WESLEY HARRIS | GUELPH WARD 5 | 2026

Core Services First

Full Platform

Protect What We Have. Fix What Isn't Working.

Common Sense with Compassion

Community, Accountability, Progress.

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Core Services First

Protect What We Have. Fix What Isn't Working.

Guelph is a good city. Most people who live here are proud to call it home.

But being proud of our city does not mean pretending everything is working perfectly.

I believe City Hall needs to get the basics right.

That means protecting the services people rely on every day: roads and sidewalks, snow removal, water and wastewater, public safety, transit, waste collection, parks, and the infrastructure that keeps our city running.

It also means protecting the City's financial safety net so those services can continue when something unexpected happens.

Core Services First does **not** mean core services only.

It means taking care of what we already have, delivering existing services well, and understanding the long-term cost before adding new permanent spending.

My approach is simple:

Protect what is working.
Fix what isn't.
Maintain what we own.
Measure the results.
Spend carefully.

Core Services Come First

Every budget involves choices.

There will always be more things we would like to do than there is money available to do them.

When Council considers significant new spending, I will ask:

Do we need it?

Is it a City responsibility?

Can we afford it over the long term?

What result will residents receive for the money?

And are we already delivering our existing core services properly?

I will not support blind cuts to important services just to make a budget number look better.

But I also don't believe every good idea needs to become a new permanent City expense.

When money is limited, priorities matter.

Guelph's 2026 resident survey found 89% rated quality of life good or very good and 81% were satisfied with overall City service delivery.

Getting Around Guelph

Roads, Snow Removal and Transit Have to Work Together

I don't see roads, sidewalks, snow removal and transit as separate problems.

They are parts of the same transportation system.

A poorly maintained road slows buses and damages vehicles.

A bus stop buried behind a snowbank is not accessible.

A sidewalk covered in snow can prevent someone from reaching transit at all.

A road reconstruction project may also be the best time to improve a sidewalk, intersection, bus stop, watermain or sewer underneath it.

That is why I want Guelph to take a more connected approach.

Maintain the road.
Clear the route.
Keep the bus moving.
Make sure people can safely get where they need to go.

Snow Removal

Set Standards and Deliver Them

Snow removal is one of the clearest examples of a core service where residents are asking for improvement.

In Guelph's 2026 satisfaction survey, only about **51% of residents were satisfied with road and sidewalk snow removal**, making it the lowest-rated of the services measured.

At the same time, Ontario municipal benchmarking suggests Guelph is **not** a high-spending outlier on road winter maintenance.

The 2025 BMA Municipal Study reported road winter-control costs, including amortization, of approximately:

- **Guelph: $2,812 per lane-kilometre**
- Kingston: $4,358
- Barrie: $4,808
- Single-tier municipal average: $3,284

Guelph's winter road-control cost was also about **$20 per resident**, compared with approximately $48 in Barrie and $53 in Kingston.

That tells me the answer is not simply to cut the snow-removal budget.

It also does not prove that simply spending more will solve the problem.

The question is:

What level of winter service are Guelph residents paying for, is the City actually delivering it, and what would better service cost?

Use the Review Already Underway

Guelph has already approved a value-for-money audit and operational review of winter maintenance.

I do not want another review simply for the sake of reviewing something again.

I want Council to:

finish the work, make the results understandable to the public, and act on what it finds.

Set Clear Service Standards

Residents should be able to understand what the City is promising.

Other Ontario cities publish clearer completion targets for different classes of roads and sidewalks.

I want Guelph to examine whether similarly clear targets would improve accountability and what those targets would cost.

Measure the Result

After major winter storms, residents should be able to see:

- how much snow fell;
- when clearing began;
- how long major road classes took;
- whether sidewalk targets were met;
- whether important transit stops remained accessible;
- what the event cost; and
- whether unusual circumstances affected the result.

If the City misses its own target, residents deserve to know why.

Give Council Costed Choices

I do not want Council debating vague choices such as:

“Should snow removal be better?”

Staff should be able to show:

Option A: maintain the current level.

Option B: targeted improvements.

Option C: a higher overall service level.

Then show what each option costs and what residents receive.

Snow Removal and Accessibility

Snow and ice do not affect everyone equally.

A sidewalk that is inconvenient for one person may be completely unusable for someone using a wheelchair, walker or mobility device.

Priority pedestrian routes, accessible crossings, transit stops and sidewalks serving major destinations should be part of the winter-maintenance plan.

Snow removal is not only a road service. It is also a transit and accessibility service.

Budget for Real Winters

Some winters will cost more than others.

That is unavoidable.

What we can control is whether Guelph has budgeted realistically and whether the appropriate contingency reserves are there when a severe winter arrives.

A difficult winter should not automatically create a choice between cutting another service and raising taxes.

Roads and Sidewalks

Spend Smarter and Fix Problems Before They Become Expensive

Only about **55% of residents were satisfied with road and sidewalk maintenance** in Guelph's 2026 survey.

But the financial story is different from snow removal.

Ontario benchmarking shows Guelph's paved-road costs are relatively high.

Approximate costs per lane-kilometre, including amortization:

- **Guelph: $16,184**
- Barrie: $13,478
- Kingston: $13,545
- Single-tier municipal average: $12,441

Guelph's average paved-road condition is about **59 out of 100**, which the City rates as fair.

The City's current asset outlook rates transportation infrastructure fair today but forecasts it falling to poor by 2035. It identifies about **$341 million in ten-year renewal needs against $209.6 million in funding**, leaving a gap of roughly **$131.4 million**.

The question is:

Why are we spending more per lane-kilometre while still getting only fair road conditions and relatively low satisfaction?

Find Out Where the Money Is Going

I would support a peer review examining:

- labour costs;
- contractor costs;
- asphalt and other materials;
- road age;
- construction methods;
- underground utility work;
- preventative maintenance;
- emergency patching;
- project management; and
- how much money goes into short-term repairs compared with permanent renewal.

If there is a legitimate reason Guelph costs more, explain it.

If there is not, find the savings.

Fix Roads Before They Fail

Roads normally become more expensive to repair as their condition gets worse.

Crack sealing, resurfacing and other preventative treatments can extend the life of pavement and delay a much more expensive reconstruction.

I want Guelph focused on **lifetime cost**, not just this year's bill.

Set a Road-Condition Goal

Council should know:

- what it costs to stop average road condition from getting worse;
- what it costs to gradually improve it;
- what level gives taxpayers the best value; and
- how our performance compares with similar cities.

We cannot close the entire transportation funding gap overnight.

But pretending it does not exist will not make it disappear.

Coordinate Construction

If a road needs rebuilding, the City should also look at what is underneath and around it.

Where practical, coordinate:

- road work;
- watermains;
- wastewater pipes;
- stormwater infrastructure;
- sidewalks;
- accessibility improvements;
- intersections; and
- transit improvements.

Plan once. Dig once. Fix what reasonably needs fixing.

Make Road Planning Easier to Understand

Residents should be able to look up their street and understand:

- its general condition;
- whether work is planned;
- approximately when;
- what kind of work is being considered; and
- why another street may have been prioritized first.

Transit

Better Service, Better Value

Transit is a core City service, but residents are telling us it needs improvement.

Only about **56% of Guelph residents were satisfied with transit** in the 2026 survey.

Guelph also spends a significant amount on the service.

The 2025 BMA Municipal Study puts conventional transit net cost at approximately:

- **Guelph: $162 per resident**
- Barrie: $106
- Kingston: $169
- Ontario municipalities over 100,000: about $137 on average

That does not prove Guelph Transit is wasting money.

But it tells me our first answer should not simply be:

Spend more.

Before asking taxpayers for more, I want to know whether we can provide better service using the buses, drivers and service hours we already pay for.

Learn From Other Cities

Barrie is particularly interesting because it is roughly Guelph's size.

Its redesigned network is based around:

- frequent routes on high-demand corridors;
- local routes connecting neighbourhoods to those corridors; and
- on-demand service in lower-demand areas.

Barrie's goal was to give roughly **70% of existing riders access to a 15-minute frequent route for part of their trip**.

I want Guelph to study that approach along with Kingston and other comparable systems.

But I am **not** committing Guelph to copying another city.

I am committing to finding out whether there is a better way.

Build on Future Ready

There are good parts of Guelph's existing Transit Future Ready plan.

It moves toward:

- more direct cross-city routes;
- a more understandable grid;
- frequent core service;
- express service;
- less dependence on every trip going through one hub;
- some on-demand service; and
- additional buses and service hours as the city grows.

I do not believe we should throw away years of work simply because another city has tried something different.

But we also should not continue spending simply because an older plan says that is the next step.

Compare the options and follow the evidence.

A Frequency-First System Worth Studying

A future Guelph system could have three basic levels.

Frequent Routes

Major high-demand corridors with approximately 15-minute-or-better service when demand supports it.

Local Routes

Neighbourhood routes connecting people with major destinations and the frequent network.

On-Demand Service

Used carefully where ridership is too low to justify continuously operating a large bus.

No neighbourhood should simply be abandoned.

The question is whether every neighbourhood requires exactly the same kind of service.

About the Buses We Already Own

Guelph currently has approximately **95 conventional passenger buses**, plus separate Mobility buses and support vehicles.

But all 95 cannot be scheduled at once.

Buses need inspections, maintenance and repairs.

That is why I would **not** commit to putting “70% of all buses” on frequent routes.

The better long-term measure is:

What percentage of riders can reach a frequent route for an important part of their trip?

Make Existing Buses Work Better

Adding another bus is not the only way to improve transit.

Before simply adding vehicles or service hours, I support examining:

- straighter routes;
- unnecessary route overlap;
- transit signal priority;
- better traffic-signal timing;
- short queue-jump lanes where justified;
- faster boarding;
- better management of the spacing between buses; and
- ways to reduce bus bunching.

Stop Bus Bunching

On a frequent route, three buses arriving together after someone waited 20 minutes is not good service.

For routes such as the 99, I want the City to study better **headway management**.

For frequent service, the passenger’s question is simple:

How long until the next bus actually arrives?

Accessibility Starts Before You Board

A transit system is not accessible if someone cannot reach the bus.

That means transit planning has to consider:

- sidewalks;
- snow clearing;
- safe crossings;
- shelters;
- lighting;
- curb design; and
- accessible boarding areas.

Keep Transit Affordable

Transit also has to remain affordable.

I support protecting targeted programs that help residents who genuinely depend on lower-cost transit.

I would be more cautious about broad fare reductions that create permanent costs without improving service.

Affordable transit matters. Reliable transit matters too.

Plan Growth With Transit in Mind

Where we build homes and jobs affects the cost of transit.

Major growth along corridors that can support strong transit is much easier to serve than growth that requires long, winding routes.

Transportation should be considered **before** thousands of people move into an area, not after.

A 12-Year Transit Direction

Short Term — Years 1 to 4

Compare, Fix and Test

Compare:

1. the existing Future Ready plan;
2. a cost-neutral network redesign using roughly existing operating hours;
3. a moderate frequency-first model using some additional service; and
4. a full frequency-first model using roughly the same long-term resources contemplated under Future Ready.

Compare each using:

- cost per resident;
- cost per passenger;
- ridership;
- passengers per service hour;
- travel times;
- reliability;
- cancelled trips;
- neighbourhood coverage;
- buses required;
- operators required;
- percentage of riders with frequent-service access; and
- rider satisfaction.

Do the lower-cost things first. Measure them. Then decide what deserves more investment.

Medium Term — Years 5 to 8

Build What Works

If the evidence supports it:

- expand the strongest frequent corridors;
- connect local routes into them;
- use on-demand service where testing shows it works;

- improve evening and weekend frequency where demand supports it;
- continue transit-priority improvements; and
- add buses and operators when actual ridership justifies them.

Long Term — Years 9 to 12

A Mature Frequent Network

A benchmark worth studying is:

Can roughly 70% of Guelph Transit riders have access to 15-minute-or-better service for an important part of their trip?

That is a benchmark to study, not a promise.

If 60% delivers much better value, do not waste money chasing 70%.

If ridership grows enough to justify more, be willing to go further.

Keep an Eye on Cost

The remaining Future Ready program includes approximately **90,000 additional annual service hours** and additional fleet expansion. The City's capital plan continues to fund Future Ready service growth.

My financial goal is:

Improve transit frequency, reliability and satisfaction while keeping long-term costs below the full Future Ready expansion where practical.

Parks

Protect What Works and Build on It

Core Services First is not only about finding problems.

It also means recognizing when Guelph is doing something well.

Parks and trails are a strong example.

About **90% of residents were satisfied with Guelph's parks and trails** in the 2026 satisfaction survey.

The important message is:

Our parks are working.

My Commitment to Existing Parks

I support:

- maintaining the parks and trails we already have;
- keeping playgrounds and sports fields in good condition;
- protecting natural areas and our tree canopy;
- improving trail connections;
- making parks accessible to different ages and abilities;
- ensuring growing neighbourhoods have reasonable access to green space; and
- understanding future maintenance costs before building new facilities.

As Guelph grows and becomes more dense, public green space becomes even more important.

For someone living in an apartment or a home without a large backyard, a neighbourhood park may be their backyard.

A National Urban Park for Guelph

I strongly support the effort to bring a **National Urban Park to Guelph**, centred around the former Ontario Reformatory lands and connected natural areas.

Guelph is **not currently an official Parks Canada National Urban Park candidate site**. Parks Canada currently lists Windsor as Ontario's candidate site while leaving room for future additions to the national program.

My National Urban Park Pledge

If elected, I will support and actively advocate for Guelph becoming an official candidate for a Parks Canada National Urban Park.

I will support working with:

- Parks Canada;
- the Province of Ontario;

- Indigenous partners;
- community organizations; and
- willing landowners.

My goals would include:

- protecting the natural character of the Reformatory lands;
- protecting waterways and wildlife habitat;
- preserving important history;
- keeping the area publicly accessible;
- connecting it with Guelph's existing parks, trails and river corridors where practical;
- meaningful Indigenous participation in planning and stewardship;
- seeking federal and provincial investment before placing major new costs on Guelph taxpayers; and
- understanding the City's long-term responsibilities before signing any final agreement.

A National Urban Park should **add to Guelph's park system, not drain resources away from the neighbourhood parks residents already love.**

Water and Wastewater

Protect What Works. Fix Problems Before They Become Emergencies.

Most of us do not think about water and sewers very often.

We turn on the tap and clean water comes out.

We flush the toilet and wastewater goes away.

That's exactly how a good system should work.

Guelph residents report high satisfaction with water and wastewater service.

The challenge is protecting the infrastructure behind that service.

Water: Fair Toward Good

Guelph's water system includes about **569 kilometres of watermains** with an estimated replacement value of approximately **$1.24 billion**.

The overall system is rated **fair**.

The City's ten-year asset plan identifies approximately:

- **$321 million in water renewal needs**
- **$337 million in planned funding**

That represents about a **$16 million funding surplus** against currently identified ten-year renewal needs.

My goal is:

Protect the water service we have and gradually move overall infrastructure from fair toward good.

Wastewater: Poor Toward Fair

Wastewater is the bigger concern.

Guelph has about **528 kilometres of wastewater mains** plus major treatment infrastructure, with an estimated replacement value of approximately **$983 million**.

The overall system is rated **poor**.

The City's ten-year plan identifies approximately:

- **$302 million in wastewater renewal needs**
- **$201.5 million in funding**
- a gap of roughly **$100.5 million**

My first goal should be:

Stop the deterioration and begin moving wastewater from poor toward fair.

The Problem Is Not Just Pipes

Wastewater renewal is not only about sewer pipes under the road.

Guelph's asset planning also identifies important treatment-facility and equipment needs.

The City's own asset plan says mid-life rehabilitation of sanitary infrastructure can extend useful life and reduce future renewal requirements.

Improve It Within the Existing Funding Plan First

I do not want the first solution to be another dedicated increase on people's utility bills.

My first approach would be to make the existing funding plan work as effectively as possible.

Use Existing Capital Reserves Carefully

Where utility capital reserves can safely support earlier renewal while maintaining a responsible cushion, I want Council to examine that option before automatically increasing rates.

Dig the Road Up Once

Before a major road reconstruction, I want staff asking:

What condition is the road?

What condition is the watermain?

What condition is the sewer?

What condition is the stormwater infrastructure?

The City's asset plan already recognizes the value of coordinating wastewater work with road and water projects when the overall project makes lifecycle sense.

Plan once. Dig once. Fix what reasonably needs fixing.

Repair Before Replacing

I want staff comparing:

Repair it.
Rehabilitate it.
Replace it.

Then choose the option that provides the best long-term value.

Put the Highest Risks First

Ask:

How likely is it to fail?

What happens if it does?

The combination of those answers should help determine what gets fixed first.

Growth Should Help Pay for Growth

Where provincial law allows it, growth-related water and wastewater infrastructure should be supported through development charges, developer contributions and senior-government programs.

Waste Collection

Protect a Service That Works. Waste Less. Spend Smarter.

Waste collection is another example of a core service residents generally believe is working.

My starting point is not to tear the system apart.

It is:

Protect reliable collection and keep looking for practical ways to improve value.

Keep Collection Reliable

Residents put their carts at the curb and expect them to be collected.

Reliable collection should remain the first priority.

Make Sure Taxpayers Benefit From the Blue Box Change

Ontario has shifted responsibility for residential Blue Box recycling from municipalities to producers.

I want residents to be able to see clearly:

What did recycling cost the City before?

What does it cost now?

What savings did the transition create?

And where did those savings go?

Compare Costs Again — Fairly

Older waste-cost comparisons are difficult to interpret because municipalities moved into producer-funded recycling at different times.

I want a **new post-transition benchmark** comparing:

- collection cost per resident;
- collection cost per household;
- service frequency;
- garbage sent to landfill;
- diversion;
- contamination;
- staffing and contracting; and
- resident satisfaction.

We're Doing Something Right on Landfill Waste

In 2024, Guelph sent approximately **154 kilograms of residential garbage per person to landfill**, compared with an Ontario average of roughly **178 kilograms per person**.

