



City of Guelph Employment Lands Strategy

Community Engagement Summary Report

February 2021

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Executive summary

This report summarizes consultation and engagement completed on the Employment Lands Strategy for the City of Guelph's project [Shaping Guelph: Growth Management Strategy](#).

Engagement and communication methods

Engagement and communication activities sought feedback from the community and stakeholders in the following ways.

Engagement or communication method	Outreach completed	Number of participants / people reached	Purpose - promote engagement	Purpose - provide information	Purpose - receive feedback
Online Question and Answer platform	1 online platform	2 participants	No	No	Yes
Stakeholder roundtable discussion	1 roundtable discussion	9 local organizations	Yes	Yes	Yes
Have Your Say	1 Have Your Say Page	98 visits	Yes	Yes	Yes
Project webpage	1 Project webpage	not available	Yes	Yes	No
Emails to the project contact list	1 Email sent	259 recipients	Yes	Yes	No

What we heard – key messages

Key messages emerging from participant feedback are summarized in brief below.

Macro economic trends influencing employment lands development

- Working from home will be a continued trend after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Transit needs to be considered in the employment lands discussion.
- Positions within companies have been reduced, and industries are feeling the effects of lower consumer demands.

Economic structure and growth trends in Guelph

- Participants were supportive of anything that could help to attract office development to the downtown, although they noted uncertainty regarding whether incentives are needed.
- A key component of locating office space downtown was small businesses, which have been impacted by the pandemic.

- City policy should dictate where office space is located, and that parking policies will be critical to the implementation of office space.

Guelph employment lands profile and competitiveness

- Participants noted a need for shovel ready employment lands, particularly when it came to industrial employment uses.
- Companies are steering towards storage and logistics types of employment use.
- Taxes in Guelph are higher than in other communities and that can present challenges for business attraction.

Employment growth and land needs, and recommendations

- The City of Guelph has many tools at their disposal to enable and encourage intensification of existing sites, but that expansion is difficult on existing sites.

Next steps

The feedback heard through the ELS and the consultation done on Growth Scenario One, together with the other technical background studies being done as part of [Shaping Guelph](#), will be used to develop growth scenarios over the next few months. These background studies and the community feedback gathered in this round of engagement will help shape two other growth scenarios the City of Guelph will present in Spring 2021.

Section 1: project overview

In 2019 the Province of Ontario released [A Place to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe \(APTG\)](#). APTG manages growth and development throughout the greater golden horseshoe and sets out population and employment forecasts and targets that municipalities are required to plan for.

Guelph is required to implement APTG by updating its Official Plan by July 2022. This update will happen through Shaping Guelph: Growth Management Strategy. As part of this work the City is required to:

- consider where and how to provide new housing
- consider where to locate new jobs
- determine how much land is needed to accommodate population and employment growth
- develop a strategy to manage growth and the infrastructure needed to support it

To bring Guelph's Official Plan into conformity with APTG it is necessary to determine where and how Guelph will grow to 2051. Guelph is required to achieve growth in the built-up area, designated greenfield area, and urban growth centre targets. Several background studies related to Shaping Guelph are being prepared throughout 2020 and 2021. These include:

- vision and principles for growth to the horizon of the Growth Plan (draft endorsed by Council in June 2020)
- a Residential Intensification Analysis
- a Housing Analysis and Strategy
- growth scenario planning (based on a land needs assessment)
- an Employment Lands Strategy

Part of Guelph's provincially mandated growth to 2051 includes an employment target of 116,000 jobs. That is an increase of about 33,300 jobs between 2021 and 2051 with an average annual growth rate of about 1 per cent. The [Employment Lands Strategy \(ELS\)](#) includes an overview of how much land there is for jobs, and looks at whether this is enough land to accommodate job growth. The ELS also outlines different things that Guelph could do to plan for its forecast job growth. Engagement on Guelph's ELS included hosting information on Have Your Say, an online Question and Answer platform, and hosting a stakeholder roundtable.

Engagement purpose and objectives

Community engagement for Shaping Guelph began in early 2020 with discussions to inform a draft vision and principles for growth. In August and September 2020, the project team sought feedback on where and how Guelph should grow over the next 20 to 30 years. In November and December 2020, the project team presented Growth Scenario One, an example of one way in which Guelph could grow until 2051. In January 2021, Shaping Guelph released an Employment Lands Strategy for public and stakeholder comments.

