



**Shaping** Guelph

# **Shaping Guelph: Growth Management Strategy**

Vision and Principles for Growth  
Community Engagement Summary  
May 2020

[guelph.ca/shapingguelph](http://guelph.ca/shapingguelph)



In May 2019 the Province released A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshow (Growth Plan). Guelph is required to bring its Official Plan into conformity with the Growth Plan by July 1, 2022 through a municipal comprehensive review (MCR). A municipal comprehensive review is a city initiated Official Plan amendment that comprehensively applies the policies and schedules of the Growth Plan.

To do this, it is necessary to determine where and how Guelph will grow to 2041. In October 2019 Guelph Council endorsed a process for the city's MCR – Shaping Guelph: Growth Management Strategy. This process includes several background studies, the first of which is to confirm a vision and principles for growth to 2041. This paper is a summary of the community engagement that helped inform a draft vision and principles for growth.

## **Guelph's Community Plan**

Guelph's Community Plan is a comprehensive, long-range plan that identifies community priorities and issues for the next 10 to 20 years. The Community Plan and community engagement summary documents were reviewed to understand what, if any, thoughts the community expressed about Guelph's growth as part of the Community Plan process. Between January 2018 and February 2019, individuals and organizations across the city were asked four key questions:

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

In responding to these questions, the community provided the following feedback about the growth of Guelph

- That the city should continue to have a plan for its growth, one that is socially responsible;
- There were mixed views on how Guelph should grow, especially the pace at which it should grow;
- Mixed-use, complete, walkable and interesting neighbourhoods, and building up not out are preferred; and
- A small city feel with big city amenities is desired.

Several themes emerged about priorities for the future. These include housing, the environment, transportation, and Guelph's character.

## **Housing**

The top growth related concern raised through the Community Plan was about housing affordability. As Guelph grows, concern was expressed about whether or not they, and future residents would actually be able to afford to live in Guelph. Concerns were also raised about the potential for an increase in homelessness.

## **The environment**

The following feedback was provided about the environment:

- Growth should not negatively affect Guelph's natural heritage system;
- Natural green space should be integrated into all new developments;
- Integrating and protecting the environment as we plan for future growth or redevelopment is important as well as planning for climate change; and
- In addition to Guelph's natural areas, there is a need to protect, expand and animate parks and green spaces and integrate them with neighbourhood development.

## **Transportation**

Transportation related feedback on the Community Plan included:

- Guelph should be easy to get around using all modes of transportation;
- A comprehensive transportation strategy for the movement of goods, freight and people is important as Guelph grows; and
- There should be a reliable and complete transit system to all parts of the city and one that connects to other cities.

## **Guelph's character**

Feedback on the Community Plan included many items related to Guelph's character. Some felt that historic buildings should be maintained and integrated with new development. Some also felt that the city's skyline should continue to focus on the Basilica of Our Lady Immaculate. A vibrant downtown was cited as being important for Guelph's character, especially a downtown that is driven by independent retailers. Some also commented that new development in the city needs to have a "soul" and avoid being devoid of character.

## **Ipsos telephone survey**

To initiate the discussion about growth management in the city, a telephone survey was conducted. In December 2019, Ipsos, on behalf of the City, conducted a statistically valid telephone survey of 600 residents to gauge their opinions, attitudes and preferences about Guelph's growth and growth management. The majority of respondents were owners of single detached dwellings who have lived in Guelph for 20 years or more. Almost half of the respondents lived in newer subdivisions, farther away from the Downtown. Over a third of respondents were 55 years or more and were part of a two person household.

The following provides a summary of the attitudes and preferences about Guelph's growth and growth management gathered through this survey.

Generally, respondents stated that they are optimistic about growth in the city. They believe that population growth will mostly benefit the economy, followed by them personally. Most residents feel that growth should be accommodated within the existing boundaries of the city. Most residents see the availability of housing as a significant challenge for the city today and moving forward. Transportation infrastructure, in general, is also an issue of importance.