That is a result worth protecting.

Improve Diversion

Guelph's 2024 diversion rate was about **55%**, while the City's existing long-term target is **62% by 2030**.

I support working toward better diversion, but I do not want Council spending large amounts simply to chase a number.

Start with practical measures:

- better sorting information;
- targeted education;

- good organics access;
- better use of collection data;
- reuse and repair;
- apartment and multi-residential access; and
- clear information about what can be recycled.

Protect the Equipment We Already Own

Guelph's solid-waste facilities, vehicles and equipment are currently in good overall condition.

Keep good equipment good rather than waiting until it becomes a crisis.

Reuse Before Building New

The City's current capital plan includes reusing part of the Materials Recovery Facility as a Collections Operations Centre, reducing earlier requests for new building space.

Use what we already have before automatically building something new.

Think Long Term About Disposal

I support studying future disposal options.

I would not commit taxpayers to an expensive new technology without a strong business case.

Compare:

Cost.
Environmental impact.
Reliability.
Long-term risk.

Public Safety and Policing

Safe Neighbourhoods. Safe Public Spaces. Accountable Policing.

People should feel safe where they live.

They should feel comfortable walking through their neighbourhood, taking transit, visiting a park or bringing their family downtown.

Public safety is one of the most basic responsibilities of government.

But I also believe we need to talk about crime honestly.

Guelph is **not an unusually high-crime city by Canadian standards**.

In 2025, Statistics Canada reported a Crime Severity Index of:

- Barrie: **46.9**
- Guelph: **57.8**
- Kingston: **61.5**

Guelph's police-reported crime rate was **4,288 per 100,000 residents**.

That does not mean every resident feels safe or that every problem should be minimized.

The goal should be to keep Guelph safe before problems become harder and more expensive to fix.

The Crime Picture Is Mixed

Different crimes move in different directions.

I do not believe it is useful to say simply:

"Crime is up."

or

"Crime is down."

The better question is:

Which crimes are increasing, which are falling, where are they happening and what response actually works?

Property crime, repeat offences, sexual violence, human trafficking and serious violence all require different responses.

Focus on the Crimes Residents Actually Experience

Property crime matters to the person whose garage was broken into, whose bike disappeared, whose business window was smashed or whose vehicle was stolen.

I want police resources driven by real information.

If particular neighbourhoods or commercial areas are seeing repeated theft, break-ins or vandalism, focus attention there.

That can include:

- targeted patrols;
- identifying repeat offenders;
- better coordination with businesses;
- camera evidence;
- Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design;
- neighbourhood education; and
- proactive investigation where the data supports it.

Put resources where the problem is instead of spreading them everywhere equally.

Protect Emergency Response

There is good news that deserves to be recognized.

In 2025, the median Guelph Police response time for Priority 1 calls improved from **6 minutes 38 seconds to 5 minutes 59 seconds**, which the Service reports was its lowest median Priority 1 response time since 2014.

That's exactly the type of result I want Core Services First to protect.

Keep emergency response strong and look for efficiencies elsewhere before weakening frontline emergency coverage.

We Have Added Police — Measure Whether It Is Working

Guelph Police reported **243 sworn members and 117.5 civilian members** in 2025, for 360.5 actual full-time-equivalent positions.

The Service also reported:

- overtime dropping from **36,521 hours in 2024 to 25,524 in 2025**;
- paid overtime cost of about **$1.46 million** in 2025; and
- an improvement in the officer-to-population ratio from about 1:718 to 1:686 using the Service's measure.

I would be careful about claiming additional staffing caused every improvement.

But those are exactly the results Council should examine when deciding whether previous investments are working.

Don't measure policing only by how many officers we hired. Measure what changed after we hired them.

Police Spending Needs the Same Accountability as Every Other Core Service

Guelph Police had a net approved operating budget of about **$67.2 million in 2025** and reported operating expenditures of approximately **$65.7 million**, or about **$410 per resident** using its own calculation.

For 2026, the confirmed Police Service budget increase was approximately **$5.79 million**, or **9.9%**, with a 1.65% impact on the overall municipal tax levy.

That is a major investment.

Residents have every right to ask what they are getting for it.

But Guelph Is Not a High-Cost Policing Outlier

The standardized 2025 BMA Municipal Study reported policing net costs per resident, excluding amortization, of approximately:

- Kingston: **$313**
- **Guelph: $354**
- Population over 100,000 average: **$354**
- Barrie: **$393**

Including amortization, Guelph was $373 per resident compared with a $367 average for municipalities over 100,000.

So I would **not** begin with the assumption that Guelph Police is unusually expensive.

My approach is the same as everywhere else:

No blind cuts. No blank cheques.

Show What New Spending Accomplishes

When the Police Services Board asks Council for additional funding, I want the business case to show what residents should expect in return.

For example:

If we hire more frontline officers:
What should happen to emergency response times and overtime?

If we hire investigators:
What should happen to investigation capacity?

If we invest in technology:
How many staff hours should it save?

If we expand alternative response:
How many calls can be handled without tying up frontline police?

Then report back.

If the investment worked, say so.

If it did not, change course.

Free Police Officers to Do Police Work

One way to improve policing without constantly increasing the number of officers is to stop using highly trained police officers for work that does not require a police officer.

I support examining:

- online reporting;
- telephone follow-up;
- appointments;
- better call screening;
- appropriate civilian response; and
- alternative response for low-risk situations.

If something doesn't require a cruiser and a uniformed officer, don't automatically send one.

Save frontline officers for the situations where they are genuinely needed.

Mental Health Calls Need the Right Response

Police officers cannot solve mental illness.

They may be needed when there is an immediate safety risk, but not every mental-health crisis requires the same response.

Guelph's IMPACT program pairs police with mental-health clinicians.

During the 2026–27 fiscal year to date, IMPACT workers attended 159 live calls with police; 111 people, or **69.8%**, were diverted from hospital.

That is the kind of partnership I support.

Use police where safety requires police. Use health professionals where the problem is primarily health.

Downtown

Compassion and Public Safety Are Not Opposites

I want a downtown where families feel comfortable visiting, businesses feel comfortable investing and people who live there feel safe.

I also believe people struggling with homelessness, addiction or mental illness deserve to be treated like human beings.

Those ideas are not contradictory.

Being homeless is not a crime.
Having an addiction is not a crime.
Having a mental illness is not a crime.

But violence, threats, theft, trafficking, vandalism and other illegal behaviour cannot simply be ignored because someone is struggling.

Residents and businesses deserve safe public spaces too.

My approach is:

Enforce the law where the law is being broken.

Offer help where help can solve the problem.

And stop pretending we have to choose between compassion and safety.

Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence

Some crimes deserve particular attention because of the harm they cause and the complexity of investigating them.

I support maintaining appropriate investigative capacity for:

- intimate partner violence;
- sexual violence;
- human trafficking;
- child exploitation; and
- crimes targeting vulnerable victims.

Guelph Police reports provincial grants supporting areas including victim services, human trafficking, child exploitation, mental-health response and other public-safety work.

I support aggressively pursuing senior-government funding for those responsibilities rather than automatically placing the full cost on local property taxpayers.

Road Safety Is Public Safety Too

In 2025, Guelph Police issued **7,712 Highway Traffic Act violations**. The same annual report recorded a **12.8% decrease in the rate of personal-injury collisions** from 2024 to 2025.

That does not prove enforcement alone caused the decline.

But road enforcement belongs in the wider transportation discussion.

Our roads should be:

maintained properly, cleared properly, designed safely and enforced reasonably.

Human Trafficking

Find the Victims. Target the Traffickers.

There is one public-safety statistic in Guelph that deserves particular attention.

In 2024, Guelph had the highest rate of police-reported human trafficking among Canadian metropolitan areas.

Statistics Canada recorded **17 police-reported incidents in Guelph, or 10.7 incidents per 100,000 residents**.

The average across Canada's metropolitan areas was only **1.6 per 100,000**.

That is something we need to take seriously.

But we also need to understand what the number means.

A high police-reported rate does not necessarily mean Guelph has more trafficking happening than every other city.

Human trafficking is a hidden crime.

Statistics Canada specifically notes that Guelph's high 2024 rate may partly reflect intensified enforcement, new initiatives, specialized teams and partnerships. It also notes Guelph's proximity to Highway 401 as a trafficking-corridor factor.

If police become better at finding victims, investigating traffickers and identifying cases, reported numbers can increase.

Guelph Police has invested in specialized human-trafficking investigations, and the Service has said increased proactive investigation has helped identify more incidents.

Finding a victim who was previously invisible is not a failure.

The failure would be knowing this is happening in our community and looking the other way.

My Approach

I want Guelph to attack human trafficking from both sides:

Make it harder to traffic people here, and make it easier for victims to get out.

Keep Specialized Investigators

Human trafficking investigations are complicated.

Victims may be frightened, financially dependent on their trafficker or manipulated into believing they cannot leave.

These cases require officers with specialized training and time to build trust.

Guelph Police expanded its Human Trafficking/Intimate Partner Violence unit to eight officers in 2025.

I support maintaining specialized investigative capacity **as long as the results continue to justify the investment**, while aggressively pursuing provincial and federal funding so local property taxpayers do not carry the entire cost.

Target the Traffickers

The priority should be the people making money by exploiting others.

That means:

- proactive investigations;
- intelligence sharing with other police services;
- identifying repeat offenders and trafficking networks;
- cooperating with provincial and federal law enforcement;
- following financial evidence where possible; and
- working across municipal boundaries.

Guelph does not exist in isolation.

Traffickers do not stop at municipal boundaries.

Neither should the investigation.

Help Victims Leave

Enforcement alone is not enough.

Someone trying to escape trafficking may need:

- somewhere safe to stay;
- counselling;
- health care;
- legal assistance;
- income support;
- help obtaining identification;
- transportation; or
- longer-term housing.

Ontario's 2025–2030 anti-human-trafficking strategy funds specialized survivor supports, victim services, legal help, crisis assistance and community-based programs.

I want Guelph working closely with those provincial programs and local organizations rather than trying to recreate every service at City Hall.

Use the programs that already exist and make sure victims can reach them.

Protect Young People Before They Become Victims

Ontario reports that about **two-thirds of police-identified human-trafficking victims are under 25**.

Prevention therefore has to include young people.

I support partnerships with:

- schools;
- child and youth organizations;
- social-service agencies;
- health providers;
- police;
- parents and caregivers; and
- organizations experienced in human trafficking.

The goal is not to frighten children.

It is to help young people and the adults around them recognize grooming, coercion and exploitation early enough to intervene.

Train the People Most Likely to See It

A trafficking victim may come into contact with many people before ever speaking with police.

That can include:

- hotel and accommodation workers;
- health-care workers;
- social-service workers;
- transit employees;
- bylaw and City staff;
- educators; and
- people working with vulnerable youth.

I support appropriate training so frontline workers know the warning signs and, just as importantly, **who to call when they are concerned**.

Ontario's current strategy emphasizes awareness, frontline training, early intervention, survivor support and holding offenders accountable.

Work With Hotels and Short-Term Accommodations

Accommodation providers can be places where trafficking is detected.

Ontario's updated accommodation-sector rules took effect January 1, 2026 and are specifically intended to strengthen human-trafficking investigations while setting privacy and reporting requirements.

Guelph should make sure local businesses understand those requirements and know how to report suspicious activity safely.

The goal is not to turn hotel employees into police officers.

It is to make it harder for traffickers to operate unnoticed.

Measure More Than Arrests

Success should not be measured only by whether the number of police-reported incidents goes down.

A falling number could mean less trafficking.

It could also mean fewer victims are being found.

Guelph therefore needs a public-safety scorecard that measures both enforcement and victim support.

The scorecard should track:

- trafficking investigations;
- victims identified;
- charges laid;
- convictions, where available;
- repeat offenders;
- suspected trafficking networks disrupted;
- referrals to victim services;
- access to emergency and longer-term housing;
- response times for connecting victims with support;

- frontline training completed;
- hotel and accommodation partnerships;
- youth-prevention and public-awareness activities;
- provincial and federal funding received;
- municipal dollars committed;
- partnerships with police, schools, health providers and community organizations; and
- longer-term trends in police-reported trafficking.

The scorecard should be reported publicly at least once a year, while protecting victim privacy and avoiding information that could compromise active investigations.

It should also explain what the numbers mean.

For example, an increase in police-reported incidents may reflect stronger detection rather than an increase in the underlying level of trafficking. A decrease may reflect progress, but it could also mean fewer victims are being identified.

The scorecard should therefore include both quantitative results and a plain-language explanation of trends.

The goal is fewer people being exploited — not simply a prettier statistic.

Review What Works

A scorecard is only useful if it leads to action.

I support an annual review involving:

- Guelph Police;
- victim-service organizations;
- survivors and survivor-led organizations, where participation is safe and appropriate;
- health and social-service providers;
- schools and youth organizations;
- accommodation providers; and
- relevant provincial and federal partners.

The review should identify what is working, where victims are falling through the cracks and what changes are needed.

If a program is not producing results, we should improve it or redirect the resources.

If a program is working, we should protect it and pursue outside funding to expand it.

What Council Can Do

A City councillor cannot direct police investigations.

The Police Services Board provides civilian oversight and develops police-service estimates, while the Chief is responsible for day-to-day operations.

Under Ontario's Community Safety and Policing Act, Council establishes the Board's overall budget and is not bound to accept the exact estimate submitted, but Council cannot approve or reject individual police-budget line items.

Council can:

- scrutinize the overall police budget;
- support specialized capacity where evidence shows it is working;
- advocate for provincial and federal funding;
- support community partnerships and prevention;
- establish a public annual human-trafficking and exploitation scorecard;
- ask for clear performance measures while protecting victim privacy;
- make sure appropriate City employees know how to recognize and report concerns;
- support safe housing and community services that help victims leave exploitation;
- encourage appropriate training for frontline City staff;
- work with hotels and short-term accommodation providers on prevention and reporting;
- support youth-focused prevention and education; and
- publicly keep the issue from being ignored.

Council should not pretend that the City can solve human trafficking alone.

The City's role is to coordinate, support, measure, advocate and make sure people can reach the services they need.

Police must lead investigations.

The province and federal government must provide substantial funding and specialized support.

Community organizations and survivors must be treated as essential partners.

My Commitment

Guelph should not become an easy place for traffickers to operate.

I will support a strategy built around:

finding victims, targeting traffickers, protecting young people, supporting survivors, measuring results and working with other levels of government to pay for specialized enforcement and services.

I will also support a public annual scorecard so residents can see:

- what actions were taken;
- how many victims were identified and connected with support;
- whether investigations and prosecutions are progressing;
- whether prevention and training are reaching the people who need them;
- how much outside funding was secured; and
- where more work is required.

And I will be careful with the numbers.

Guelph having Canada's highest **police-reported rate** is serious.

But if stronger enforcement means we are finding victims who would otherwise remain hidden, we should not punish the people doing that work simply because the reported number went up.

The number I ultimately want to bring down is not the number of police reports.

It is the number of people being exploited.

Know What Council Can Actually Do

I will not promise authority I do not have.

A councillor is not the Police Chief.

The Guelph Police Services Board provides civilian oversight, while the Chief manages daily police operations.

What Council can do is:

- scrutinize the overall police budget;
- demand clear performance information;
- make responsible appointments to the Police Services Board;
- ask whether new spending produces measurable results;
- advocate for provincial and federal funding;
- support City programs that reduce unnecessary police calls;
- improve public spaces; and
- advocate to senior governments when criminal law, bail, health care or other issues fall outside municipal authority.

Fire and Emergency Response

Protect Fast Response. Maintain the People and Equipment Behind It.

When someone calls 911 because their home is on fire, someone is trapped in a vehicle or a family member is having a medical emergency, minutes matter.

Fire protection and paramedic response are among the clearest examples of core municipal services.

Guelph Fire operates from six stations across the city with more than 170 personnel. Firefighters do much more than fight fires. They respond to medical emergencies, vehicle extrications, hazardous-material incidents, water and ice rescues, carbon-monoxide calls and other emergencies.

My starting point is simple:

Protect emergency response.

Measure whether it is working.

Maintain the people, stations, vehicles and equipment needed to deliver it.

Guelph Is Spending More Than the Large-City Average — But Less Than Some Close Comparators

The 2025 BMA Municipal Study provides a standardized comparison of municipal fire costs.

Net fire-service cost per resident, excluding amortization, was approximately:

Guelph: $220
Barrie: $232
Kingston: $231
Municipalities over 100,000: $194 average

Including amortization:

Guelph: $229
Barrie: $252
Kingston: $250
Municipalities over 100,000: $203 average

That means I would not begin with either conclusion:

Guelph Fire costs too much.

or

Guelph Fire needs more money.

The question should be:

What level of emergency protection are residents receiving for the money we already spend, and what does the evidence say we need to protect or improve it?

Response Time Has to Be One of the Main Measures

A fire department cannot be judged only by its budget or how many firefighters it employs.

One of the most important measures is how quickly help actually arrives.

Guelph's 2024 Asset Management Plan reported that 64.3% of fire service calls met the City's four-minute response measure.

I want residents to be able to see current performance clearly.

Council should receive reporting showing:

how long it takes to answer and process a call;
how long crews take to turn out from the station;
how long they spend travelling;
how long the total response takes;
whether the first-arriving unit met the City's standard; and
whether enough firefighters arrived within the required time for the type of emergency.

If performance improves, residents should know it.

If it falls behind, Council should know why.

Measure More Than the First Truck

Getting the first fire truck to an emergency quickly matters.

But for a serious structure fire, the first arriving crew may not be enough to carry out every task that has to happen safely.

Firefighters may need to attack the fire, search the building, establish a water supply, ventilate the structure, protect neighbouring buildings and maintain personnel available for firefighter rescue.

That is why I also want Guelph to examine effective response force.

Brantford's public reporting provides an example. It separately reports whether four firefighters arrive within four minutes, eight within six minutes and fifteen within eight minutes, rather than measuring only the arrival of the first vehicle.