Community and stakeholder feedback on the Employment Lands Strategy, combined with feedback on the development of Growth Scenario One will inform the development of two additional growth scenarios. The City of Guelph will present all three scenarios for public consultation in Spring 2021. This round of engagement sought input from stakeholders on the Employment Lands Strategy, including:

- macro economic trends influencing employment lands development

- economic structure and growth trends in Guelph
- Guelph's employment lands profile and competitiveness
- employment growth and land needs, and recommendations

This engagement round continued to build an educational foundation for subsequent engagement, introducing common terminology and the overall engagement program for Shaping Guelph. This report summarizes the engagement process and feedback received on the Employment Lands Strategy.

Section 2: engagement and communication methods

Engagement methods

The engagement methods used to seek feedback from the community and stakeholders included the following:

- a virtual stakeholder roundtable discussion
- an online question and answer platform
- emails received from members of the public regarding the Employment Lands Strategy

The following section explains each in further detail below.

Online Question and Answer Platform

Public feedback was sought primarily through an online question and answer platform hosted on the project's Have Your Say website. The online platform was available from January 7, to January 28, 2021. There were a total of two questions asked through the online question and answer platform.

Stakeholder roundtable

On January 14, 2021, the City hosted a virtual roundtable discussion with identified stakeholders to collect feedback on the Employment Lands Strategy. Stakeholders were identified and invited to join the roundtable based on subject matter interest and/or expertise to ensure that the appropriate sectors provide feedback into the strategy. The following organizations attended the roundtable:

- Guelph Wellington Local Immigration Partnership
- Guelph Chamber of Commerce
- City of Guelph Economic Development Advisory Committee
- Guelph and District Home Builders Association
- City of Guelph Business, Development and Enterprise staff
- Guelph Junction Railway
- Avison Young
- Cowie Capital
- Cooper Construction

The roundtable included:

- a presentation component
- a facilitated/moderated question and answer discussion

The facilitated question and answer discussion focused on economic trends influencing employment lands growth in Guelph, Guelph's employment lands profile and competitiveness, and employment growth and land needs recommendations.

Communication methods

The communications methods used to share information with the community and stakeholders included:

- the City of Guelph’s [Have Your Say Page](#)
- the [project webpage](#)
- emails to the project contact list

Communication methods are explained in further detail below.

Have Your Say

[Have Your Say](#) serves as the project’s landing page for community engagement. The page serves as a place for the public to learn more about the project and access relevant documentation such as discussion guides and town hall videos. Have Your Say directed the public to ask questions of the project team.

Project webpage

The [project webpage](#) provides more information about Shaping Guelph: Growth Management Strategy. The website provides an overview of Shaping Guelph, including the scope and timeline of the project. It is a repository for all Council reports, background studies, and community engagement materials.

Emails to contact list

The City sent an email to the project contact list informing them of the Employment Lands Strategy and inviting them to review materials and submit a question or comment.

Engagement and reach

The following table summarizes the reach of engagement and communications tactics throughout the engagement period.

Engagement tool	Reach
Stakeholder roundtable	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 9 representatives of local organizations
Have Your Say	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 98 visits, with:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ 1 new registration○ 2 visitors registering as engaged○ 71 visitors registering as aware○ 24 registering as informed
Project web page	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Data not available
Email to the contact list	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 1 email sent to the contact list comprised of 259 people/organizations

Data analysis

The City gathered feedback through the stakeholder roundtable and the Have Your Say Question and Answer feature. Additionally, three emails were sent to the City regarding the Employment Lands Strategy. Section 3 provides an overview of the key messages heard through community engagement.

All comments received through engagement efforts have undergone a thematic analysis. This involves summarizing and categorizing qualitative data so that important concepts within the dataset are captured. Once completed, a collection of themes was used to formulate the descriptive text in this report.

Section 3: what we heard

This section provides a high-level summary of the main themes heard throughout community and stakeholder engagement on the Employment Lands Strategy, first with questions asked and second with feedback received.

Questions and Answers

The City of Guelph posted the Employment Lands Strategy to Have Your Say for public review and invited them to ask questions or provide comments. Two participants shared their questions through the platform. The questions have been edited for clarity and listed below with the corresponding response provided by the City.

Q: Hello, do you think that things have changed, and we should now be looking at life through a COVID-19 filter? It seems that many more people and companies are finding success in working from home. This may change the formula for what our "employment lands" might look like. I appreciate the City cannot argue with the Province about the push to grow, but more importantly we should be protecting our communities from loss of green spaces. More people are now working from home and this will continue to a great extent, green spaces to walk in or bike in after work/school should be what is mandated.

A: The Employment Lands Strategy has a section, section 3.5, which outlines how the impacts of COVID-19 have been considered on the forecast employment growth for Guelph.

Q: When it comes to employment lands, is it also being considered that because of the pandemic we have seen a lot of office jobs moved to work-from-home situations?

A: The Employment Lands Strategy has a section, section 3.5, which outlines how the impacts of COVID-19 have been considered on the forecast employment growth for Guelph.