When it comes to balancing protection of the environment with future growth, almost half of respondents felt that Guelph could be doing more to protect the

environment. They felt that the most important part of the environment to protect was the city's groundwater resources.

Respondents believe the best approach for accommodating future growth and development is to build in already developed areas at higher densities, thus protecting the most green space. Respondents prefer new housing to be built in old or abandoned industrial or commercial sites, unused lots around the city, or in already developed areas. Less than one in ten respondents preferred building more single detached homes. However, when asked where they would likely see themselves moving in the future, respondents still expressed a strong desire to move into a single detached or semi-detached home when the time came to move.

About three quarters of respondents feel that their neighbourhood is a complete community where people can work, live and access services walking or using public transit. Respondents feel that the item missing the most that would complete their community was a mix of jobs. Respondents also mentioned that their community was lacking in housing that was affordable, access to health services, and access to grocery stores.

## **Have your say Guelph online survey**

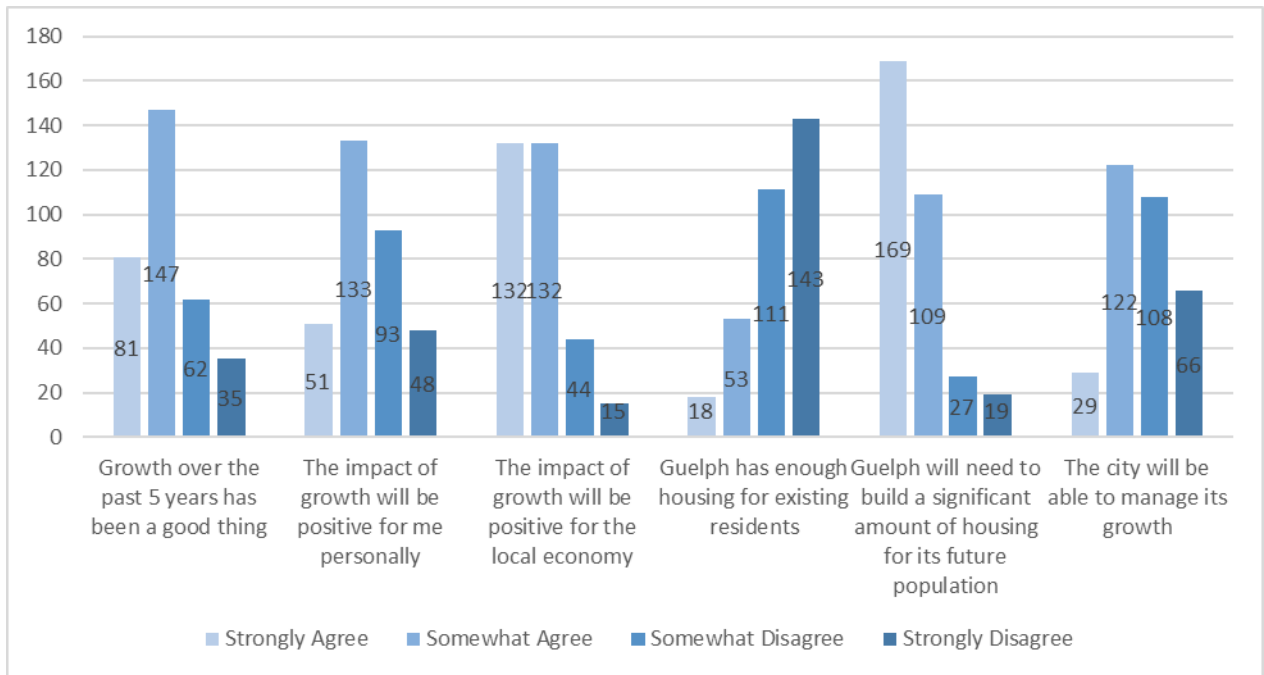
From February 7 to March 8, 2020 an online survey was available through the city's [website](#). The survey questions were similar to those asked as part of the Ipsos telephone survey and gauged respondents' opinions, attitudes and preferences about Guelph's growth and growth management. There were 327 responses to the survey.