I do not believe Guelph should automatically copy another city's exact numbers.

But the principle makes sense:

Measure how quickly the first crew arrives — and how quickly enough firefighters and equipment arrive to actually deal with the emergency.

That would give residents and Council a much clearer picture of whether the system is working.

Do Not Let a City-Wide Average Hide a Coverage Problem

A city-wide response-time number can look acceptable even when one part of the city consistently receives slower service.

Kingston provides an interesting model.

Its fire service divided the community into 185 risk-planning zones and assessed them using factors including historical emergency response, infrastructure, transportation and building occupancy.

Guelph already maintains a Community Risk Assessment that is reviewed annually and used to inform Fire Department planning.

I want that information connected more clearly to public performance reporting.

Residents should be able to understand:

which areas of Guelph are consistently meeting response standards;
which areas are falling behind;
whether the problem occurs at certain times of day;
whether traffic or road design is affecting response;
where population and building density are changing risk; and
whether certain areas require different resources because of the types of buildings or emergencies located there.

The goal is not to rank neighbourhoods.

It is to make sure a weak area cannot disappear inside a good city-wide average.

Look at Station Coverage Before Automatically Building More

Guelph currently operates six fire stations.

Some are relatively new, while others have been serving the city for decades. Headquarters opened in 1972, Station 2 in 1964 and Station 3 in 1976. Stations 4, 5 and 6 opened in 2000, 2005 and 2011 respectively.

The City completed a Fire and Paramedic Facility Needs Assessment in 2023. The 2026 capital plan says replacement of Fire Headquarters is no longer included within the current ten-year capital forecast.

The City is also not presently undertaking a formal Fire Master Plan. Its Community Risk Assessment is updated annually, while a 2022 Fire Strategic Initiatives study continues to guide planning.

Before committing taxpayers to a new station or a major station replacement, I want updated evidence showing:

where emergency calls are occurring;

how population growth is changing demand;
where response-time gaps exist;
how high-rise and higher-density development changes fire risk;
whether relocating an existing station could improve coverage;
whether additional apparatus or staffing would solve the problem more efficiently than another building; and
what each option would cost over its full life.

Build what we need — but demonstrate the need first.

Set a Growth Trigger Instead of Assuming Growth Means Another Station

Population growth alone should not automatically trigger construction of another fire station.

The question should be whether growth is causing the existing emergency-response system to fall below an adopted service standard.

Barrie's Station 6 provides one example. Barrie tied the new station to its Council-mandated objective of achieving six-minute road travel time on 90% of emergency calls and hired 20 firefighters to operate the new facility.

Cambridge has also used station placement strategically. Its Station 6 provides primary coverage to a growing industrial and residential area while improving secondary response to neighbouring areas and Highway 401 incidents.

I want Guelph asking:

Where will growth actually cause our existing response standard to fail?

If an area remains adequately protected, population growth by itself should not justify a major new capital project.

If an area is falling behind, staff should compare the options:

Relocate a station.

Change deployment.

Add or reposition apparatus.

Adjust staffing.

Improve access or road connections.

Or build another station.

Then show Council what each option would cost and what improvement residents would receive.

A new station may sometimes be the right answer.

It should not automatically be the first answer.

Growth Cannot Be Allowed to Slowly Erode Emergency Coverage

Guelph is growing.

More homes, more residents, taller buildings and more traffic can all affect emergency-response demand and travel times.

That does not automatically mean adding the same amount of staffing every time population increases.

It means continuously asking:

Is the existing system still meeting the level of service Council expects?

The Community Risk Assessment should be one of the tools used to answer that question, and significant growth-related fire spending should be connected to measurable evidence from that assessment.

Maintain the Equipment Before It Becomes an Emergency

Emergency equipment is not an area where the City should wait for failure.

Guelph's current asset information rates the Fire Department asset portfolio poor in 2026, with improvement to fair projected by 2035. Fire-specific equipment has approximately $6.4 million in ten-year renewal needs against approximately $6.7 million in identified funding. Fire stations and vehicles are accounted for separately under the City's facility and fleet asset classes, so that equipment figure does not represent the entire cost of maintaining the service.

The current capital plan continues replacement of breathing apparatus, bunker gear and other protective equipment. Some light-duty fire vehicle replacements have been deferred by a year, a pumper/aerial procurement has shifted, and design of the Fire Training Burn Tower has moved from 2028 to 2029.

Deferring something for a year may be completely reasonable.

Allowing important equipment to deteriorate because we avoided dealing with it is not.

I want Fire capital decisions based on:

condition, risk, reliability, safety and lifetime cost.

Protect Frontline Staffing — and Watch Overtime

Fire departments require minimum staffing even when employees are sick, injured, on leave or in training.

That means Council should not measure workforce needs only by the authorized number of positions.

I want to know:

Are stations consistently meeting required staffing?

How much overtime and backfill are we using?

Is overtime temporary or becoming structural?

Are injuries, vacancies or recruitment problems driving the cost?

Would another permanent position cost less than repeatedly filling the same shift through overtime?

And are firefighters receiving the training and equipment necessary to do the job safely?

Protect frontline response while looking for the least expensive sustainable way to provide it.

Make Next Generation 911 Produce Results

Guelph Fire moved onto the Next Generation 911 network in November 2025.

The system provides emergency call operators with improved caller-location information, stronger cybersecurity and additional backup capability. Ontario provided more than $1.5 million toward Guelph Fire's transition beginning in 2022.

That is exactly the kind of technology investment that should be measured.

After implementation, Council should be able to see whether it improves:

call processing;
dispatch reliability;
location accuracy;
coordination between emergency services; and
ultimately total response time.

Technology should solve a problem, not simply become another permanent software bill.

Fire Prevention Is Part of Fire Protection

The cheapest and safest fire is the one that never happens.

Fire prevention, inspections and public education are part of protecting the community.

I support prevention efforts that are practical and measurable.

That means concentrating education and inspections where the Community Risk Assessment and incident history show the greatest risk.

Emergency response matters.

Preventing an emergency matters too.

Fire and Paramedics Have to Work Together

Many emergency calls require more than one service.

Guelph has already demonstrated that emergency services can share infrastructure. The Clair Road Emergency Services Centre houses Fire, Paramedics and Police in the same facility.

Where future facility planning shows that shared locations can improve service or reduce long-term costs, I support examining them.

Paramedic demand continues to grow.

Guelph-Wellington Paramedic Service handled 32,243 Code 1–4 calls in 2025, compared with 21,426 in 2015. Those figures cover the entire Guelph-Wellington service area rather than Guelph alone.

For the most serious CTAS Level 1 calls in 2025, the service met its eight-minute target 70% of the time, above the Council-approved 65% compliance target. CTAS

Level 2 also exceeded its target, while Levels 3 and 4 were below their established compliance targets.

The 2026 budget provides approximately $524,000 for eight additional paramedics and one superintendent, supporting two additional paramedic shifts. The City expects provincial funding to cover 50% under the provincial funding model in the following year.

I support measuring whether that investment actually improves the response categories that are falling behind.

The question should not simply be:

How many paramedics did we hire?

It should be:

Did emergency medical response improve after we hired them?

Send the Right Resource to the Right Call

Not every 911 call requires exactly the same response.

Guelph-Wellington began using the Medical Priority Dispatch System in December 2025. It allows dispatchers to gather more clinical information and prioritize resources according to the seriousness of the patient's condition.

That gives Guelph-Wellington an opportunity to examine whether emergency resources can be deployed more intelligently.

Middlesex-London has developed a model called CARE First.

Instead of automatically sending the same resource to every type of emergency, the model uses:

an Advanced Care Paramedic in a non-transport rapid-response vehicle for serious, time-sensitive emergencies; and
a separate first-response resource for appropriate lower-acuity patients that can help connect them with other health services rather than automatically transporting them to hospital.

Middlesex reported that the model improved response times to its most urgent calls by more than 9%. In 2025, its Advanced Care Rapid Response Unit reported a 12% reduction in response time and an 86% increase in Advanced Care Paramedic availability for the highest-acuity calls.

I am not proposing that Guelph simply copy Middlesex-London.

I am proposing that we ask:

Are we sending the right resource to the right call?

Before simply adding more transporting ambulances, examine whether a tiered-response model could:

get advanced care to the most serious emergencies faster;
prevent lower-acuity calls from unnecessarily tying up transporting ambulances;
make better use of existing paramedic skills;
reduce unnecessary emergency-department transports; and
keep more ambulances available for the calls where they are genuinely needed.

Test it.

Measure it.

And only expand it if the results justify the cost.

Treat People in the Right Place

An ambulance should take someone to an emergency department when an emergency department is where that person needs to be.

But not every patient necessarily needs hospital emergency care.

Guelph-Wellington already operates Community Paramedicine programs intended to reduce repeat 911 calls and unnecessary emergency-department use. Existing services include home visits, referrals to community resources, clinics in social housing and remote monitoring for people with conditions such as heart failure, diabetes and COPD.

That means Guelph does not need to invent Community Paramedicine from scratch.

It needs to build on what is already working.

My approach would be:

Right patient.

Right response.

Right destination.

When provincial rules, medical oversight and patient safety allow it, I support examining whether appropriate patients can:

be safely treated where they are;
be connected directly with community health services;
receive follow-up through Community Paramedicine;
be taken to an appropriate alternative-care location; or
be transported to the emergency department when hospital care is required.

The goal is not to discourage people from calling 911.

The goal is to make sure calling 911 results in the care that person actually needs.

Mental-Health Calls Need the Right Combination of Skills

Some mental-health and addictions calls involve an immediate danger and require police, paramedics or both.

Others do not.

Simcoe County has developed a Community Alternative Response Engagement model involving a Community Paramedic and a Canadian Mental Health Association social worker for appropriate non-emergent, non-violent mental-health and addictions cases.

The team can provide medical assessment, mental-health support, minor medical care, de-escalation and connections to community services. Patients who require immediate acute care continue through the normal emergency system.

Guelph already has the IMPACT police-and-mental-health partnership discussed elsewhere in this platform.

I want to examine whether there is a gap between:

a situation requiring police

and

a situation requiring an ambulance trip to the emergency department.

If a Community Paramedic working with an appropriate mental-health professional can safely resolve some of those calls, connect the person with treatment and keep police officers and transporting ambulances available for emergencies, that is worth studying.

Again:

Do not duplicate an existing service.

Identify the gap first.

Then determine whether another response model would actually fill it.

Keep the Ambulances We Already Pay For Available

Adding another ambulance is not the only way to increase paramedic capacity.

We should also ask:

How much time are our existing ambulances unavailable — and why?

That includes:

hospital offload delays;
vehicle maintenance;
equipment problems;
restocking;
cleaning and preparation;
staffing shortages; and
other periods when a vehicle that taxpayers already own cannot answer another call.

Middlesex-London has developed a mobile logistics program where logistics technicians travel directly to paramedic crews to restock supplies, troubleshoot equipment and perform minor repairs in the field.

In 2025, Middlesex reported that 98% of minor repairs handled through the program were completed on scene, helping ambulances return to service more quickly.

That does not mean the same model would automatically produce the same result here.

But the principle is worth examining:

Before buying another ambulance, make sure the ambulances we already own are spending as much time as reasonably possible available for calls.

I want the City tracking ambulance availability and the major causes of lost service time.

Then fix the problems we can control.

Prevent the Next 911 Call

One of the best ways to protect emergency response capacity is to prevent avoidable emergencies from happening again.

Guelph-Wellington Community Paramedicine already works with people who repeatedly use 911, conducts home visits and remotely monitors some patients with chronic illnesses.

In 2024, Guelph-Wellington Community Paramedics completed more than 5,100 home visits for 1,108 people, with approximately 250 people receiving active remote monitoring. The service has also proposed expanding high-intensity home support to help patients at risk of hospitalization.

Other municipalities are measuring whether these programs actually reduce emergency demand.

Simcoe County examined patients referred by paramedics who subsequently received new or increased services. It reported 30% fewer 911 calls during the following six months compared with the six months before referral.

That is the type of result I want Guelph-Wellington measuring.

For Community Paramedicine, report:

number of patients served;
repeat 911 calls before and after involvement;
emergency-department visits where data sharing allows;
hospital admissions where measurable;
patients safely maintained at home;
referrals successfully connected to another service;
cost per patient;
provincial funding received; and
whether the program actually frees emergency paramedics for emergency calls.

Community Paramedicine should not simply be another program that exists because it sounds good.

Show whether it is preventing emergencies, helping people stay safely at home and reducing pressure on the emergency system.

Use the Province to Help Pay for Health Care

Community Paramedicine sits at the intersection of municipal emergency response and the provincial health-care system.

Guelph-Wellington has already sought provincial support to expand high-intensity home care through Community Paramedicine. Its proposal would add four staff providing 12-hour-a-day, seven-day-a-week coverage for patients at risk of hospitalization, using frequent home visits and remote monitoring, with capacity estimated for another 350 patients per year.

Where a paramedic program reduces hospital use, supports long-term-care patients, provides mental-health care or substitutes for another part of the provincial health system, I will advocate strongly for provincial funding.

Local property taxpayers should not quietly inherit the full cost of delivering health-care services that properly belong within the provincial health system.

If a program benefits both systems, the funding should reflect that.

Use Outside Funding Whenever It Is Available

Emergency response protects residents, but municipalities should not carry costs that other governments are prepared to fund.

Ontario provided more than $1.5 million toward Guelph Fire's NG911 implementation, and paramedic services already operate within a provincial funding relationship.

I will support pursuing provincial and federal funding for eligible:

emergency communications;
specialized equipment;
training;
paramedic and Community Paramedicine programs;
resilient emergency facilities; and
other emergency-service costs.

Every outside dollar secured for an eligible cost is one less dollar that has to come entirely from the local property-tax base.

My Approach

Fire and emergency response should follow the same Core Services First principles as the rest of the platform.

Protect what is working.

Measure response times honestly.

Measure whether enough firefighters and equipment arrive when they are needed.

Identify geographic coverage gaps instead of hiding them in city-wide averages.

Fix coverage gaps where the evidence identifies them.

Use measurable service standards to guide growth-related expansion.

Maintain stations, vehicles and safety equipment before they fail.

Watch overtime and workforce pressures.

Send the right paramedic resource to the right call.

Keep existing ambulances available as much as reasonably possible.

Treat patients in the right place when safe and appropriate.

Use Community Paramedicine to prevent repeat emergencies where the evidence shows it works.

Use prevention to reduce risk.

Make technology prove its value.

Plan emergency coverage alongside population growth.

And pursue outside funding before placing the entire cost on local taxpayers.

When someone calls 911, the system has to work.

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Recreation and Community Facilities

Maintain What We Own. Make Better Use of What We Have.

Recreation is not an emergency service.

But community centres, pools, arenas, gyms and recreation programs are an important part of what makes a city a good place to live.

They give children places to learn and play.

They help adults and seniors stay active.

They provide accessible activities for people with disabilities.

They give sports organizations, neighbourhood groups and families places to gather.

My approach is straightforward:

Maintain what we have.

Use it well.

Keep recreation reasonably accessible.

And prove the need before building the next major facility.

South End Changes the Recreation Picture

Guelph is about to make one of the largest recreation investments in its history.

The South End Community Centre is scheduled to open in late 2026. The approximately 160,000-square-foot facility will include:

two ice pads;
an eight-lane 25-metre pool;
a leisure pool;
a double gymnasium;
an indoor walking track;
meeting and programming rooms; and
other community space.

The approved project budget is approximately $125.1 million, and the City expects the facility to provide about 110 additional hours per week of City programming and community rentals.

That is a significant investment.

It also means Guelph should not immediately begin planning the next large recreation complex simply because population is growing.

We should first understand what South End changes.

Measure South End Before Automatically Building Again

Once South End has completed a meaningful operating cycle, Council should be able to see:

how many people are using it;
which programs are filling;
which programs have waiting lists;
ice utilization during prime and non-prime hours;
pool utilization;
gym utilization;
room rentals;
operating cost;
revenue;
cost recovery;

staffing requirements;
geographic participation;
whether pressure has been relieved at West End and Victoria Road; and
what demand remains unmet.

If South End absorbs much of Guelph's growth in recreation demand, that matters.

If significant gaps remain, that matters too.

Build the next major facility because the evidence says we need it — not simply because another long-range plan contains a line on a map.

The Bigger Problem May Be the Facilities We Already Own

Guelph's recreation asset portfolio has an estimated replacement value of approximately $164.8 million. The City's current asset reporting rates recreation assets poor in 2026 and forecasts them declining to very poor by 2035 under current assumptions. Recreation facilities are incorporated into the City's broader facilities funding analysis.

South End will add a new facility to that portfolio, so the overall condition picture will evolve.

But a new building does not make aging buildings disappear.

Guelph's own Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment found that its two standalone arenas were at or approaching the end of their useful lives and would require renewal, infrastructure improvements or repurposing. It also identified accessibility improvements needed in some older facilities.

That leads to one of the central principles of this platform:

Do not neglect an existing building because a new building is more exciting.

Decide What Older Facilities Are Actually Worth

An old facility is not automatically a bad facility.

But age alone should not determine whether taxpayers keep pouring money into it.

For major older recreation facilities, I want Council comparing:

Repair it.

Renovate it.

Repurpose it.

Replace it.

Or retire it.

Then show:

remaining useful life;
structural condition;
accessibility;
energy and operating costs;
annual maintenance;
required capital work;
utilization;
replacement cost;
service that would be lost if it closed; and
whether that service can reasonably be provided somewhere else.

Sometimes rehabilitation will provide excellent value.

Sometimes replacement will.

And sometimes keeping an underused building alive indefinitely may cost more than it is worth.

Make the decision using evidence.

Get More Out of the Ice We Already Have

Ice is a good example of why utilization matters.

Guelph's Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment found that prime-time ice is heavily used.

But utilization varies significantly during the season, and the City identified opportunities to make better use of the existing supply.

At Centennial Arena specifically, the assessment estimated that approximately 300 additional hours of ice could potentially be made available through facility upgrades and operational changes.

