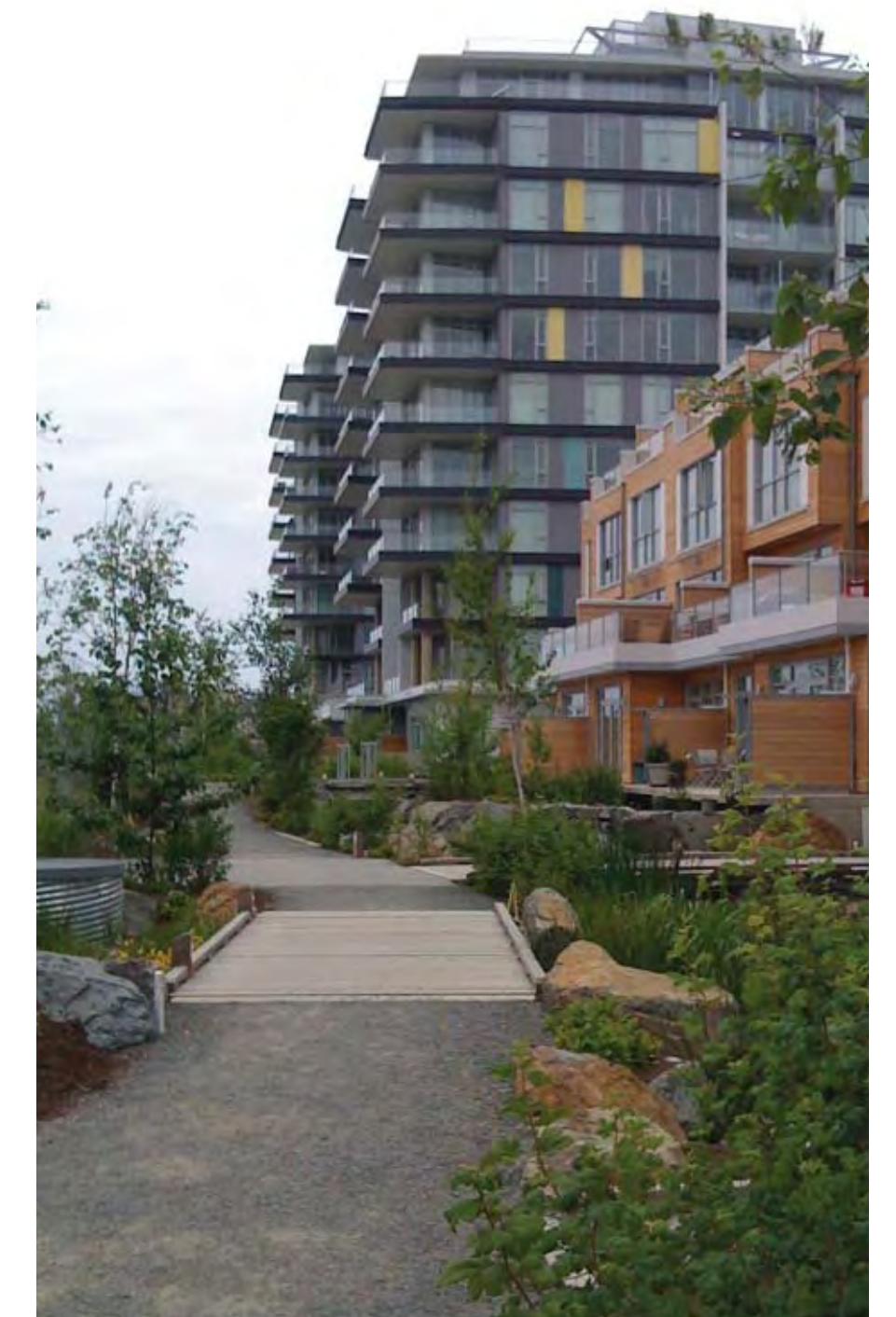
# Vision for East Bank

## Key features and initiatives:

- Redevelopment of the Woods properties and other older industrial sites, adding a diversity of housing and open spaces integrated into the existing fabric.
- New parkland and new links to the riverfront.
- New streets and pathways to enhance connectivity and provide frontage for new development.
- Green infrastructure to support the goals of the Community Energy Plan .