The majority of respondents were owners of single detached dwellings who have lived in Guelph for 20 years or more. Almost half of the respondents lived in newer subdivisions, farther away from the Downtown. Over half of respondents were 35 - 54 years old and over 30 % were part of a two person households. Compared to Ipsos telephone survey, respondents to the online survey were younger.

The following provides a summary of the have your say Guelph online survey.

## **Growth statements and location of growth**

Respondents were asked to agree or disagree with several statements related to growth. Figure 1 summarizes responses to these statements.



**Figure 1: Responses to growth statements**

Respondents felt that population growth will be positive for the local economy, and generally positive for themselves. They also somewhat agreed that the growth that Guelph has seen over the past 5 years has been a good thing. It was clear that respondents do not think that there is enough housing to support current or future Guelph residents. As for confidence that the city will be able to manage its growth, responses were almost equally split. 46% feel that the city will be able to manage its growth and 54% do not.

Most respondents felt that growth should be accommodated within the existing boundaries of the city. Building new apartments, condominiums and townhouses, and protecting some green space was seen as the best approach for accommodating growth. Only 8% of respondents believe that the city should build more single detached homes to accommodate growth. However, when asked where they would likely see themselves moving in the future, respondents still expressed a strong desire to move into a single detached or semi-detached home when the time came to move.

Respondents favoured building new housing in old or abandoned industrial or commercial sites, larger unused lots around the city, and already developed areas throughout the city.

When asked whether they felt that their community was a complete community, responses were slightly higher for those that felt that they are living in a complete community. 57% felt that their community is complete while 42% do not. Similar to the Ipsos survey, respondents felt that the item missing the most that would complete their community was a mix of jobs. Respondents also mentioned that their community was lacking in housing that was affordable, access to health services, and access to grocery stores.

## **Challenges of growth**

The city wanted to understand what the community believes are the biggest challenges that it might experience as it grows. The responses to this question were many and varied. Common responses included:

- Housing that is affordable;
- The availability of a range of housing types;
- Increasing homelessness and poverty;
- Adequate roads to accommodate a range of modes of transportation, including cars, bicycles, and pedestrians;
- Increasing need for and pressure on health care facilities, especially the hospital
- Public safety, especially downtown; and
- Protection of the environment, especially groundwater resources.

## **Metroquest Guelph online survey**

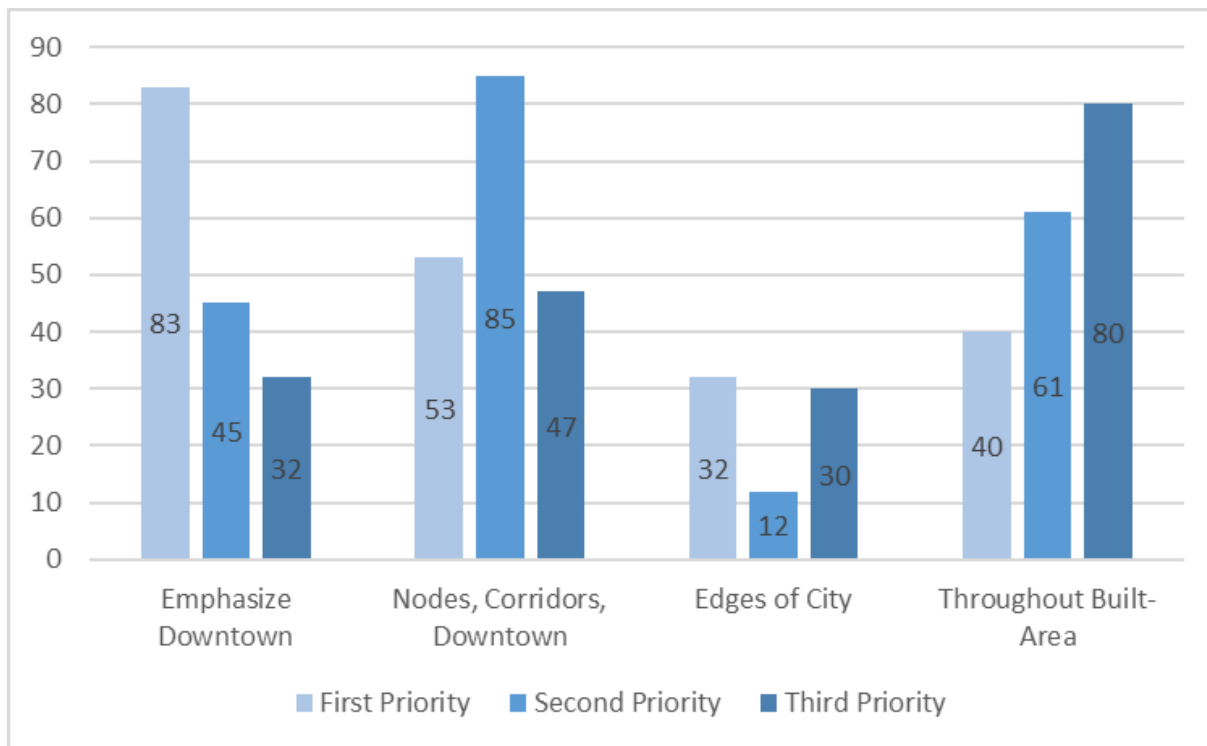
In conjunction with the have your say Guelph online survey, a second online survey, using Metroquest's survey tools, was available for input from February 7 to March 8, 2020. This survey focused on how and where Guelph should grow to 2041. There were 271 responses to this survey.