The same assessment projected that, using a simple population-based provision ratio, another ice pad beyond the South End Community Centre could eventually be required.

But it specifically cautioned against relying only on population.

Instead, it recommended looking at actual participation, registrations, unmet requests and changing sport trends before deciding how much future ice Guelph really needs.

That is exactly the approach I support.

Before spending tens of millions on another arena:

How full is the ice we already have?

When is it full?

Who cannot get ice?

Can scheduling or facility improvements create more usable hours?

And is participation actually growing enough to justify another pad?

Measure Demand, Not Just Population

Population growth matters.

But recreation preferences change.

The activities people wanted twenty years ago are not necessarily the activities people will want twenty years from now.

Guelph's own recreation planning identifies growing demand for activities such as pickleball and cricket, an aging population, increasing diversity and greater demand for flexible and unprogrammed recreation.

That means recreation planning should consider:

registrations;
waiting lists;
actual facility bookings;
participation trends;
changing demographics;
neighbourhood growth;

requests the City cannot currently accommodate; and
what residents are actually using.

Do not build tomorrow's recreation system entirely around yesterday's participation patterns.

Make Better Use of Existing Space

Not every recreation need requires another building.

Guelph's own Needs Assessment recommends examining:

repurposing underused facilities;
improving existing facilities so they can accommodate more activity;
changing programming and allocation practices;
adding amenities to existing locations;
creating more multi-purpose facilities; and
partnerships with schools and other organizations.

The 2026 capital plan already contains one example: underused space at West End Community Centre is being adapted to accommodate pottery and arts programming rather than automatically constructing another dedicated facility.

That principle should apply across the system:

Use the space we already pay for before automatically asking taxpayers to build more space.

Learn From Other Cities — Without Automatically Copying Them

Other Ontario municipalities are confronting the same problem.

Kitchener's recent recreation planning found that residents placed a higher priority on investing in existing infrastructure than building new facilities. Its master plan also emphasizes multi-purpose buildings, partnerships and non-traditional funding sources.

Kingston's recreation strategy includes using school board, community and other non-municipal facilities to provide programming rather than requiring the City to own every gym or pool it uses.

Cambridge is developing its new recreation complex beside school-board facilities and a library as part of a joint-use campus designed to share some infrastructure and reduce duplication. Cambridge also secured $19.5 million in provincial funding toward the recreation complex.

Guelph should examine the same basic question:

Does the City actually need to own another building to provide the service?

A school gym, community organization, university facility or other partner may sometimes provide the needed space at much lower cost.

Partnerships will not work everywhere.

But they should be considered before another large construction project.

Shared Facilities Should Be Part of Future Planning

Where a major new recreation facility is eventually justified, I support examining whether other public services can share the site.

That could include:

library space;
community meeting rooms;
childcare;
schools;
outdoor sports facilities;
senior programming; or
other compatible public uses.

One building containing several useful community services can sometimes provide better value than constructing and operating several separate buildings.

But the numbers still have to work.

Shared does not automatically mean cheaper.

Show the capital savings, operating savings and service benefit before committing.

Recreation Has to Remain Accessible

A recreation centre that people cannot afford to use is not serving everyone it was built to serve.

Guelph's Parks and Recreation Needs Assessment identified affordability as a significant barrier to participation. It also identified transportation, geography, scheduling, childcare and accessibility as barriers for some residents.

Guelph already provides targeted assistance.

Children and youth from lower-income families can receive assistance through the City's partnership with the Children's Foundation of Guelph and Wellington, while the FAIR program provides recreation assistance for eligible adults and seniors. The City also offers programs such as the PAL and Leisure Access Cards for people with disabilities.

I support protecting targeted assistance for people who genuinely need it.

That is different from pretending every recreation program can or should be free.

Facilities have operating costs.

Pools need lifeguards.

Arenas need refrigeration.

Buildings need maintenance.

Programs require instructors.

The goal should be:

reasonable fees for those who can afford them and targeted help for people who otherwise could not participate.

Be Careful With User Fees

The 2026 budget increased registration fees for fitness, sports, dance and summer camps to address rising costs. The facility subsidy for eligible youth and school groups also declined from 45% to 42.5%.

I do not believe Council should simply increase recreation fees every time the budget is difficult.

But I also do not believe every program should be entirely funded through property taxes.

For major fee decisions, residents should be able to see:

what the program costs;

how much participants currently pay;
how much taxpayers subsidize;
whether participation is falling because of price;
whether lower-income assistance is available; and
how Guelph compares with similar municipalities.

Then make the decision.

Protect Accessibility When We Renew Buildings

Older recreation facilities were often constructed before today's accessibility standards.

When we renovate major facilities, accessibility should be part of the work rather than something repeatedly pushed into the future.

That includes practical things such as:

accessible entrances;
washrooms and change rooms;
elevators where required;
pool access;
accessible seating;
sensory-friendly programming;
mobility equipment; and
support for people who require assistance to participate.

Guelph already provides inclusive programming, sensory-friendly recreation and support programs for residents with disabilities.

Maintain those strengths while improving the physical buildings.

Recreation Facilities Should Work More Than Prime Time

A facility that is packed from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. but lightly used for much of the rest of the day presents a different problem from a facility that is full all day.

I want utilization reporting broken down by:

weekday and weekend;
daytime and evening;
prime and non-prime time;

season;
program type; and
facility.

Then look for practical ways to fill unused capacity.

That might include:

seniors programming during daytime hours;
school use;
camps;
adult programming;
community organizations;
flexible drop-in programs;
non-ice arena uses;
arts and cultural uses; or
discounted non-prime rentals where they increase overall revenue without displacing higher-demand use.

An empty room earns nothing and serves no one.

Use Outside Money Before Local Taxpayers Pay the Whole Bill

Recreation infrastructure can sometimes qualify for provincial and federal funding.

Cambridge's recent recreation complex received a $19.5 million provincial contribution, demonstrating that significant outside funding can be available for qualifying projects.

Guelph's South End Community Centre also includes grant funding within its approved project financing.

For future major recreation projects, I want the City aggressively examining:

provincial grants;
federal grants;
development charges where legally permitted;
responsible sponsorships;
partnerships;

donations and fundraising where appropriate; and
shared-use agreements.

Property taxpayers should not automatically pay 100% of a facility when another reasonable funding source exists.

Understand the Operating Cost Before Cutting the Ribbon

A new recreation centre does not stop costing money when construction ends.

It requires:

employees;
utilities;
cleaning;
maintenance;
security;
programming;
equipment;
insurance;
future repairs; and
eventual replacement.

The South End Community Centre is already requiring operating funding and additional staffing as it prepares to open.

That is normal.

But those costs need to be understood before Council approves the next major facility.

The same rule already established elsewhere in this platform applies here:

Show the full cost before saying yes.

A Recreation System That Grows With Guelph

Growth will eventually require additional recreation capacity.

I am not proposing that Guelph stop building recreation infrastructure.

I am proposing that we build it when the evidence supports it.

Before adding another major facility, Council should know:

What demand cannot currently be accommodated?

Can existing facilities handle it more efficiently?

Can an older facility be renewed or repurposed?

Can another organization provide the space through a partnership?

What does growth genuinely require?

What will construction cost?

What will annual operations cost?

And who will pay for it?

Then make the decision.

My Approach

Recreation facilities are community assets.

They should be maintained and used well.

My approach will be:

Open South End and measure what changes.

Maintain the facilities we already own.

Repair, repurpose or replace aging buildings based on evidence.

Get more usable hours from existing facilities where practical.

Measure actual participation instead of relying only on population targets.

Protect targeted assistance so cost does not shut lower-income residents out.

Improve accessibility as facilities are renewed.

Look for partnerships before automatically building another City-owned facility.

Use grants, development funding and outside contributions wherever appropriate.

Show residents what facilities cost and how heavily they are used.

And understand the full lifetime cost before approving the next major recreation project.

Recreation matters.

But good recreation planning is not measured by how many new buildings Council announces.

It is measured by whether residents can use the facilities they have, whether those facilities are maintained properly, and whether taxpayers are receiving good value from them.

Recreation and Community Facilities — Source Notes

1. City of Guelph, Parks and Recreation Master Plan (Council-approved 2023). Used for long-term planning, funding, maintenance, accessibility and participation principles. https://guelph.ca/plans-and-strategies/parks-and-recreation-master-plan/

2. City of Guelph, South End Community Centre Construction (current project reporting; accessed September 27, 2026). Used for facility scope, approved budget, funding mix and 2026 opening schedule. https://guelph.ca/living/construction-projects/south-end-community-centre/

3. City of Guelph, Large-scale Projects (2026 project reporting). Used for South End Community Centre budget, schedule and project-status reporting. https://guelph.ca/living/construction-projects/capital-projects/

4. City of Guelph, 2026 Confirmed Budget: Operating Budget and Capital Budget (confirmed November 2025). Used for South End operating impacts, existing-facility renewal, recreation programming/equipment and Parks and Recreation Master Plan implementation. https://guelph.ca/city-government/budget-and-finance/city-budget/2026-budget/2026-budget-update-operating-budget/ and https://guelph.ca/city-government/budget-and-finance/city-budget/2026-budget/2026-budget-update-capital-budget/

5. City of Barrie and City of Kingston recreation-planning materials. Used only as comparator examples for maintaining existing assets, multi-purpose facilities, partnerships and use of non-municipal space; not as direct measures of Guelph performance.

Housing, Affordability and Growth

Housing That Works for Working Families. Real Solutions to Homelessness. Growth That Pays Its Way.

A city cannot call itself affordable if the people who work here cannot afford to live here, and it cannot call itself compassionate if people are left living on the streets without a realistic path forward.

Guelph needs housing that works for the people who already call this city home, including lower-income residents, working families, seniors, young adults and people who are struggling to find a stable place to live.

Housing affordability is not simply about building more homes.

It is about building the right kinds of homes, at prices people can actually afford, while making sure our infrastructure and municipal services can support growth.

It is also about recognizing that homelessness has a human cost and a financial cost. Continuing to respond to the same emergencies without addressing their underlying causes is not a sustainable long-term approach.

My starting point is simple:

Help lower- and middle-income families find housing they can afford.

Make sure growth is supported by the infrastructure and employment opportunities our community needs.

Prevent homelessness where possible and provide realistic pathways back into stable housing.

Measure the results and understand the full cost before committing taxpayers to permanent new spending.

1. Housing Affordability — Help the People Being Squeezed

Housing Affordability Is Not Just a Low-Income Problem

There are people in Guelph who need deeply subsidized housing.

There are also people who earn enough to support themselves but cannot afford the rents or purchase prices of newly built homes.

Between those two groups is a substantial part of our community: people who work, pay their bills and contribute to Guelph but are finding it increasingly difficult to afford a suitable home.

They may earn too much to qualify for certain income-tested housing programs but not enough to comfortably afford market rents or homeownership.

Some are paying so much for housing that they have little left for groceries, transportation, childcare or unexpected expenses.

Others are living in homes that are too small for their families, remaining with relatives longer than they expected, or putting off starting a family because suitable housing is out of reach.

A family should not have to be in poverty before housing affordability becomes a concern.

Guelph's Housing Affordability Strategy identifies approximately 8,700 affordable housing units as part of an estimated need for about 26,000 additional homes between 2024 and 2051. The same strategy's longer 2021-to-2051 growth baseline identifies a need for 29,200 additional housing units overall. The two figures use different starting years and should not be treated as contradictory.

But that does not mean the remaining housing need is automatically affordable to ordinary working families.

The gap between subsidized housing and what the private market currently provides deserves specific attention.

Address the Missing Middle of Housing Affordability

I want Guelph to pay particular attention to households that fall between traditional subsidized housing and market housing.

That includes lower- and middle-income families who may not qualify for deeply subsidized housing but still cannot afford the homes being built.

Guelph's own Housing Affordability Strategy identifies households earning approximately $45,900 to $63,520 annually as one group facing this gap. These households may earn too much to qualify for deeply subsidized housing but not enough to afford market-rate rental housing. The strategy estimates that this income group will account for approximately 16% of projected renter-household growth, demonstrating the need for housing options between traditional subsidized housing and market-rate rentals.

The solution is not necessarily another subsidy program for every household.

It is to examine how the City can help create housing that costs less to build, operate and maintain, and how those savings can translate into lower rents and purchase prices.

That means looking at:

Smaller starter homes and modest townhouses.
Family-sized apartments and purpose-built rental housing.
Additional dwelling units and small-scale infill.
Non-profit and co-operative housing.
Affordable ownership opportunities where financially sustainable.
Partnerships that can deliver housing at a lower full-life cost.
Municipal approval processes and requirements that unnecessarily increase construction costs.

Not every household needs the same type of home.

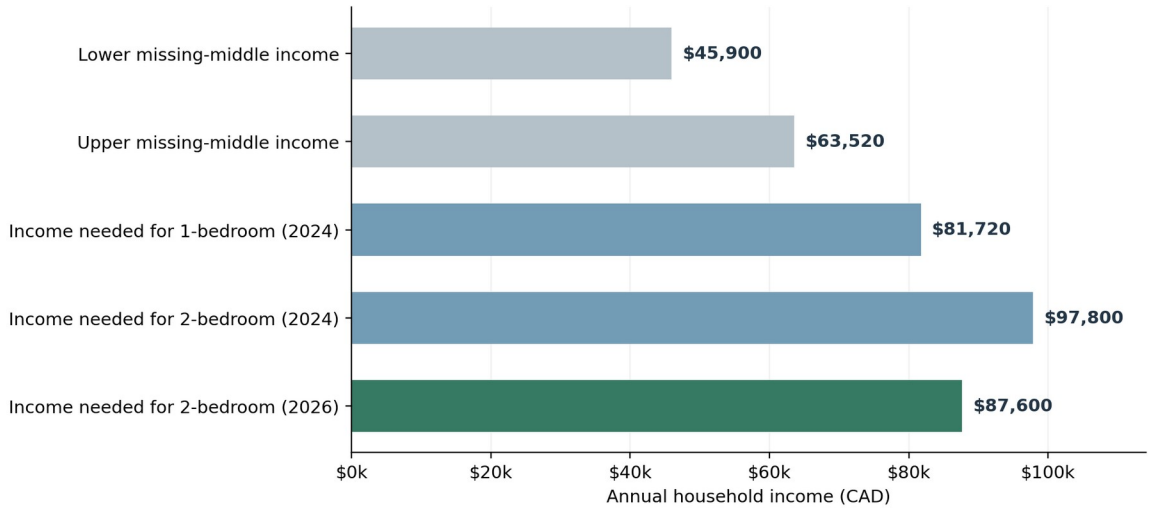
A single person, a family with three children and a senior looking to downsize have different housing needs.

The City should not measure success simply by counting the number of units approved.

We should measure whether the homes being completed are suitable and affordable for the households that need them.

The Missing-Middle Rental Affordability Gap

Annual household income required to afford rental housing in Guelph — 2024 and 2026 rental data.



Horizontal axis: Annual household income (CAD).

Rental type	Monthly rent	Income needed
1-bedroom (2024)	$2,043	$81,720
2-bedroom (2024)	$2,445	$97,800
2-bedroom (2026)	$2,190	$87,600

The missing-middle income range comes from Guelph's Housing Affordability Strategy. The 2024 advertised rents are cited in that strategy, while the Q2 2026 two-bedroom asking rent comes from Statistics Canada for the Guelph CMA. Required incomes are calculated using rent equal to 30% of gross household income. The rental datasets use different sources and geographic definitions and should not be interpreted as a directly comparable rent-price trend. [Sources: City of Guelph Housing Affordability Strategy; Statistics Canada, Quarterly Rent Statistics, Q2 2026.]

Although recent rental data suggest some improvement in affordability, there is still considerable room for improvement. The income required to afford a typical two-bedroom rental remains beyond the reach of many lower- and middle-income households. Guelph needs to continue working toward housing that ordinary working families can afford.

Measure Affordability Against Real Household Incomes

I want housing affordability reporting to show what different households can realistically afford.

That should include lower-income residents, single-income households, two-income working families, seniors and households with children.

For example, a household earning $60,000 annually has a very different housing budget from one earning $100,000.

But even two households earning the same amount may have different financial pressures depending on family size, childcare, disability-related expenses and transportation costs.

The City should compare actual rents and purchase prices with household incomes rather than relying exclusively on broad definitions of affordable housing.

For ownership housing, that means considering the down payment, mortgage costs, property taxes, insurance and other necessary expenses.

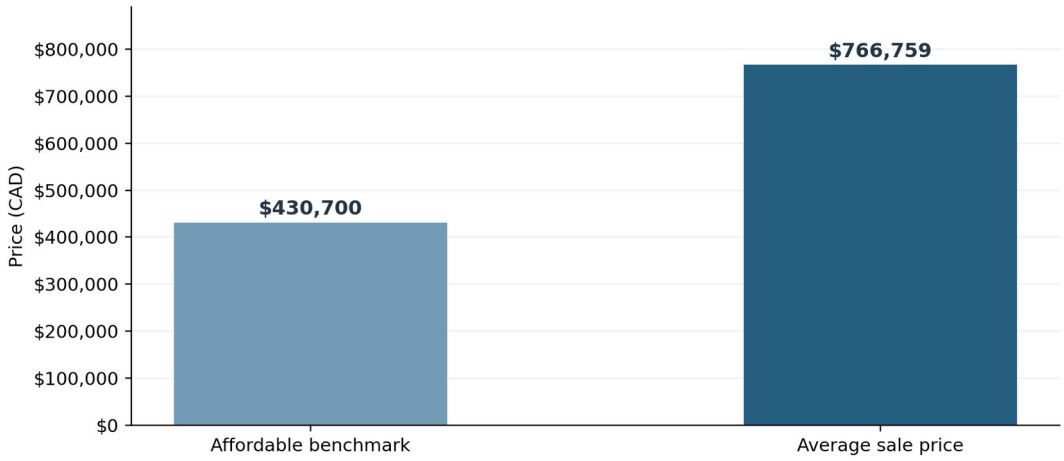
For rental housing, it means considering rent and utilities, along with the availability of appropriately sized homes.

