

Backstage at Budget 2021



We all have a pretty good idea of what a budget is; it's a look at the funds we allocate to cover some must-dos and some would-like-to-dos, both with a short-term and long-term vision, and on the other side, is the amount of money we expect to receive. That simple explanation can apply to your household, business and even the City of Guelph's budget.

At the City of Guelph and like many other municipalities, our practice has been to assemble our annual budget in four sections—operating (the funds needed to “keep the lights on”, capital (expenses that allow for brick and mortar), non-tax operating (programs and services funded through rates and fees like utilities) and our local boards and shared services (library, police, the Elliot and others). Then, we share that information with Council and the public at a few meetings with a goal of an approved budget that meets our community needs while being fiscally responsible.

This budget process has always worked so why even think about changing it? The question I would ask you is...why not if there is a better way.

So, here's what the 2021 budget will look like and how we will present it this year:

Strategic Plan alignment

Last year, Council approved the [City's Strategic Plan](#), and in September 2020, they approved Strategic Plan initiatives and measurements. The Strategic Plan sets out Council's vision for the community over the long-term. The plan covers the “what” we need and want to do. The budget is the tool we use to prioritize those initiatives. It is the “how/when” we implement looking at the funding requirements and funding available for both the capital and operating portions of the project, and if it should be implemented in one year or several.

If the Strategic Plan sets our course, then it makes sense that our budget is set up to reflect the budget requirements to reach the goals in each of the five Strategic Plan priorities and be presented as one budget.

Council and the public will be presented with the 2021–2024 budget on November 17; one day, the whole budget. City staff and our local boards and shared services partners will present the funding requirements by priority with all portions of the budget included. This will offer Council and the public a holistic view of what is required to meet each of our Strategic Plan priority goals.

For example, when staff presents the Sustaining our Future priority, you will hear about initiatives and funding requirements including capital and operating costs, as well as non-tax and any local board and shared services budgets that contribute to achieving the goals of Sustaining our Future.

Multi-year budgeting

The process of multi-year budgeting is probably what you would guess...looking at a budget over a span of more than one year. Even more, it's approving a budget that covers four years, with flexibility to adapt as needed. For Council, multi-year budgeting allows

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them to make the best decisions with a set view longer than one year. We had to modify our original plan and Council will approve a 2021 budget this year, and receive for information a 2022–2024 three-year operating forecast. Council will also receive the 2022-2030 capital forecast.

Budget documents

New this year is also the presentation of our budget documents. All our accessible documents will be available at guelph.ca/budget and reflect the budget presentation under each Strategic Plan priority. Budget documents can be made available in other formats for anyone who requires them.

Podcasts



Big “G” in Conversation is our new City [podcast series](#) and throughout October and November, these podcasts will feature our 2021 budget. Have a listen and enjoy.