The majority of respondents were owners of single detached dwellings who have lived in Guelph for 20 years or more. 44% of the respondents lived in older neighbourhoods around the Downtown with an additional 44% living in newer subdivisions farther from downtown. The demographic profile of respondents for this survey was similar to that of the have your say Guelph online survey.

The following provides a summary of the online Metroquest Guelph online survey.

## **Housing Location Preferences**

Respondents were asked to prioritize their top three locations for where they felt growth should be directed in the future. Figure 2 shows that the majority of respondents preferred growth to be directed in downtown as well as Guelph's nodes (e.g. Clair Road and Gordon Street) and corridors (e.g. Woolwich Street).



**Figure 2: Priorities for location of residential growth**

Some respondents commented that additional growth should be directed downtown as this area provided the city with the best chance at achieving its growth mandate. Others cautioned that additional growth downtown should only be allowed at building heights that still respected views to the Basilica of Our Lady Immaculate and that respected Guelph’s cultural heritage resources. Nodes and corridors were felt to be appropriate locations to direct growth as these areas are spread out throughout the city providing for opportunities to continue to develop a strong transit network. Concentrating growth in areas that are well served by transit was mentioned as a priority.

For those that prioritized directing growth throughout Guelph’s built-up area, some commented that this would only be feasible if the growth was coordinated with transit. Others commented that if growth was to occur throughout Guelph’s neighbourhoods that it would need to maintain the integrity of these neighbourhoods.