The purpose is not to guarantee that every household can afford every type of home.

It is to understand which households are being left behind and whether municipal housing policies are helping close those gaps.

Average Home Price vs. Affordable Ownership Benchmark

City of Guelph, 2026 — Canadian dollars.



The average sale price for January–August 2026 was approximately $336,000 above the City's affordable ownership benchmark.

The $430,700 benchmark is the City's 2026 market-based affordable ownership threshold. The $766,759 figure is the average Guelph residential sale price from

January through August 2026, reported from local MLS data. These are different measures, compared to illustrate the affordability gap. [Sources: City of Guelph, Affordable Housing Benchmarks for 2026; local MLS sales report, January–August 2026.]

More Housing Supply Matters — But So Does the Type of Supply

Guelph needs additional housing.

A shortage of suitable homes places pressure on both renters and buyers.

But approving more housing does not automatically guarantee that lower- and middle-income residents will be able to afford it.

The City has already changed its planning rules to permit up to four residential units on eligible properties.

I support examining whether those changes are producing housing that residents can actually use and afford.

That means tracking completed homes, not simply the number of units theoretically permitted under zoning.

It also means recognizing that different types of housing serve different needs.

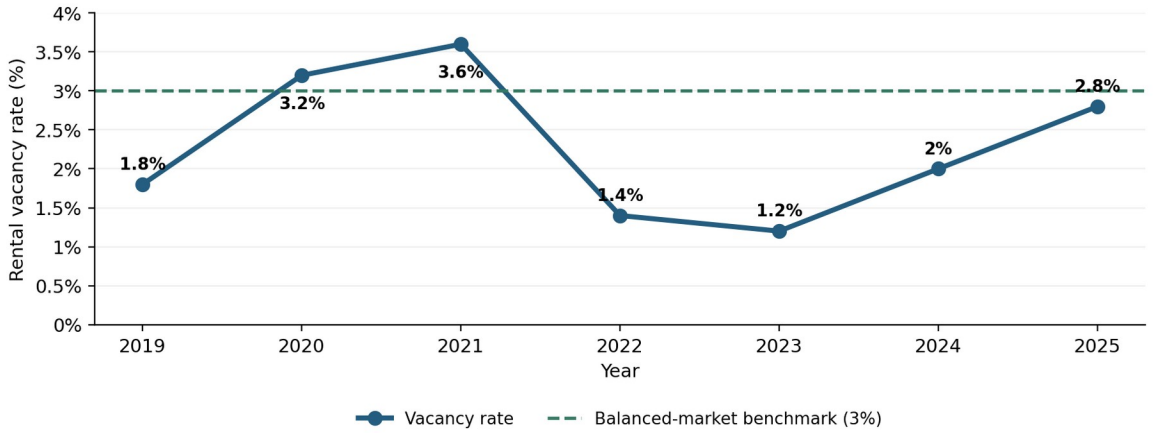
More small apartments may help some households.

But families also need homes with enough bedrooms, reasonable access to schools and childcare, and suitable neighbourhood amenities.

Build more housing, but make sure we are building housing that meets the needs of the people who live here.

Guelph's Rental Vacancy Rate

Purpose-built rental apartments, 2019–2025.



Horizontal axis: Year. Vertical axis: Rental vacancy rate (%). Source: CMHC Rental Market Survey, as compiled in a 2026 Guelph rental-market review. The 3% line is a commonly used balanced-market benchmark, not a statutory threshold.

Guelph's rental vacancy rate has improved in recent years, indicating that more rental housing is becoming available. However, greater availability does not automatically mean greater affordability. We need to continue measuring both the number of homes available and whether lower- and middle-income families can actually afford them.

Make Affordable Housing Easier to Build

Unnecessary municipal delays and uncertainty can increase construction costs.

I want Guelph to examine where approval processes can be simplified without compromising safety, infrastructure requirements or legitimate environmental protections.

That could include clearer development requirements, better coordination between municipal departments, more predictable approval timelines and standardized approaches where appropriate.

Affordable and non-profit housing projects should receive particular attention when unnecessary delays threaten funding or increase costs.

But faster approvals should not mean ignoring building standards, fire safety, water capacity or the infrastructure needed to support new residents.

Make the process more efficient without abandoning the standards that protect our community.

Protect Affordability Over the Long Term

If taxpayers help finance below-market housing, the public benefit should be clear.

Council should know how many affordable homes are being created, which households they are intended to serve, how affordable they will be and how long that affordability will last.

Where public land, grants or other financial assistance are provided, affordability requirements should be enforceable.

A project that receives public support should not simply provide a temporary discount before returning to prices that the intended residents cannot afford.

Public investment should produce lasting affordability.

2. Test Municipal Housing Before Expanding It

Guelph is already exploring the development of housing on City-owned land.

I want to use the proposed 12-unit Normandy Drive and Eastview Road affordable housing project as a test case to determine whether direct municipal involvement in housing development can deliver lasting affordability without creating an ongoing financial burden for taxpayers.

Before committing to further projects, Council should examine the actual construction costs, operating expenses, financing, maintenance requirements and long-term affordability of the completed development.

The results should be compared with other approaches, including partnerships with non-profit housing providers and private-sector development.

For this purpose, cost-neutral should mean accounting for the full long-term municipal cost, including financing, operations, maintenance and future capital renewal.

The value of municipal land, infrastructure and any other public subsidy should also be clearly reported.

If the project demonstrates that Guelph can provide genuinely affordable housing, operate it on a financially sustainable and cost-neutral basis, and make a measurable contribution to addressing our housing needs, I would support considering similar projects in the future.

If the results do not support expansion, we should examine what went wrong and whether another approach would deliver better value.

Test it first. Measure the results. Expand only if the evidence supports it.

3. Housing, Employment and the Cost of Living

Working in Guelph Should Not Mean You Have to Live Somewhere Else

Guelph needs housing that supports the people who work here.

That includes people employed in manufacturing, health care, education, retail, hospitality, skilled trades, municipal services and other parts of our local economy.

Not everyone who works in Guelph lives in Guelph.

And not everyone who lives in Guelph works here.

Commuting between municipalities is a normal part of a regional economy, and many people choose to commute for personal or professional reasons.

But housing affordability should not force people into longer commutes simply because they cannot find a suitable home near their workplace.

Even if someone has a good job and is working full-time, that does not mean they can afford a suitable home in Guelph.

A person should not have to choose between keeping a job in the community and finding housing their family can afford.

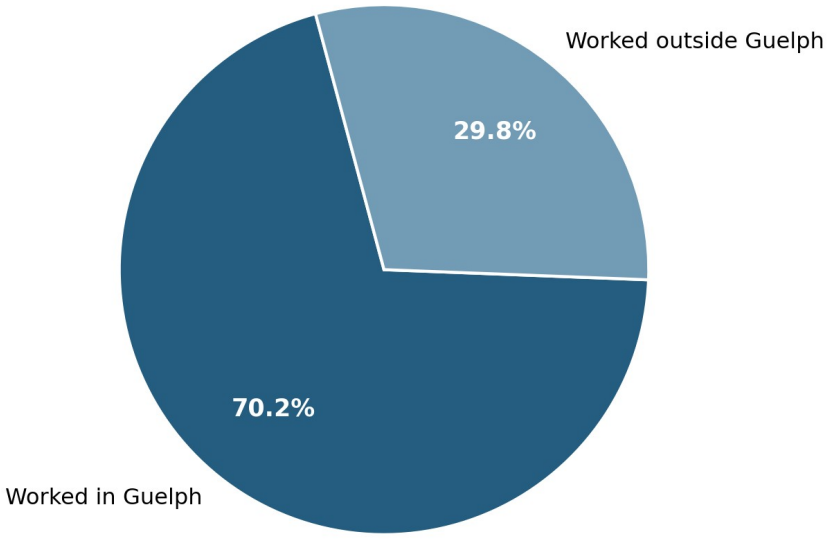
Recognize Guelph's Commuting Population

A meaningful portion of Guelph's employed residents travel outside the city for work.

The 2021 Census recorded 68,525 employed Guelph residents with a usual place of work. Of those, 20,405 worked outside Guelph, representing approximately 29.8%.

Where Employed Guelph Residents Worked

2021 Census — employed residents with a usual place of work.



Approximately 70.2% worked in Guelph and 29.8% worked outside the city. This excludes residents working at home and those without a usual workplace address. [Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census, place of work tabulation.]

Those figures do not tell us how many residents commute because of housing affordability rather than personal choice or employment opportunities.

But they demonstrate that Guelph is part of a larger regional labour market.

Housing and transportation planning should reflect that reality.

Affordable Housing and Good Jobs Need to Grow Together

I do not want Guelph to become a city where residents can find housing only by accepting long commutes to employment elsewhere.

Nor do I want it to become a city where people can find work but cannot afford to live.

That means protecting appropriate employment lands and planning infrastructure that supports both housing and local businesses.

Industrial, commercial and institutional land provides space for jobs and contributes to the municipal tax base.

Converting employment land to residential use may sometimes be appropriate, but Council should understand the long-term consequences before making that decision.

A city needs places for people to live and places for people to work.

Housing Affordability Is More Than the Monthly Rent or Mortgage

A less expensive home located far from employment, transit, schools and essential services may not be as affordable as it first appears.

Transportation costs matter.

A household that needs two vehicles to reach work, childcare and daily services may spend substantially more than one living in a location with practical transportation alternatives.

That does not mean everyone should be expected to live without a car.

It means housing and transportation costs should be considered together.

Where practical, new housing should be planned with reasonable access to employment, transit, schools, recreation and other services.

Affordability should reflect the real cost of living, not just the advertised price of a home.

4. Growth Must Be Supported by Infrastructure

Guelph cannot build homes without considering the infrastructure and services those homes require.

More residents mean additional demand for water, wastewater capacity, roads, transit, schools, parks and emergency services.

But that does not mean every development requires entirely new infrastructure.

I want Guelph to compare the full cost of growth in different locations.

Where existing roads, water systems, transit and community facilities have available capacity, additional housing may be accommodated with less new infrastructure.

Where major upgrades are required, those costs should be identified before development proceeds.

Growth Should Pay Its Fair Share

Development charges and other permitted growth-related funding should be used to recover eligible infrastructure costs.

Existing residents should not automatically be expected to subsidize infrastructure required primarily for new development.

At the same time, charges and municipal requirements should be reviewed to ensure they are justified, transparent and not unnecessarily increasing housing costs.

The goal is not to make development free.

It is to ensure costs are assigned fairly and that Council understands who ultimately pays.

Protect Employment Land

Housing is only one part of building an affordable city.

Residents also need employment opportunities close to home.

Housing growth must be balanced with the need to preserve appropriate industrial, commercial and institutional land.

That includes planning water, wastewater, transportation and other infrastructure to support both residential development and future employment.

A city needs places for people to live and places for people to work.

5. Homelessness — Move From Managing the Crisis to Reducing It

Homelessness is not one problem with one solution.

Some people lose their housing because of an unexpected financial crisis, a relationship breakdown or a sudden loss of income.

Others have experienced years of housing instability and may need substantial support to remain housed.

Mental illness, addiction, disability and serious health problems can make an already difficult situation much harder.

The response needs to recognize those differences.

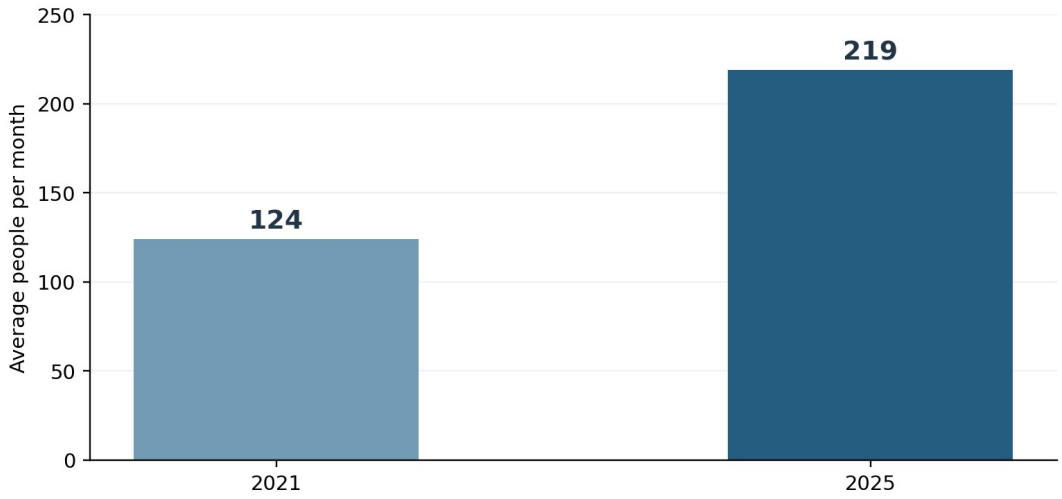
The goal should be to prevent homelessness where possible, help people who have lost their housing return to stable accommodation, and provide appropriate ongoing support to those who need it.

The Situation in Guelph-Wellington

The 2026 Wellington-Guelph Health and Housing Community Plan reports that the average number of people experiencing chronic homelessness each month increased from 124 in 2021 to 219 in 2025. These figures cover the Wellington-Guelph service area, not Guelph alone.

Rise in Chronic Homelessness

Guelph-Wellington — average monthly number of people experiencing chronic homelessness.



2021: 124. 2025: 219. Increase: 76.6%.

Source: 2026 Wellington-Guelph Health and Housing Community Plan. These are monthly averages for Guelph and Wellington County, not annual counts of unique individuals.

The same report found that, among people surveyed during the 2024 local Point-in-Time Count, 71% reported a mental-health issue, 73% reported a substance-use issue and 43% reported another illness or medical condition. These were self-reported experiences among people counted, not diagnoses or estimates for every person experiencing homelessness.

That tells us why simply providing an emergency shelter bed will not resolve every situation.

But it also tells us why homelessness cannot be treated exclusively as a policing problem.

Prevent Homelessness Before It Starts

Preventing someone from losing their home can avoid the need for a much more expensive emergency response later.

Guelph and Wellington County can examine whether existing prevention programs are reaching people early enough.

That includes people facing eviction because of temporary financial hardship, families leaving unsafe living situations, young people leaving care, and residents whose health or disability puts their housing at risk.

Possible interventions include temporary rent assistance, help resolving landlord-tenant disputes, connecting people to income supports and assistance finding suitable alternative housing.

Wellington County already provides homelessness prevention and diversion services. The task is to identify gaps in those services and measure whether additional intervention prevents people from entering the shelter system.

A relatively small intervention that prevents a family from losing its home may avoid months of emergency accommodation and the disruption that comes with it.

That is worth measuring.

Emergency Shelters Are Necessary, but They Cannot Be the Final Destination

Emergency shelters provide immediate protection when people have nowhere else to go.

They are an essential part of the system.

But a shelter bed is not a permanent home.

Guelph-Wellington already has several forms of emergency and transitional accommodation. In 2026, the Stepping Stone project at 23 Gordon Street added 24 emergency shelter beds and 12 transitional housing units, supported by federal and provincial funding.

The County and City should measure how effectively people move from emergency accommodation into stable housing.

That means tracking the average length of shelter stays, how many people move into permanent housing, how many return to homelessness and what prevents others from moving forward.

A successful shelter system should help people leave homelessness, not simply provide a place where they remain indefinitely.

Housing and Support Need to Work Together

For people experiencing chronic homelessness, housing alone may not be enough.

Some residents need ongoing assistance with mental-health care, addiction treatment, medication, daily living, employment, income support or maintaining a tenancy.

The level of support should match the individual's actual needs.

That can mean independent housing with occasional support for one person and permanent supportive housing with regular on-site services for another.

Guelph and Wellington County can examine where supportive housing capacity is insufficient and how existing housing, health-care and community organizations could work together more effectively.

The emergency-response section of this platform already examines Community Paramedicine, mental-health support and alternatives to repeated emergency-department visits.

Housing and health-care planning should be coordinated rather than treated as unrelated problems.

6. Learn From Other Municipalities

Other Ontario municipalities are experimenting with different approaches to homelessness.

The purpose of comparing them is not to copy another city's program automatically.

It is to understand what has been tried, what it costs, what results have been measured and whether a similar approach could address a demonstrated need in Guelph.

Brantford — Smaller Supportive Housing Projects and Building Conversions

Brantford has developed several housing projects serving different needs.

Its 5 Marlene Avenue development provides 30 studio apartments for people participating in a supportive housing program focused on chronic homelessness.

Brantford also converted a former university residence into Lucy Marco Place, providing 41 units of transitional and permanent housing with support from community partners.

These projects demonstrate two possible approaches: smaller purpose-built housing developments and the conversion of existing buildings.

For Guelph, the relevant question is whether suitable existing buildings, surplus properties or partnerships with non-profit housing providers could deliver housing at a lower full-life cost than new conventional construction.

Any comparison should account for acquisition, renovation, accessibility, fire safety, staffing, maintenance and ongoing support.

Simcoe County — Modular Housing and Bridge Accommodation

Simcoe County, which includes Barrie, has expanded its use of modular facilities and short-term bridge housing.

Its Bridge to Stability initiative is intended to provide temporary accommodation and intensive support for people facing substantial barriers to permanent housing.

Modular construction may reduce construction time and certain upfront costs, but it still requires suitable land, utilities, building approvals, staffing, maintenance and an operating budget.

The purpose of each facility also needs to be clear.

Emergency shelter, transitional accommodation and permanent supportive housing serve different needs.

A temporary facility should have a defined pathway toward stable housing rather than becoming an indefinite substitute for it.

Kingston — Connecting Housing and Health Services

Kingston has developed an integrated approach bringing together emergency accommodation, mental-health and addiction services, health care and community organizations.

Its service system is undergoing a transition in 2026 toward a provincially funded Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment Hub.