## PRECEDENTS

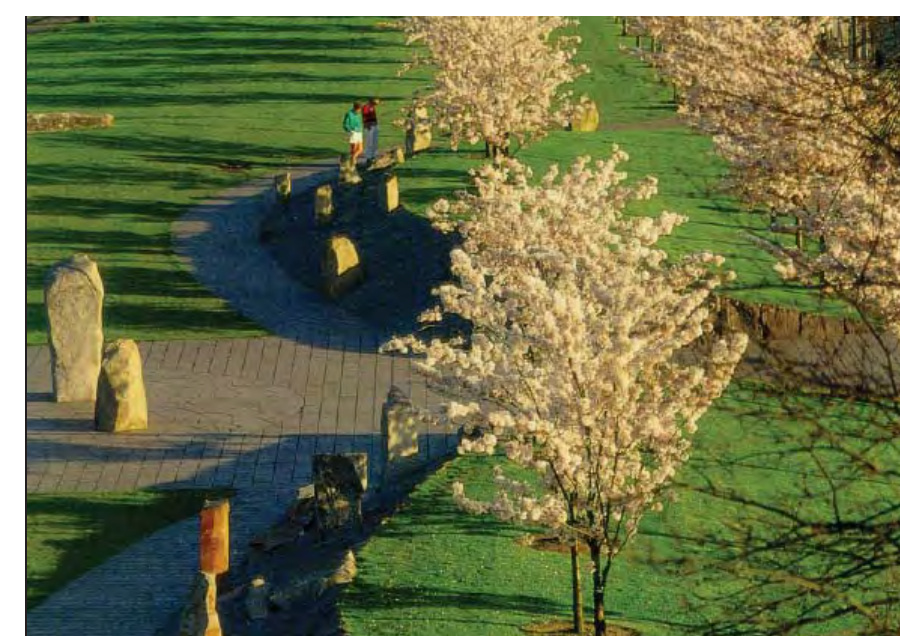




# Vision for Lower Town

## Key features and initiatives:

- A new mixed use neighbourhood with a diversity of housing and institutional uses fronting the river.
- A new riverfront park and trail to serve a growing downtown and the larger city.
- Neighbourhood commercial and recreational amenities on the ground floors of buildings. contribute to a thriving centre for living, working, and playing.
- Reuse of the Armoury and redevelopment of its parking lot to create a destination and catalyst for downtown living, culture and learning
- Tall buildings at the bottom of Wyndham to assert this street as the primary entry to downtown.





# Potential Priorities

## Short-term Priorities (0-5 years):

- Program the Civic Square
- Attract an educational institution
- Initiate a major food festival
- Begin the process to acquire the Armoury
- Undertake a tourism marketing strategy
- Proceed with phased development of the Baker Street site
- Redevelop the Woods site and Cooperators site
- Develop a marketing and communication program on the goals, strategies and community benefits of the Secondary Plan
- Host workshops with capable developers on downtown opportunities
- Update downtown zoning and streamline the approvals process
- Create an external design review panel
- Develop a downtown retail development strategy
- Undertake a parking management strategy

## Medium and Longer-term Initiatives:

- Macdonell streetscape improvements
- St. George's Square re-design
- Fountain Street Lot redevelopment
- Fire station relocation and redevelopment
- Riverfront parkland
- Armoury re-use and redevelopment
- Other new cultural destination(s)
- Ongoing private redevelopment

## Tell us what you think

Your feedback on the material presented today will help ensure the Downtown Secondary Plan reflects the aspirations and concerns of Guelph citizens. Please fill out and drop off a comment sheet before you leave, or send your comments to:

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The open house materials will be available on the City's web site ([www.guelph.ca](http://www.guelph.ca)).