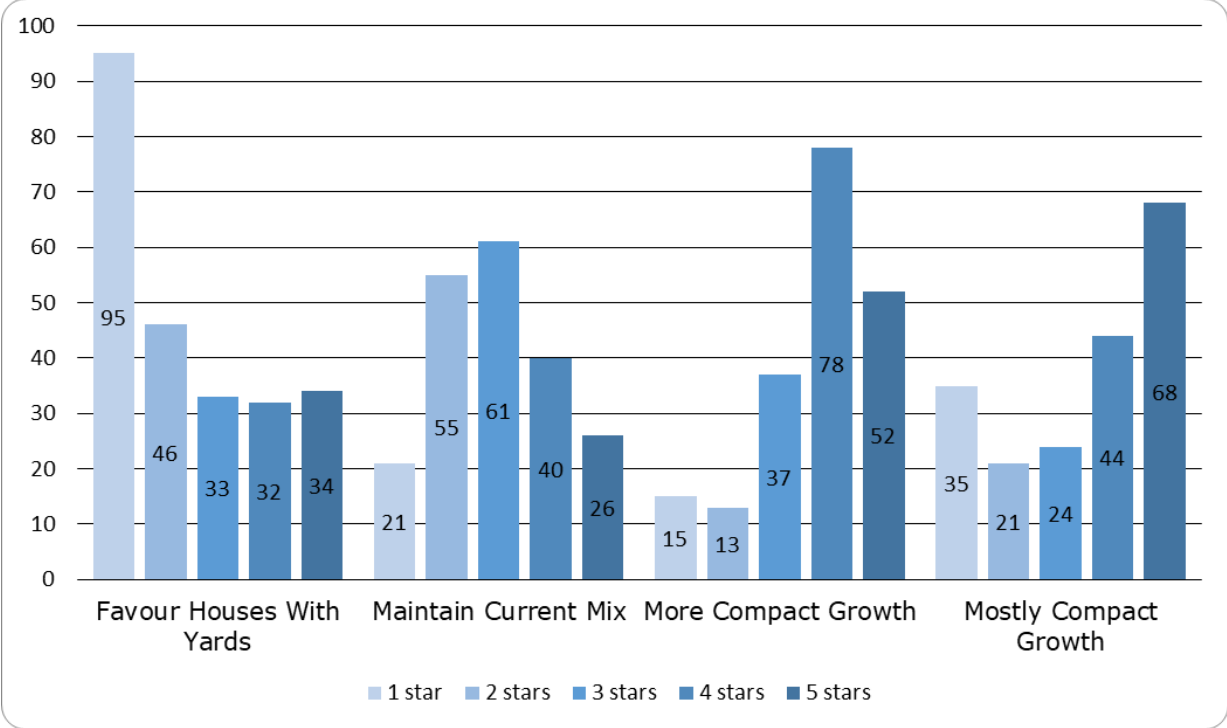
Respondents were provided the opportunity to suggest other areas of Guelph that should be considered to accommodate growth. The suggestions provided ranged from using abandoned industrial areas, adding housing to commercial areas, and using underutilized land in low density areas. Some suggested that Guelph should grow outside of our current geographic boundary while others suggested that we shouldn’t grow at all.

# Housing Density Preferences

Four housing scenarios were provided where participants were asked to rank each, using a scale of 1 star to 5 stars (least favourite to most favourite). The scenarios were:

- Favour houses with yards – in this scenario, most new housing is detached homes with yards. More land is required to house our growing population. Additional lands outside the city’s current boundary may be needed
- Maintain current mix – the city is currently mostly detached houses, with some townhouses and apartments. This scenario continues with this housing mix
- More compact growth – in this scenario, most new housing will be townhouses and low-rise apartments with some detached homes. Less land is required to house our growing population
- Mostly compact growth – in this scenario, most new housing will be apartments with some townhouses. The least amount of land is required to house our growing population.

Figure 3 shows that the majority of respondents preferred the scenarios with more or mostly compact growth. The least preferred scenario was the one that favoured houses with yards.