Guelph already has mental-health outreach, Community Paramedicine and housing support organizations.

The relevant question is where coordination breaks down.

Can someone leaving hospital be connected to housing before returning to the street?

Can someone entering supportive housing access appropriate mental-health or addiction treatment without starting another lengthy referral process?

Can emergency services connect frequent callers to ongoing care rather than repeatedly responding to the same unresolved situation?

Health-care treatment remains primarily a provincial responsibility, and provincial funding would need to be part of any proposed expansion of clinical services.

7. Examine a Two-Year Modular Housing Pilot

Modular housing is one possible way to provide accommodation for people experiencing homelessness without automatically committing to the cost and construction time of a conventional housing development.

The approach could be examined for different stages of the homelessness response, including emergency accommodation, transitional housing and permanent supportive housing.

However, the type of housing must match the needs of the people it is intended to serve.

A small modular unit without appropriate services may be suitable for one person but inadequate for someone requiring substantial daily support.

A Two-Year Proof of Concept

A two-year modular housing pilot could test whether a small, targeted housing development can help reduce homelessness and the public costs associated with repeated emergency responses.

The pilot would use suitable municipal land, where available, and could involve Wellington County, established housing providers and appropriate health-care partners.

The size of the pilot, the number of units and the level of support would be determined through a feasibility assessment.

Before proceeding, the assessment would need to establish:

Whether suitable municipal land is available.
The number and type of units required.
Whether modular construction would cost less than converting an existing building or using another housing model.
The full cost of site preparation, utilities, construction and installation.
The cost of staffing, maintenance, security and resident support.
The availability of provincial, federal and other outside funding.
The expected number of people who could move from homelessness into stable housing.
How the project would continue operating after the pilot period.

The pilot should be designed to test both housing outcomes and financial performance.

Funding the Pilot — Current Budget or a Future Budget

The 2026–2027 budget should be examined to determine whether a pilot could be funded through existing eligible allocations, available housing reserves, outside grants, partnerships or responsible reallocation of funds.

Money already committed to another project should not be treated as available simply because it appears in a housing-related budget.

The Normandy Drive and Eastview Road housing project should remain a separate test case for direct municipal housing development.

If existing budget allocations cannot accommodate a financially sound modular housing pilot, I will propose bringing the two-year pilot forward for consideration in a future municipal budget.

Any future-budget proposal would need to identify the full capital and operating costs, the proposed funding sources, the municipal share and the effect on existing services and reserves.

The two-year pilot would be a defined test, not an automatic commitment to permanent expansion.

Measure the Results Before Expanding

The pilot should establish a baseline before residents move in.

At the end of the first and second years, the evaluation should examine:

How many people obtained housing.
How many remained housed.
How many moved into longer-term accommodation.
Changes in shelter use and repeat homelessness.
Changes in ambulance calls, hospital visits and other emergency-service use where reliable information is available.
The full cost per resident housed.
The municipal contribution and outside funding received.
Whether the intervention reduced the total public cost of responding to homelessness.
Whether the model could be operated sustainably over the longer term.

The evaluation should distinguish actual financial savings from reductions in service demand that do not immediately reduce an agency's budget.

It should also identify whether the program's outcomes differ according to the needs of the residents.

Plan for What Happens After Two Years

A two-year pilot cannot simply end with residents being returned to homelessness.

Before the pilot begins, there should be a plan for what happens to the housing and its residents at the end of the evaluation period.

That could include continued operation where funding and results justify it, transferring the housing to an appropriate provider, or supporting residents in moving into other suitable permanent accommodation.

The evaluation should inform whether similar projects are expanded, modified or discontinued.

A pilot should demonstrate whether the model works before a permanent expansion is approved.

8. The Cost of Doing Nothing Versus the Cost of Providing Housing

Homelessness already creates costs for the public.

Emergency shelters, temporary accommodation, outreach, hospital visits, ambulance calls, policing and repeated emergency interventions all require resources.

The financial question is not simply how much a new housing program costs.

It is also how much the public currently spends responding to homelessness and whether an alternative approach could reduce those costs while producing better outcomes.

Compare the Full Cost of Both Approaches

A meaningful financial comparison should examine two scenarios over a defined period, such as five or ten years.

Scenario A — Continue the existing response

Maintain emergency shelters, temporary accommodation, outreach and other existing services, with additional capacity where demand requires it.

Estimate the cost of continued operations, necessary expansions, health-care use, emergency response and other public services.

Scenario B — Expand targeted prevention, housing and support

Maintain necessary emergency services while adding appropriate prevention, permanent housing, transitional accommodation and supportive housing.

Include capital costs, ongoing staffing, clinical support, maintenance and any additional funding required.

Estimate how much emergency-system demand could realistically be avoided.

Both scenarios must include the services that would still be needed.

Providing permanent housing does not mean emergency shelters can immediately close.

And reducing hospital visits or police calls does not automatically translate into an equivalent reduction in municipal spending.

What Canadian Research Tells Us

The Canadian At Home/Chez Soi study provides evidence that Housing First programs can improve housing stability and offset some public-service costs.

Over the two-year study, participants receiving Housing First spent substantially more time in stable housing than those receiving usual services.

The financial results varied depending on participants' needs and the support provided.

The study's reported cost offsets were approximately $9.60 for every $10 invested in the high-needs intervention and $3.42 for every $10 invested in the moderate-needs intervention. For the highest-cost 10% of participants, reported offsets were substantially greater.

These are historical Canadian research findings, not current Guelph program costs.

They demonstrate that some supportive housing interventions can offset a substantial portion of their costs, particularly for people who previously used expensive emergency services frequently.

They do not establish that every housing program pays for itself.

Understand Who Pays and Who Saves

A housing intervention may reduce hospital costs without directly reducing the City's operating budget.

Likewise, a program funded by Wellington County may reduce the demand placed on Guelph Police or Guelph-Wellington Paramedic Service.

Those effects matter, but they must be reported accurately.

For major homelessness initiatives, the financial analysis should distinguish between costs and savings attributable to:

The City of Guelph.
Wellington County.
The Province of Ontario.
Hospitals and other health-care providers.
Other participating public agencies.

This would help identify where provincial or federal funding is justified and whether the municipal contribution reflects the benefits received.

We should not assume that doing nothing is free, and we should not assume that every new program will save money.

Show the cost of both approaches.

Then show whether the investment is producing the promised results.

9. Housing and Homelessness Measures for the Core Services Scorecard

Homelessness already places significant demands on emergency shelters, hospitals, paramedics, police and other public services.

These measures would form the housing and homelessness component of the Core Services Scorecard, comparing those costs with the cost of preventing homelessness and providing stable housing.

Measure	What should be reported
Homelessness	Number of people experiencing homelessness, including chronic homelessness, using consistent reporting definitions.
Prevention	Households receiving prevention assistance and the proportion avoiding entry into homelessness.
Housing outcomes	People moving into stable housing, housing retention and returns to homelessness.
Emergency accommodation	Cost per occupied shelter bed, average length of stay and total expenditure.
Emergency services	Changes in ambulance calls, hospital visits, policing and other relevant service use where reliable data are available.

Measure	What should be reported
Housing investments	Full capital and operating costs, cost per resident housed, outside funding and long-term financial obligations.
Cost of doing nothing	Projected cost of maintaining existing responses compared with the full cost and measured outcomes of alternative interventions.
Public savings	Actual cash savings and reduced service demand, reported separately for each participating level of government.

The Core Services Scorecard should distinguish between savings that have actually been realized and projected savings that depend on future changes in service demand.

For major new initiatives, Council should receive a comparison of the cost of continuing existing services against the full cost of the proposed intervention.

The goal is to measure whether investments are reducing homelessness, improving housing stability and making more effective use of public resources.

10. Public Safety and Compassion

Residents should be able to use parks, sidewalks, transit stops and other public spaces safely.

People experiencing homelessness also deserve safety, dignity and access to appropriate assistance.

The City, Wellington County, housing providers, health services and emergency responders have different but connected responsibilities.

A coordinated response should distinguish homelessness itself from criminal behaviour, provide appropriate outreach and accommodation options, and address unsafe conditions in public spaces.

People should not be treated as criminals simply because they have nowhere to live.

At the same time, homelessness should not mean that violence, threats, trafficking or other criminal conduct is ignored.

The goal should be to reduce unsafe conditions while addressing the circumstances that allow them to continue.

11. Consolidated Approach

This housing and homelessness section establishes the following areas of action:

Housing affordability measured against actual household incomes, with specific attention to lower- and middle-income families who fall between subsidized housing and market housing.

A range of housing types, including family-sized rentals, starter homes, townhouses, non-profit housing and suitable infill development.

A municipal housing test case, with further direct development contingent on demonstrated affordability, cost neutrality and financial sustainability.

Housing and employment planning that recognizes Guelph's regional commuting patterns and the need for local employment opportunities.

Growth-related infrastructure costs identified and allocated transparently.

Homelessness prevention, emergency accommodation, stable housing and appropriate support services treated as distinct but connected responsibilities.

A potential two-year modular housing pilot, subject to site feasibility, a full financial assessment, available funding and budget approval.

A future-budget option for the pilot if existing allocations cannot accommodate it.

Permanent housing and homelessness measures within the Core Services Scorecard to compare housing outcomes, public-service costs and the financial effects of different interventions.

The central questions running through the section are whether the housing being created meets residents' needs, whether people experiencing homelessness are moving into stable accommodation, and whether public resources are producing measurable results.

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Economic Development, Jobs and Local Business

Support Local Jobs. Help Businesses Grow. Make Economic Growth Work for Guelph.

A strong local economy matters to everyone.

It matters to the person working in a factory, the family operating a small business, the student looking for their first job and the worker trying to earn enough to afford a home.

Businesses provide employment, contribute to the municipal tax base and help support the services residents rely on.

But a strong local economy also depends on the people who make those businesses successful.

I believe Guelph should be a place where businesses can grow, invest and succeed, and where the people working for those businesses are treated fairly and have opportunities to earn enough to support themselves and their families.

Being pro-business and pro-worker should not be competing goals.

When businesses succeed, they can create jobs and opportunities for residents.

When workers earn fair wages and have stable employment, they are better able to support their families, afford housing and participate in the local economy.

Those two things should work together.

My approach is simple:

Protect the businesses and jobs we already have.

Remove unnecessary barriers to responsible business expansion.

Make sure employment lands and infrastructure are available for future growth.

Support opportunities for workers at different income and skill levels.

And measure whether municipal economic-development spending is producing results.

1. Start With the Businesses We Already Have

It is easy to focus economic development on attracting a large new employer.

But Guelph already has businesses employing residents, purchasing local goods and services, and contributing to the City's tax base.

Helping an existing business expand may sometimes be less complicated than attracting a completely new company.

Guelph's existing Economic Development Strategy identifies formalized business expansion and support as a municipal priority. The City also operates business-support and investment services.

I want those existing services focused on practical problems businesses are experiencing.

That means asking local employers:

What is preventing your business from growing?

Can you find the employees you need?

Is suitable property available?

Are municipal approvals causing avoidable delays?

Do you have adequate water, wastewater, electricity and transportation infrastructure?

Are there existing government programs that could help you invest or expand?

And is there something within the City's responsibilities that can be improved?

The purpose is not to promise that City Hall can solve every business problem.

It is to identify what the City can actually influence and act on it.

Learn From Cambridge's Business-Retention Approach

Cambridge is undertaking a targeted Business Retention and Expansion initiative focused on its automation and robotics supply chain.

The project involves direct contact with participating businesses, identifying challenges and opportunities, and using the findings to inform municipal policies

and economic-development activities. Its published timeline calls for interviews during 2026 and subsequent analysis and action planning.

Guelph could examine whether a similar targeted approach would strengthen the business-support work it already performs.

That might mean examining the needs of manufacturers, food-processing businesses, agricultural technology companies, health-related industries and smaller independent employers.

But I would not automatically create another permanent municipal program.

First, determine whether the City's existing Economic Development Office can incorporate these practices into its current work.

The measure of success should not simply be how many businesses staff contacted.

It should be whether identifiable problems were addressed and whether the assistance contributed to measurable business activity.

2. Protect Employment Land and Plan for Future Jobs

Housing growth is important.

But a growing city also needs places for people to work.

Guelph's long-term planning framework identifies an employment target of 116,000 jobs by 2051.

The City began updating its Employment Land Strategy in February 2026 to examine available land, business growth constraints, changing provincial planning requirements and future employment needs. Completion is scheduled for January 2027.

That work deserves careful attention.

Before converting significant employment land to another use, I want Council to understand:

How much employment land is actually available?

How much is serviced and ready for development?

How much is already committed to existing businesses?

What kinds of employers need additional land?

How much industrial, commercial and institutional space will Guelph require as it grows?

And what are the long-term economic consequences of changing the land's intended use?

Not Every Empty Property Is Available Employment Land

A property may appear vacant but still be unsuitable for immediate development.

It may lack sufficient water or wastewater capacity, road access, appropriate zoning or required environmental approvals.

Other properties may be privately held, already committed to future development or needed by an existing business for expansion.

I want Guelph to distinguish between:

Land designated for employment.

Land that is actually available.

Land that is serviced.

And land that is ready for a business to occupy or develop.

That distinction would help Council understand where the real constraints exist.

Learn From Kingston's Industrial Land Approach

Kingston maintains an inventory of available City-owned industrial land in its business parks.

Its published process brings municipal real-estate, planning, engineering and economic-development staff together to assist businesses with identifying sites and moving through the development process.

Guelph already maintains employment-land information and offers site-selection assistance.

The opportunity would be to examine whether those existing services could provide clearer information about available properties, servicing capacity, development timelines and expansion opportunities.

Before spending public money to prepare another industrial site, Council should understand the likely demand, the servicing cost, the expected development timeline and the financial risk.

Having land available for business is important. Making sure taxpayers receive appropriate value from preparing that land is important too.

3. Make Infrastructure Work for Both Housing and Employment

Housing and economic development cannot be planned separately.

Both require water, wastewater capacity, roads, transportation and other infrastructure.

Guelph's February 2026 Water and Wastewater Servicing Allocation Policy established a process for checking available servicing capacity when development proposals could increase demand on municipal systems.

The City also maintains long-term infrastructure plans intended to accommodate residential and employment growth.

I want Council to understand the infrastructure requirements for both.

If we allocate available servicing capacity entirely to residential growth without understanding future employment needs, we may make it harder for local businesses to expand.

At the same time, reserving too much capacity for employment projects that are not proceeding could unnecessarily delay needed housing.

The question is:

How can Guelph allocate available infrastructure capacity fairly while protecting the ability of both residents and businesses to grow?

Growth Should Contribute to Its Infrastructure Costs

Before supporting major new infrastructure primarily intended to enable employment growth, I want Council to see the full financial picture.

What does the infrastructure cost?

How much can be recovered through eligible development charges, developer contributions, user rates and outside funding?

How much will existing taxpayers have to contribute?

What are the ongoing maintenance and replacement costs?

And what measurable benefit is expected from the investment?

The City should not assume that every new industrial or commercial development will automatically generate enough tax revenue to cover the public costs of servicing it.

But it should also recognize that carefully planned employment growth can contribute revenue to help support municipal services over time.

The goal should be to understand the full financial effect rather than considering construction costs or future tax revenue in isolation.

4. Make It Easier to Do Business With City Hall

Municipal government cannot control global markets, interest rates or every cost facing a business.

But it can influence the way it administers permits, development approvals, municipal requirements and access to information.

Guelph announced the digitization of development-planning applications in September 2026. The City already provides online information about site planning, development fees, building permits and other business services.

I want those existing processes examined from the perspective of the people using them.

A business owner should be able to understand what approvals are required, what they will cost, approximately how long they should take and whom to contact when an application is delayed.

That does not mean every application can or should be approved.

It means the process should be understandable, consistent and reasonably predictable.

Coordinate Municipal Reviews

A business expanding its premises may need input from planning, engineering, building, fire prevention, transportation and other departments.

Those responsibilities exist for legitimate reasons.

But where several departments are reviewing the same project, unnecessary duplication and inconsistent requirements can create delays.

I want Guelph to examine whether existing staff and digital systems can better coordinate those reviews.

For significant business-development applications, Council should be able to see whether the City is meeting its published service standards.

If an application is delayed because the applicant has not provided required information, that should be distinguished from a delay caused by municipal processing.

Measure what the City controls, explain what it does not, and fix avoidable problems.

5. Support Jobs That Allow People to Build a Life in Guelph

Economic development is not only about the number of jobs created.

The quality of those jobs matters too.

A city needs people working in manufacturing, skilled trades, health care, education, retail, hospitality, technology, professional services and many other sectors.

Those jobs offer different wages, training requirements and career opportunities.

I want Guelph's economic-development decisions to consider whether they are creating opportunities for residents at different income and skill levels.

That includes people entering the workforce, experienced workers changing careers, skilled tradespeople, university and college graduates, and residents who need accessible employment opportunities.

A Living Wage Benefits Workers and Can Benefit Businesses

A business has to be financially sustainable to provide stable employment.

But the people working for that business also need to be able to afford the basic costs of living.

Fair treatment, safe working conditions, reasonable opportunities for advancement and adequate compensation are important parts of a healthy workplace.

I support encouraging employers to work toward paying a living wage wherever financially practical.

There is also a business case worth understanding.

The Ontario Living Wage Network's 2024 employer feedback survey found that 68% of responding employers reported that paying a living wage helped with employee retention, while 80% reported a positive effect on their workplace environment.

Better retention can mean fewer employees leaving, less time spent recruiting replacements and less disruption to daily operations.

Some employers also report improved morale, motivation and productivity.

But those benefits are not guaranteed, and higher wages create real costs that businesses must be able to manage.

I do not believe the City should simply assume that every business can absorb the same wage increase or that Council can solve the problem of low wages through municipal policy alone.

The approach should recognize the financial realities facing businesses while also recognizing that workers need adequate incomes to live in the communities where they work.

A business needs to be able to succeed. Its employees need to be able to build a life, too.