Participants in the stakeholder roundtable were also provided with an opportunity to ask questions. A summary of the questions asked along with the corresponding response provided by the City is below.

Q: There was a good slide on the provincial and municipal plans in effect in Guelph. Is it worth putting together a road map of all the interrelating plans for Shaping Guelph to understand how they all fit together?

A: Part of the result of the work we are doing will be a local Growth Management Strategy. The strategy will show how to grow over the next 30 years and identify what plans need to be updated. Towards the end of this process, this work will lead to those types of recommendations for the Official Plan and ongoing master plan work.

Q: With the Metrolinx activity near downtown Guelph, will Guelph change into more of a bedroom community?

A: The range of residents living in the city and where they work will continue to diversify. Employment in Guelph looks like it will continue to grow and provide local employment opportunities for existing and new residents. Because of Guelph's proximity to the GTHA and the Waterloo Region there will be increasing opportunities for residents to move here due to quality of life and affordability considerations.

Q: Can you clarify what you mean by the amount of available employment land? Is it shovel ready?

A: 391 hectares is the available amount of vacant employment land. It is not all serviced land, so not necessarily shovel ready.

Macro economic trends influencing employment lands development

After listening to a presentation on the economic trends impacting employment lands development, stakeholder roundtable participants were asked to provide their feedback on how COVID-19 has impacted their business. Participants shared that:

- They expect working from home to be a continued trend after the COVID-19 pandemic. They noted that after the pandemic there would likely be a hybrid model of office work and working from home. It was expressed that use and need of space is hard to predict, because more working from home requires less space, but when working in the office there is a need for safer distances.
- As employers downsize their office spaces, available meeting spaces will become more important.
- Cuts to transit service levels have had an impact on their businesses and access to transit needs to be considered when discussing expanding employment lands.
- Some positions within their businesses have become obsolete.
- Some industries are facing revenue loss resulting from less consumer demand, and that it will take a long time to fully recover from COVID-19 impacts.

Economic structure and growth trends in Guelph

Next, the economic structure and growth trends in Guelph and the downtown's role in attracting major office development were reviewed. Stakeholder roundtable participants were asked to provide their feedback on if Guelph should explore financial tools and incentives to attract office development to the downtown. Participants indicated that:

- They are supportive of anything that could help to attract office development to the downtown, however noting that they were unsure whether incentives are needed. They indicated that a key component of locating office space downtown was small businesses, and that the sector is struggling because of the pandemic.
- They want to see the downtown be a combination of a destination and a centre for office space.
- They have concerns about existing large scale office tenants downtown leaving, and that it was important that current office spaces are filled before locating more office space downtown.
- They felt City policy should dictate where office space is located, and incentives could be used to facilitate those policies.
- They felt that parking policies are critical to the implementation of office space in the downtown.
- Maintaining heritage in the downtown was important and they do not want to see only tall buildings and office uses.
- They have an interest in how the City will address the residential component downtown in addition to adding office space.

An email received noted the importance of mixed-use developments, where residents of Guelph could easily walk or cycle to work.

Guelph employment lands profile and competitiveness

After reviewing Guelph's employment lands profile and competitiveness, participants were asked what they saw as the key limiting factors to Guelph's ability to accommodate employment growth. Participants shared that:

- There is a need for shovel ready employment lands, particularly when it comes to industrial employment uses.
- There is an insufficient supply of large sites.
- Guelph's economy is primarily manufacturing-based, and companies are steering towards storage and logistics types of employment use.
- Guelph has a good base of skilled labour that companies would like to draw from.
- Taxes in Guelph are higher than in other communities and that can present challenges for business attraction.
- A lack of rail transportation options may be a limiting factor for companies moving into Guelph.

In addition to stakeholder feedback and questions posed on Have Your Say, an email received noted the potential for brownfield redevelopment as employment lands as opposed to residential uses.

Employment growth and land needs, and recommendations

It was noted with participants that between 2021 to 2051 it is expected that 15 per cent of Guelph's employment land growth will be accommodated through the intensification of existing developed employment lands. Participants were asked to share their thoughts on the amount of growth projected to be accommodated through intensification. Participants shared that:

- The City of Guelph has many tools at their disposal to enable and encourage intensification of existing sites.
- Employment intensification is difficult on existing sites, especially when green initiatives are factored in.
- A supply of large lots is important, notably shovel ready land.

Section 4: next steps

The feedback heard through the ELS and the consultation done on Growth Scenario One, together with the other technical background studies being done as part of [Shaping Guelph](#), will be used to develop growth scenarios over the next few months. These background studies and the community feedback gathered in this round of engagement will help shape two other growth scenarios the City of Guelph will present in Spring 2021.