**Figure 3: Preference for how Guelph should grow**

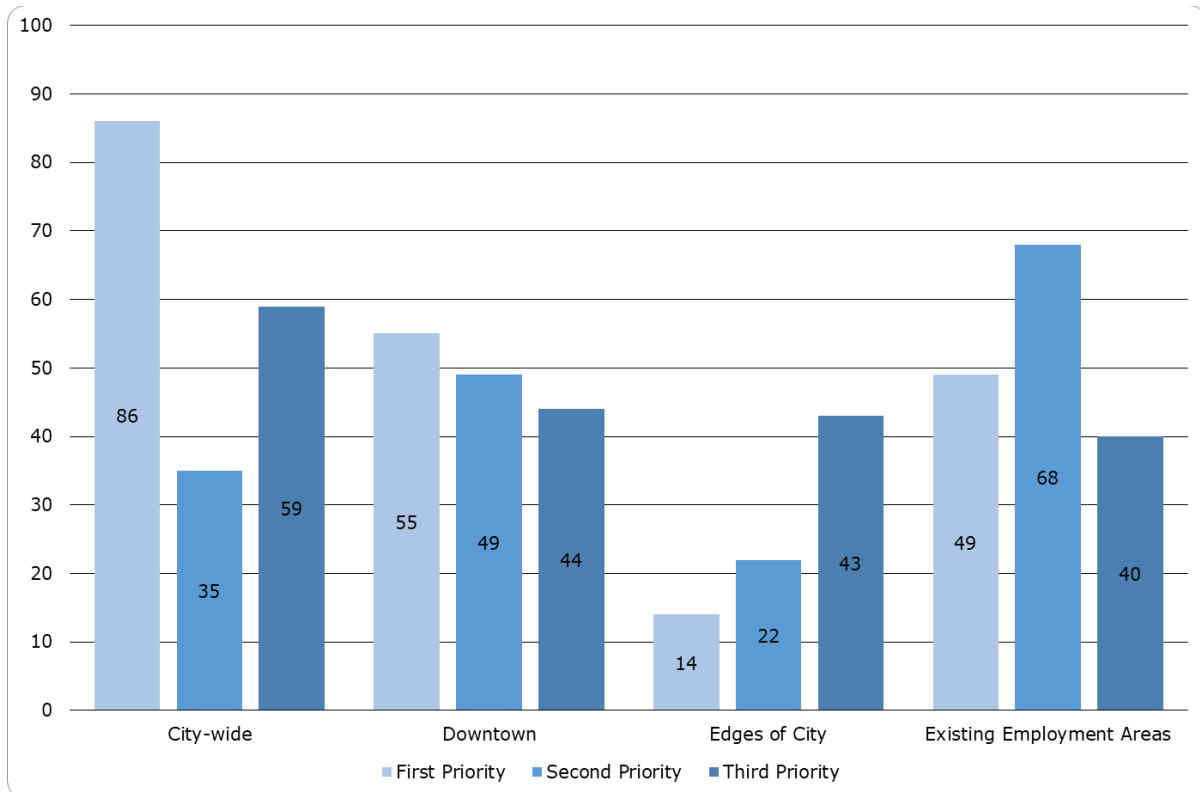
Some respondents commented that the more and mostly compact growth scenarios would meet the needs of the most people and would likely provide the most affordable housing options. Some respondents also commented that these scenarios would make Guelph feel like other big cities and that this wasn’t desirable. For these scenarios to work in Guelph the buildings should be well designed and limited to buildings that are between 6 and 8 storeys.



Comments on the scenario which favoured houses with yards included concerns that this scenario isn't feasible to accommodate the amount of people that we are required to. Others felt that we had enough of this housing type. In contrast to these comments, those that ranked this scenario higher felt that this type of housing is why many had moved to Guelph. Others felt that there is a need for the private outdoor space that this scenario provides.

## Job Location Preferences

Participants were asked to prioritize their top three locations for where they felt job growth should be directed. Figure 4 shows that the majority of respondents preferred growth to be directed city-wide followed by existing employment areas.