Fair Wages Support the Wider Local Economy

When workers have more disposable income, they have a greater ability to spend money at local shops, restaurants and other businesses.

Research into minimum-wage increases has found modest increases in consumer spending, particularly in industries such as food services. This suggests one way higher earnings can support local economic activity, although the size of the benefit will depend on local conditions.

A stronger local economy is not only about attracting outside investment.

It is also about whether residents have enough money to participate in the economy that already exists.

When workers have more financial stability, they are better able to pay their bills, support local businesses and plan for their families' future.

Those benefits can extend beyond any individual employer.

Fair Wages and Housing Affordability Are Connected

The housing section of this platform already identifies the gap between people who qualify for deeply subsidized housing and those who can afford market rents or homeownership.

Employment income is an important part of that problem.

Someone can be working full-time and still struggle to afford a suitable home in Guelph.

The Ontario Living Wage Network calculates regional living wages using essential household expenses, including housing, food, transportation and childcare.

But even a living wage does not guarantee that someone can afford to purchase a home, particularly in an expensive housing market.

We need to look at both sides of the equation.

Help create housing that lower- and middle-income households can afford.

And support an economy that provides opportunities for residents to earn enough to support themselves and their families.

Housing affordability and economic development should reinforce one another, not be treated as separate problems.

Connect Economic Development With Housing Affordability

There is a direct connection between the availability of employment and the affordability of living in Guelph.

A person can work full-time and still struggle to afford a suitable home.

Increasing the number of jobs without considering the wages those jobs provide, the housing available to workers and the cost of commuting gives Council an incomplete picture.

I want housing, employment and transportation planning to be connected.

Where practical, employment growth should be supported by housing options workers can afford and transportation connections that allow residents to reach their jobs.

I do not believe every worker should be expected to own a car.

I also do not believe every business can be adequately served by transit.

The goal should be to provide practical options that reflect the needs of different employers and workers.

Work With the Institutions We Already Have

Guelph has existing educational, training and business-support organizations that can help connect residents with employment opportunities.

The City's Economic Development Strategy already identifies partnerships with employers, educational institutions and workforce organizations as part of its approach to skills development.

I want Guelph to work with those organizations rather than automatically creating new City-run training programs.

That includes identifying where employers are struggling to recruit workers and whether existing educational or training providers can help address those needs.

The City's role should be to connect employers and workers, identify obstacles within municipal responsibilities and advocate for appropriate provincial and federal support.

Do not duplicate an existing program simply to announce a new initiative.

6. Keep Downtown Open for Business

Downtown is an important part of Guelph's economy.

It provides space for independent shops, restaurants, professional services, entertainment, tourism, residents and community activities.

But operating a downtown business can also involve challenges that are different from those facing a company in an industrial park.

Access, deliveries, parking, construction disruption and public safety can all affect day-to-day operations.

I want downtown economic development to remain connected to the City's broader commitments on roads, transportation, public safety, homelessness and infrastructure.

Protect Businesses During Major Construction

Guelph's Downtown Infrastructure Renewal Program began major construction on Wyndham Street in 2026.

The City has established measures including access planning, changing detour information, business-delivery arrangements, construction updates and coordination with the Downtown Guelph Business Association.

These measures are important because businesses still have to operate while public infrastructure is being repaired.

I want major municipal construction projects affecting commercial areas to include clear plans for maintaining reasonable access to businesses wherever practical.

That should include understandable timelines, communication about closures, delivery access, accessible routes and coordination between municipal departments and affected businesses.

When delays occur, explain what happened and how the City intends to address them.

The same principle should apply beyond downtown.

Businesses elsewhere in Guelph should not be left trying to operate through major construction without clear information or reasonable access.

Public Safety and Economic Activity

A business owner should be able to operate safely.

Employees should feel safe travelling to work.

Customers should feel comfortable visiting businesses and public spaces.

But addressing public safety should not mean treating homelessness, addiction or mental illness as crimes.

The policing and homelessness sections of this platform already establish the distinction between enforcing the law where criminal behaviour occurs and connecting people with appropriate assistance where health, housing or social support is required.

I want that same approach applied to commercial areas.

The City should coordinate appropriate enforcement, public-space maintenance, outreach, health services and business support rather than expecting any one service to solve every problem.

Measure Whether Downtown Initiatives Are Working

Guelph's 2026 budget includes a one-year $210,000 investment in the Welcoming Streets Initiative to support downtown businesses and vulnerable individuals.

For initiatives such as this, I want Council to understand what the funding is intended to accomplish and what results are being achieved.

That means considering business feedback, public-space conditions, service referrals, safety concerns, municipal expenditures and other measures relevant to the program's actual objectives.

If an initiative is working, show the evidence.

If it is not producing the intended results, determine whether it needs to be changed.

7. Help Small Businesses and Entrepreneurs Without Duplicating Services

Not every business begins with a large factory or office.

Many start with one person, a small storefront, a home-based operation or a family investing its savings into an idea.

Smaller businesses are part of Guelph's neighbourhoods and provide employment, services and opportunities for local ownership.

But City Hall should not assume that every small business needs another municipal grant program.

Guelph already has business-support services, including the Guelph-Wellington Business Centre and the City's Economic Development Office.

I want to understand whether those services are reaching the businesses that need them and whether they are helping people navigate the practical requirements of starting or expanding a business.

That includes understanding municipal permits, finding suitable premises, accessing existing financing and training programs, and obtaining accurate information about applicable regulations.

Where assistance is already available from another organization or level of government, the City should help business owners find it rather than automatically recreating the service.

Support Local Purchasing Where It Makes Sense

Guelph's existing Economic Development Strategy includes developing a stronger local-purchasing initiative.

I support examining opportunities for local businesses to compete for municipal contracts and for residents to find local suppliers and services.

But local purchasing should not automatically mean paying more for the same product or excluding competition.

Municipal procurement should remain transparent, competitive and consistent with applicable trade and procurement rules.

The City can make bidding opportunities easier to understand, examine whether unnecessarily complicated requirements discourage smaller eligible suppliers, and ensure businesses receive fair access to municipal purchasing opportunities.

The goal should be responsible purchasing that provides value to taxpayers while allowing qualified local businesses to participate.

8. Be Careful With Business Incentives

Some municipalities offer financial incentives intended to attract investment, encourage redevelopment or support employment growth.

Barrie established a Community Improvement Project Area in March 2026 to facilitate employment-land development and investment. The designation creates a framework for an employment-land improvement program; it does not, by itself, demonstrate that the program has created jobs or generated a positive financial return.

Guelph should examine such approaches when considering its own employment-land and redevelopment needs.

But I would not support creating an open-ended municipal subsidy simply because another city offers one.

For any significant proposed incentive, I want Council to understand the full public cost, the expected investment, the measurable public benefit and what would happen if the promised investment does not occur.

That includes asking whether the business would likely proceed without municipal financial assistance.

Protect Taxpayers When Public Money Supports Private Investment

If Council considers offering a financial incentive, the agreement should clearly establish what the business is expected to deliver.

Where legally appropriate, that could include enforceable development timelines, employment or investment commitments, reporting requirements and provisions addressing failure to deliver the agreed public benefit.

The financial analysis should also account for municipal servicing, infrastructure maintenance, future renewal and any foregone tax revenue.

A large private investment announcement may be welcome news.

But an announcement is not the same as completed construction, sustained employment or additional net municipal revenue.

Measure what was delivered, not simply what was promised.

When evaluating significant economic-development incentives, I also want Council to consider the quality of the employment opportunities being created.

That includes the expected wages and benefits, opportunities for training and advancement, employment stability and whether the jobs provide realistic opportunities for residents to support themselves and their families.

These factors should be considered alongside the investment being made, the long-term municipal costs and the measurable public benefits.

Public investment in economic development should be evaluated on more than the number of jobs announced.

9. Build on Guelph's Existing Economic Strengths

Guelph's 2022–2026 Economic Development and Tourism Strategy identifies advanced manufacturing, agri-innovation and life sciences as industry clusters, alongside cleantech, information technology and tourism as priority sectors.

Those existing strengths provide a starting point for future economic-development planning.

The City should understand which industries are growing, which are facing challenges, and where public infrastructure or municipal processes may be limiting expansion.

But economic development should not be restricted to a small number of high-profile industries.

Smaller employers, skilled trades, personal services, retail, hospitality and other sectors also provide work and services that residents depend on.

Tourism Should Produce Measurable Economic Benefits

Tourism can support local businesses, employment and the use of existing community facilities.

Guelph's Economic Development Strategy already includes sports, group and conference tourism, visitor experiences and partnerships with tourism organizations.

I want those existing activities examined using the same financial principles as other municipal investments.

Where the City supports a major event or tourism initiative, Council should understand the municipal cost, outside funding, expected visitors, use of existing facilities and measurable economic activity.

Visitor spending estimates should be distinguished from revenue actually received by the City.

And tourism events should not automatically justify constructing expensive new facilities that taxpayers will have to maintain long after the event has ended.

Use what we already have.

Work with existing community and business organizations.

And understand the full cost before committing to major new spending.

10. Give Economic Development the Same Accountability as Every Other City Service

Economic development can be difficult to measure.

A municipality may provide assistance to a business that was already planning to expand.

An announced development may take years to complete.

A company may create jobs in one location while eliminating others.

And private investment can increase property-tax revenue while also requiring additional municipal infrastructure.

I want Guelph to measure economic-development performance in a way that recognizes those distinctions.

The City already conducts an annual Employment Survey intended to inform business-support activities, growth planning, outreach and the measurement of economic trends.

Council should build on that existing information rather than automatically creating another reporting program.

Economic Development Measures for the Core Services Scorecard

I would propose including economic development in the existing Core Services Scorecard framework, while recognizing that economic outcomes depend on many factors beyond municipal control.

The scorecard should track:

Business establishments opening, closing, expanding and relocating, using consistent definitions.
Employment levels and changes by major industry.
Business-retention and expansion activities, including the problems identified and resolved.
Employment land available, serviced, committed and ready for development.
Industrial and commercial development approvals and processing times.
Completed business investment and development, distinguished from announcements and proposals.
Municipal economic-development spending and outside funding secured.
Financial commitments and measurable outcomes associated with business incentives.
Changes in commercial and industrial assessment and municipal tax revenue, with related servicing and infrastructure costs identified.
Downtown business conditions, construction-related concerns and results associated with major municipal initiatives.
The outcomes of major business-support and tourism programs.
Employment quality, including available information about wages, benefits, job stability and opportunities for advancement.
The number of jobs created or maintained through significant publicly supported economic-development initiatives, with available information about their wage ranges and employment conditions.
Where reliable data are available, how local wages compare with Guelph's cost of living and regional living-wage calculations.

Reporting should use reliable aggregate information and should not require the public disclosure of individual employees' compensation or personal information.

The scorecard should explain changes in context.

A business closure does not automatically mean a municipal economic-development program failed.

Likewise, a new employer opening in Guelph does not automatically prove that municipal spending caused the investment.

The City should report what it did, what it cost, what changed and what evidence connects its actions to the results.

Measure the Financial Return — Carefully

Economic growth can increase municipal revenue.

But new businesses may also require infrastructure, maintenance, servicing and other public expenditures.

I want major economic-development proposals evaluated using their full long-term financial implications rather than treating gross assessment growth or announced investment as guaranteed savings for residents.

If a project produces a positive financial return, explain the basis for that conclusion.

If it requires a continuing municipal subsidy, make that cost clear.

And if its public value is primarily employment, workforce development or another economic benefit rather than direct tax revenue, report that distinction honestly.

The goal is to help Council make informed decisions rather than simply produce attractive economic-development statistics.

My Approach

Guelph needs a local economy that supports the people who live and work here.

That means protecting existing employment opportunities, allowing responsible business growth and understanding what kinds of development the City needs as its population increases.

My approach will be:

Protect the employment lands and infrastructure necessary for future jobs.

Build on existing business-support services rather than automatically creating new programs.

Help employers identify and resolve problems within municipal responsibilities.

Make municipal approvals clearer, more predictable and better coordinated.

Connect employment growth with housing affordability, transportation and workforce needs.

Support small businesses and local purchasing while protecting competition and taxpayer value.

Keep downtown and other commercial areas accessible during major construction.

Examine business incentives carefully and require measurable public benefits where municipal financial assistance is provided.

Use existing facilities and partnerships when supporting tourism and business activity.

And publicly report what economic-development investments cost and what they actually accomplish.

Economic development should not be measured only by how much money is announced or how many new buildings appear. It should also be measured by whether Guelph is maintaining and creating employment opportunities, supporting sustainable businesses and strengthening the community's long-term financial position.

Economic Development, Jobs and Local Business — Source Notes

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2. City of Guelph, Official Plan Updates — Phase 2 (employment land review and 116,000-job planning target for 2051): https://guelph.ca/plans-and-strategies/official-plan/official-plan-updates-phase-2/

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4. City of Kingston, Industrial Lands (available City-owned business park lands and coordinated land-sale process): https://www.cityofkingston.ca/business-in-kingston/economic-development/industrial-lands/

5. City of Guelph, Water and Wastewater Servicing Capacity Checks and Allocation (policy approved February 24, 2026): https://guelph.ca/water-and-wastewater-servicing-capacity-checks-and-allocation/

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8. Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, The Local Aggregate Effects of Minimum Wage Increases (consumer spending and restaurant-sector effects): https://www.bostonfed.org/publications/research-department-working-paper/2017/the-local-aggregate-effects-of-minimum-wage-increases.aspx

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10. City of Guelph, Downtown Infrastructure Renewal Program — Phase 1 Wyndham Street Reconstruction (construction and business access): https://guelph.ca/living/construction-projects/downtown-infrastructure-revitalization/phase-1-wyndham-street-reconstruction/

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12. City of Barrie, March 2026 Community Improvement Project Area By-law (employment land development): https://www.barrie.ca/government/news-notices/public-notices/notice-passing-law-designate-community-improvement-project-area-pursuant-sections-282-planning-act

13. City of Guelph, Economic Reports (annual Employment Survey and regional workforce data): https://guelph.ca/business/economic-development-office/economic-reports/

Environment, Climate Resilience and Stormwater

Protect Our Environment. Prepare for Extreme Weather. Maintain the Infrastructure We Depend On.

Guelph's natural environment is one of the things that makes this city a good place to live.

Our rivers, parks, forests, trails and green spaces are important to residents. They also help manage rainwater, protect our water supply, provide shade and reduce some of the effects of extreme weather.

Protecting those assets is not separate from maintaining our roads, water systems and other municipal infrastructure.

A blocked storm sewer can flood a neighbourhood.

A poorly maintained stormwater pond can lose the capacity it needs to manage heavy rainfall.

A healthy tree canopy can provide shade, but aging trees also require proper inspection and maintenance.

Environmental protection and responsible municipal spending should be considered together.

The important questions are:

What environmental risks is Guelph facing?

What infrastructure and natural areas are already helping protect us?

What needs to be maintained or improved?

What would the proposed improvements cost?

And what could happen if we continue delaying necessary work?

1. Protect the Stormwater System We Already Own

Stormwater management is an essential municipal service.

When rain falls on roads, rooftops, driveways and parking lots, much of that water cannot soak naturally into the ground.

It needs somewhere to go.

Guelph's stormwater infrastructure collects, manages and releases runoff to help protect properties, roads and waterways.

The City's 2026 asset information identifies approximately 456 kilometres of stormwater mains, 119 stormwater management facilities and more than 25,000 associated assets.

Their estimated replacement value is approximately $1.37 billion.

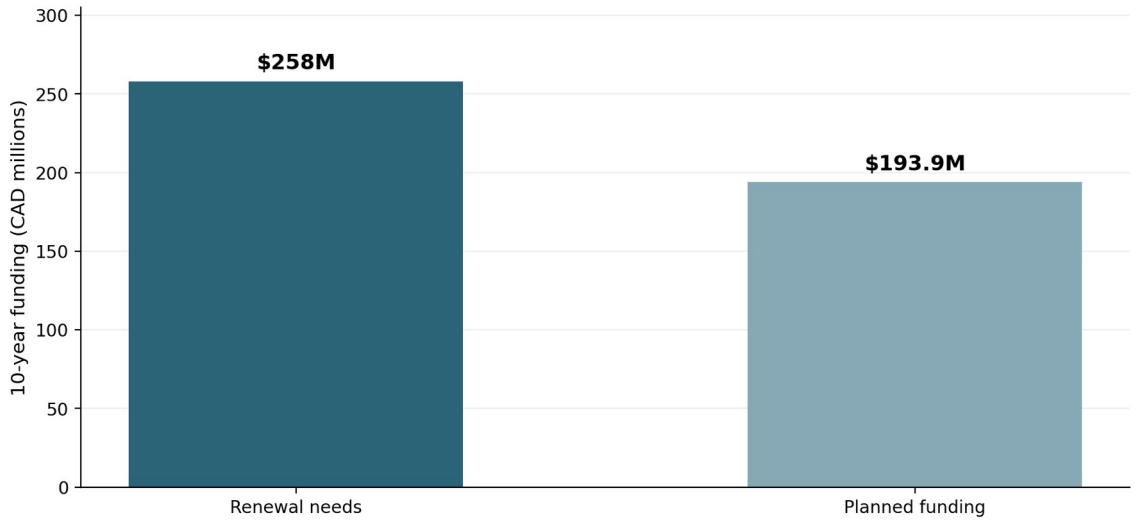
These are assets residents already own and pay to maintain.

A $64.1 Million Renewal Funding Gap

Guelph's current asset-management information identifies the following ten-year forecast:

Stormwater infrastructure: renewal needs versus available funding

City of Guelph — 2026 asset-management forecast, Canadian dollars



Projected 10-year funding gap: $64.1 million

Approximately 25% of identified renewal needs.

Source: City of Guelph’s 2026 asset-management information. The figures are forecasts for infrastructure renewal, not an immediate deficit or the total operating budget for Stormwater Services.

The overall system is currently rated fair, and its condition is forecast to remain fair through 2035 under the City's current asset-management assumptions. That does not eliminate the need to address the identified renewal gap.