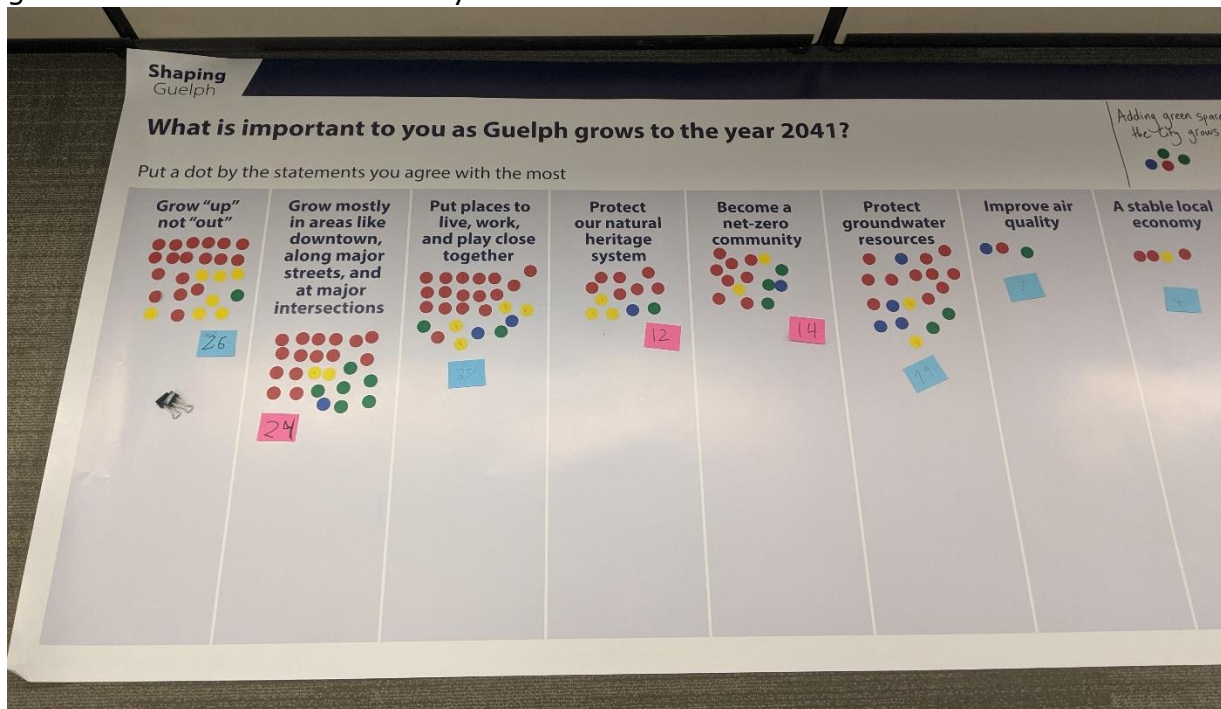
**Figure 4: Preference for the location of job growth**

Some respondents commented that jobs should be located throughout the city to decrease the travel times between work and home. They also felt that existing employment areas should continue to be used for manufacturing and warehouse uses. In addition to the locations provided in the survey, respondents were encouraged to suggest other areas of the city that would be appropriate for job growth. Some suggested having more jobs closer to the GO Train station downtown as well as closer to Highway 401. Others suggested, similar to locations for houses, that jobs be located along or close to transit.

## Shaping Guelph Speaker Event

On February 27, 2020 the city hosted "Guelph 2041: A conversation about a growing city". The event included talks, a panel discussion about growth and an opportunity for attendees to provide input on priorities and locations for Guelph's

growth. At the Guelph 2041 Speaker event attendees had the opportunity to identify what is important to them as Guelph grows to the year 2041 and where growth should occur in the City.



Participants were asked to place three dots on the statements that they agreed with the most in response to the question "What is important to you as Guelph grows to the year 2041". The statements provided were:

- Grow "up" not "out"
- Grow mostly in areas like downtown, along major streets, and at major intersections
- Put places to live, work, and play close together
- Protect our natural heritage system
- Become a net-zero community
- Protect groundwater resources
- Improve air quality
- A stable local economy
- Plan for climate change
- Maintain our "Guelphiness"
- Protect cultural and heritage resources, and
- Urban design

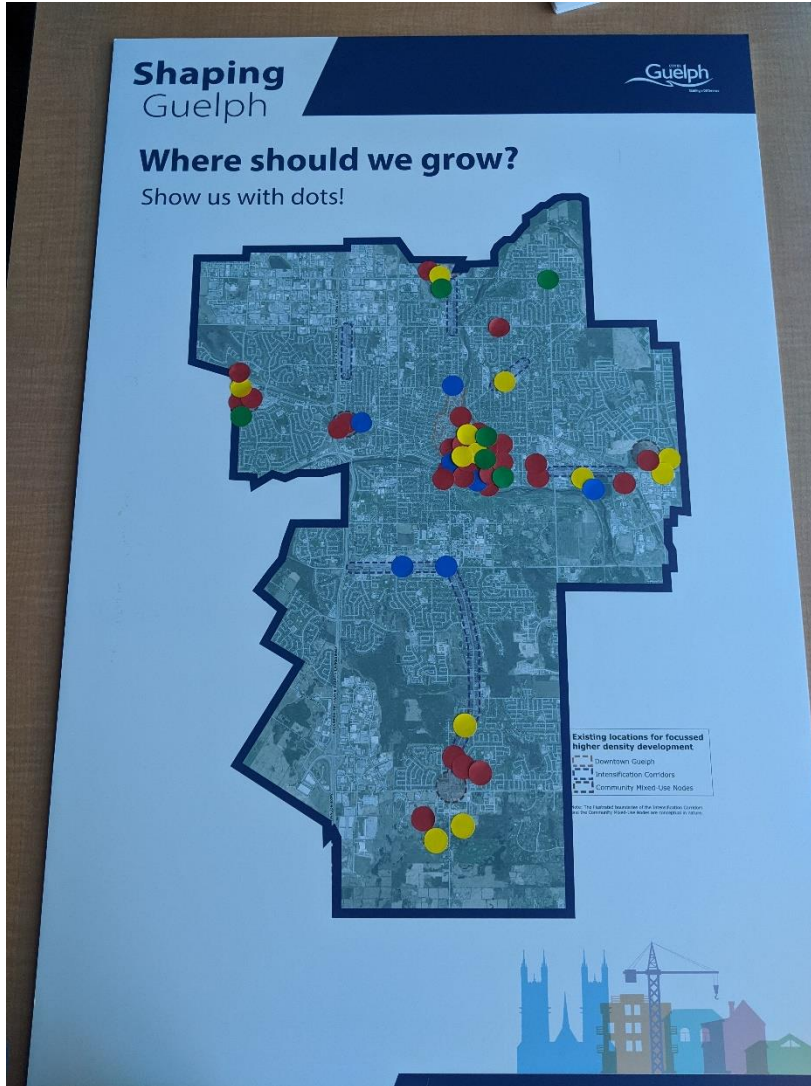
The following three options were added by participants:

- Adding green space as the City grows
- Urban farming, and
- Transit and cycling dependent supportive communities.

The top statements that participants agreed with the most were: growing up not out; planning for climate change growing mostly in areas like downtown, along

major streets and at major intersections, and; putting places to live, work and play close together.

A map of the city was provided showing Guelph's current intensification areas, which are its intensification corridors, mixed-use nodes, and downtown. Participants were asked to place dots on areas of the city that they thought would be good locations to accommodate growth.



Overwhelmingly, attendees identified downtown Guelph as an area to accommodate growth. Some of the city's existing intensification corridors and mixed-use nodes throughout the city were also identified as areas to accommodate growth. Nodes were identified more often than corridors to accommodate growth. Specifically, existing mixed-use nodes in the east, west, and south of Guelph. No one identified areas outside of the city as a place where Guelph should grow.

## What we heard – key findings

It was clear from all of the community engagement that there is a strong preference for growth to be contained within the city's current boundaries. There is

also preference for this growth to locate in already developed areas, such as downtown and within nodes and corridors at higher densities. Across all community engagement platforms, it was clear that availability of housing; transportation infrastructure, and; protection of the environment, especially protection of groundwater, are of utmost concern as Guelph grows.

## **Next steps**

The input provided through this community engagement will be used, together with other inputs, to develop a draft vision and principles for growth. Upon endorsement by Council, the draft vision and principles for growth will be used to guide the development of the Shaping Guelph: Growth Management Study. The vision and principles for growth will continue to be refined through the Shaping Guelph study. A final vision and principles will be brought to Council for approval with the MCR Official Plan amendment at the conclusion of this work.