Before making additional commitments, the City needs to understand which stormwater assets are most likely to fail, what would happen if they did, and whether available funding is sufficient to protect existing service levels.

A deteriorating pipe beneath a road, a stormwater facility serving an area with repeated flooding and an asset with little immediate risk may require different responses.

The condition rating alone does not tell us which project should proceed first.

Measure the Cost of Delaying Repairs

Deferring infrastructure work can sometimes be reasonable.

An asset may remain safe and functional for several additional years.

But postponing necessary maintenance can also create larger costs if a failure damages roads, private property or other infrastructure.

For significant stormwater projects, the City should be able to compare the cost of completing the work now with the expected cost and risk of delaying it.

That comparison should include the condition of the asset, its remaining useful life, the consequences of failure and the potential for coordinating the work with other infrastructure projects.

The goal is to distinguish repairs that can reasonably wait from repairs where delay creates unacceptable risks or higher future costs.

2. Identify Flooding Problems Before They Become Emergencies

Flooding does not affect every part of Guelph equally.

Some neighbourhoods may have undersized stormwater infrastructure.

Others may experience drainage problems because of local topography, development patterns or the condition of existing infrastructure.

The City's Stormwater Management Master Plan, approved in 2023, provides a framework for assessing existing systems, development needs and future stormwater investment.

The question is whether the work being completed is reducing the risks identified in that plan.

Exhibition Park Provides a Practical Example

The City's 2026 budget identifies the Exhibition Park neighbourhood as an area receiving targeted infrastructure improvements.

The planned work includes stormwater infrastructure intended to alleviate localized flooding around the intersection of Division Street and Exhibition Street.

The program is being implemented in nine phases, with the first phase scheduled to begin construction in 2026.

This provides an opportunity to measure whether a substantial neighbourhood infrastructure investment delivers its intended results.

Before construction, the City can establish the existing drainage problems, relevant flood-risk conditions and expected improvements.

After construction, it can assess whether those improvements have been delivered.

The same approach could inform other areas where drainage problems have been documented.

Make Flood-Risk Information Easier to Understand

Residents should be able to understand whether their neighbourhood has known municipal drainage constraints, whether improvements are planned and what work has already been completed.

That does not mean the City can guarantee that a property will never flood.

Extreme rainfall, private-property drainage conditions and other factors can create risks even where municipal infrastructure is functioning properly.

But clear public information can help residents understand the difference between a known municipal infrastructure problem and a property-specific issue.

It can also help Council assess whether the areas facing the greatest consequences are receiving appropriate attention.

3. Use Green Infrastructure Where It Makes Practical and Financial Sense

Not every stormwater problem requires a larger underground pipe or another conventional stormwater pond.

Trees, healthy soil, rain gardens, wetlands and other natural or landscaped areas can help absorb, temporarily store or slow the movement of rainwater.

They can complement conventional stormwater infrastructure.

Guelph already recognizes these approaches through its Stormwater Management Master Plan, natural asset-management work and existing rainwater-management programs.

The important question is where these approaches can deliver measurable benefits.

Compare Natural and Conventional Infrastructure

When a stormwater improvement is being planned, Council should have enough information to compare reasonable engineering options.

That could include conventional pipes and detention facilities, green infrastructure, or a combination of approaches.

The comparison should account for construction, land requirements, maintenance, expected lifespan, performance during severe rainfall and effects on nearby property and water quality.

A rain garden may help manage runoff from a small area.

It is not automatically a substitute for major stormwater infrastructure serving an entire neighbourhood.

Likewise, a conventional engineered solution is not automatically the least expensive option when natural infrastructure can provide some of the required service.

The choice should depend on the site, the engineering requirements and the full cost of providing the intended level of protection.

Learn From Kitchener's Stormwater Credit Program

Kitchener offers residential property owners stormwater-fee credits for eligible measures that capture or manage rainwater.

Its program includes rain barrels, cisterns, infiltration systems and rain gardens. Depending on the amount of water managed, eligible residential properties can receive credits ranging from 20% to 45% of their monthly stormwater fee.

Guelph already offers discounted rain barrels, residential rain-garden rebates and stormwater-fee credits for eligible industrial, commercial, institutional and larger multi-residential properties. The existing commercial credit program can provide a reduction of up to 50%.

The useful comparison is therefore not whether Guelph should introduce rainwater-management incentives from scratch.

It is whether the programs Guelph already operates are producing measurable benefits and whether any gaps remain.

Kitchener's residential stormwater-credit model provides an additional option for examination.

Any similar change in Guelph would need to consider administrative costs, verification requirements, the effect on stormwater revenue and whether the reduction in runoff provides sufficient public value.

A fee credit that reduces revenue without reducing infrastructure costs or risks could place additional pressure on the funding gap already identified.

4. Growth Should Not Make Existing Flooding Problems Worse

Guelph needs additional housing and employment opportunities.

But new development can change how rainwater moves across a property.

Replacing natural ground cover with rooftops, roads and parking lots can increase the amount of runoff that must be managed.

The City's existing stormwater requirements provide for water-quality and water-quantity controls at the development and site-plan level.

Those requirements need to be considered alongside housing affordability and the cost of development.

Identify the Full Infrastructure Requirements

Before approving major growth-related stormwater infrastructure, Council should understand the additional runoff the development is expected to generate, the capacity of the existing system and the improvements required.

Where an existing system needs renewal regardless of development, the cost of maintaining that asset should be distinguished from the additional cost of accommodating growth.

Eligible growth-related costs can be considered through development charges and other legally permitted funding sources.

The goal is to understand which costs arise from existing infrastructure needs and which are attributable to new development.

This approach is consistent with the housing section's distinction between maintaining existing services and providing infrastructure for growth.

Protect Existing Neighbourhoods

New development should also be assessed for its effects on neighbouring properties and downstream drainage systems.

Managing stormwater within a development is only part of the question.

Council needs to understand whether the proposal could increase runoff, erosion or flooding elsewhere, and what measures would be required to address those risks.

The City should also consider whether existing drainage problems can be addressed efficiently when growth-related infrastructure is installed.

Coordinating the work can sometimes reduce the cost and disruption of returning to the same area for separate projects.

5. Protect Guelph's Tree Canopy and Natural Areas

Guelph's trees, parks, waterways and natural areas contribute to the character of the city.

They also provide services that would otherwise need to be supplied partly through conventional infrastructure or additional municipal operations.

Trees provide shade, help manage rainfall and contribute to the quality of public spaces.

Natural areas can provide habitat, support water management and create places for residents to enjoy.

The City already has an Urban Forest Management Plan and a One Canopy Tree Planting Strategy.

The One Canopy Strategy establishes a goal of 40% tree canopy cover by 2070.

Maintain Existing Trees, Not Just Plant New Ones

Tree planting is only one measure of a healthy urban forest.

New trees require suitable planting locations, soil, water, maintenance and protection while they become established.

Existing mature trees also require care.

The City should be able to distinguish between the number of trees planted and the number that survive and contribute to the canopy over time.

That means measuring tree condition, survival, removals, replacements and canopy coverage.

Use the Tree Inventory We Already Have

In June 2026, Guelph announced a high-precision digital mapping project to inventory street trees and other assets within public rights-of-way.

The project uses mobile scanning technology to improve information about the City's street-tree inventory and support urban forest management.

This is the kind of existing investment whose results can be measured.

Council should be able to see whether improved information leads to better maintenance planning, more accurate identification of hazardous trees, more effective planting and a clearer understanding of the resources needed to maintain the urban forest.

The City should also be able to explain how it is managing the costs of the inventory and any additional work identified through it.

Protect Natural Areas as Part of Infrastructure Planning

Guelph has already undertaken natural asset-management work, including an inventory of natural assets and analysis of the stormwater-management services provided by the Hanlon Creek subwatershed.

That information can inform decisions about land development, infrastructure and environmental protection.

When natural areas provide identifiable services, their maintenance and protection can be considered alongside conventional infrastructure options.

However, natural assets should not be assigned assumed financial savings without a credible assessment of their actual function, condition and the costs of preserving them.

6. Prepare for Extreme Heat, Heavy Rainfall and Other Severe Weather

Guelph already has a Climate Adaptation Plan.

It identifies risks associated with extreme weather and includes actions related to municipal infrastructure, public safety, environmental health and emergency preparedness.

The City reports that it is tracking 163 actions under the plan, with a target of completing 85% by 2028.

The question is how to connect that work to measurable improvements in the services residents rely on.

Extreme Heat Is Also a Public Safety Issue

Extreme heat can affect everyone, but some residents face greater risks because of age, health, housing conditions or limited access to cooling.

Guelph already operates warming and cooling centres in cooperation with local service providers during periods of extreme temperatures.

The relevant measures include whether those facilities are accessible to the residents who need them, whether information is available when extreme-weather conditions occur and whether the City has adequate plans for maintaining essential services.

Transit access, building accessibility, operating hours and communication are all practical considerations.

A cooling centre cannot serve someone effectively if they cannot reach it or do not know when it is available.

Emergency Preparedness Must Include Existing Infrastructure

Severe weather can disrupt electricity, transportation, communications and other essential services.

The City's climate and emergency planning should account for those risks, including their effects on municipal buildings, water and wastewater systems, emergency responders and other critical infrastructure.

For major resilience-related capital proposals, the City should identify the specific risk being addressed, the service that would be protected and the expected costs and benefits.

That information should also establish whether the work is already required as part of routine asset renewal.

7. Reduce Municipal Energy Costs Where the Numbers Support It

Energy is an operating expense.

The City pays to heat, cool and power buildings, operate equipment and run its vehicle fleet.

An energy-efficiency improvement can sometimes reduce ongoing operating costs while extending the useful life of municipal infrastructure.

But an expensive energy project should not be treated as financially beneficial simply because it reduces energy consumption.

The full financial case matters.

Understand What Is Already Planned

Guelph's 2026 capital budget removed the previously forecast ten-year funding for dedicated 100% renewable energy initiatives, including building energy retrofits, HVAC improvements, lighting upgrades, solar installations and certain vehicle-charging infrastructure.

The City says some energy-related work will continue through other capital projects, including asset renewal and transit electrification.

That makes it important to distinguish between a project already proceeding as part of necessary maintenance and an additional investment requiring new funding.

Measure the Financial Return

For significant energy-related investments, Council should receive a business case showing the upfront cost, available grants or incentives, expected annual energy savings, maintenance costs, useful life and future replacement requirements.

A straightforward financial payback period can help residents understand an investment, but it should not be the only measure where safety, reliability or necessary asset replacement is also involved.

The analysis should distinguish financial savings from environmental benefits rather than assuming that one automatically proves the other.

Combine Energy Improvements With Necessary Repairs

When a municipal building requires a new heating or cooling system, roof, windows or major electrical work, that may be an opportunity to compare more efficient replacement options.

The comparison should show the additional cost of an efficiency improvement against the ordinary replacement cost, along with expected operating savings.

This avoids treating the full cost of a necessary replacement as though it were solely an additional environmental investment.

It also fits the existing platform's principle of maintaining infrastructure and coordinating work wherever practical.

8. Protect Guelph's Water Supply and Waterways

Guelph's water supply and natural waterways are connected to the way land and infrastructure are managed.

Stormwater can carry sediment and pollutants from roads, parking lots and other developed areas into natural watercourses.

Cambridge's stormwater information describes how stormwater ponds and other management facilities can slow runoff and allow sediment and pollutants to be removed before water reaches receiving waterways.

Guelph already has programs addressing stormwater quality, water conservation and the management of natural assets.

Maintain Existing Environmental Protection Infrastructure

Stormwater ponds and related facilities require inspection, cleaning and periodic rehabilitation.

If they are not properly maintained, their ability to manage runoff and sediment can deteriorate.

The City's maintenance and renewal planning should account for both drainage capacity and water-quality requirements.

Where projects are deferred, the risks associated with the delay should be documented.

Protect Water Quality Without Duplicating Existing Programs

Guelph already operates water-conservation incentives, including water audits, rainwater-harvesting rebates and other programs.

The purpose of reviewing these programs would be to understand participation, municipal costs, water savings and any demonstrated benefits for the water system.

Where programs overlap, their results can be considered together.

The same applies to environmental protection work involving the City, conservation authorities and other levels of government.

Municipal responsibilities should be clear, and the costs of shared programs should be attributed to the appropriate organizations.

Coordinate Winter Maintenance and Environmental Protection

Road salt can create competing considerations.

Winter maintenance is necessary to protect road users and maintain access, while excessive salt application can create environmental concerns.

Guelph's Climate Adaptation Plan identifies an existing pilot project with the University of Guelph to optimize salt application during winter.

The results of that work could be considered alongside the winter-maintenance service standards established elsewhere in this platform.

The objective is to understand whether improvements in equipment, application methods or operational planning can maintain required safety standards while reducing unnecessary material use and related costs.

9. Environmental Improvements Must Be Financially Transparent

Environmental infrastructure is not free.

Stormwater systems, tree maintenance, flood protection, building improvements and emergency preparedness all require funding.

But delaying necessary work can also create financial risks.

The City needs to distinguish between investments required to maintain existing infrastructure, improvements intended to address documented risks, and optional service enhancements.

Start With Existing Funding and Maintenance Plans

Guelph's 2026 stormwater service fee is $11.20 per month for a typical residential property, an increase of $1.20 from 2025.

The stormwater service is funded through a dedicated utility model, and the City's long-term financial strategy forecasts future capital-reserve balances and expenditures.

The financial assessment should establish whether the available funds can meet the required level of service, whether spending can be rescheduled without increasing unacceptable risks, and whether efficiencies or other eligible funding sources are available.

Temporary reserve balances should not be confused with money available for permanent new commitments.

The same applies to deferring projects: moving an expense to a future year does not necessarily reduce its eventual cost.

Learn From Other Municipalities Without Automatically Copying Them

Cambridge provides stormwater credits for eligible non-residential properties that reduce peak runoff, manage runoff volume or improve water quality. Its program permits credits of up to 50%.

Guelph already has a broadly comparable commercial stormwater-credit program.

Comparing the two systems may reveal differences in eligibility, administrative costs, participation or the benefits achieved.

But the existence of a program elsewhere does not establish that introducing or expanding it in Guelph would be cost-effective.

The City's existing incentives should be evaluated before committing to further expenditure or fee reductions.

Pursue Available Outside Funding

Where environmental protection and infrastructure-resilience projects qualify for provincial, federal or other outside funding, the municipal business case should identify those opportunities.

Grants may reduce the local cost of construction, but they do not automatically cover maintenance, staffing or eventual replacement.

The complete funding arrangement should be understood before a new project is approved.

10. Make Environmental and Stormwater Performance Part of the Core Services Scorecard

Guelph's existing Core Services Scorecard provides a framework for reporting whether residents are receiving the services they are paying for.

Environmental and stormwater programs can be assessed in the same way.

Scorecard Measures

Environment, Climate Resilience and Stormwater

Measures to report

Area	Measures to report
Stormwater infrastructure	Overall asset condition, renewal needs, funding gap, maintenance completed and changes in the renewal backlog.
Flood protection	Documented flooding problems, high-risk locations, infrastructure improvements completed and results measured after construction.
Stormwater financing	Utility revenue, capital and operating expenditure, reserve balances, external funding and long-term financial obligations.
Green infrastructure	Installation costs, maintenance, runoff-management performance and comparison with conventional infrastructure where appropriate.
Urban forest	Canopy coverage, tree condition, planting, survival, removals and replacement activity.
Severe-weather preparedness	Completion of priority actions, service disruptions, emergency exercises and accessibility of warming and cooling services.
Municipal energy	Energy consumption, operating costs, project expenditures, verified savings and performance of major energy investments.
Water and environmental protection	Stormwater quality measures, rehabilitation of management facilities, conservation-program outcomes and results associated with environmental protection initiatives.

Where possible, the City should distinguish between improvements caused by municipal action and changes resulting from weather conditions, development patterns or other factors outside its control.

My Approach

Guelph's environmental planning, stormwater infrastructure and climate-resilience work are connected to the City's responsibilities for public safety, infrastructure maintenance, growth and financial management.

This section establishes a framework for evaluating those responsibilities through measurable outcomes.

Protect existing stormwater infrastructure and understand the consequences of delaying necessary renewal.

Identify neighbourhood flood risks and measure whether completed projects reduce them.

Compare conventional and green infrastructure using site-specific engineering and full lifetime costs.

Account for the effects of new development on existing drainage systems and neighbouring properties.

Maintain the existing urban forest while measuring the results of new tree planting.

Connect severe-weather preparedness to accessible public services and the reliability of essential infrastructure.

Examine energy-efficiency opportunities alongside necessary asset renewal and document the financial return from additional investment.

Protect water quality and natural areas through coordinated maintenance and planning.

And report the costs, risks and results of major environmental initiatives through the existing Core Services Scorecard.

Protecting the environment, maintaining municipal infrastructure and preparing for extreme weather are connected responsibilities. The financial and service implications of each should be visible before major spending decisions are made.

Environment, Climate Resilience and Stormwater — Source Notes

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11. City of Guelph, Climate Adaptation Plan (163 tracked actions, 2028 target and winter salt pilot): https://guelph.ca/plans-and-strategies/climate-adaptation-plan/

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Taxes, Budgeting and Affordability

Protect Core Services. Control Spending. Rebuild Our Financial Safety Net.

Guelph is becoming an increasingly expensive place to live.

Residents are facing pressure from housing costs, groceries, transportation, utilities and property taxes.

Some of these costs are outside municipal government's control.

Property taxes are not.

That does not mean Council can promise that taxes will never increase.

Maintaining roads, providing emergency services, operating transit, keeping facilities open and replacing aging infrastructure all cost money.

But I do not believe residents should be expected to accept continually increasing taxes without a clear explanation of what they are paying for and what results they are receiving.

The same principle applies to lower- and middle-income families who are already struggling to make ends meet.

For someone living on a fixed income, a family paying a mortgage or a renter whose landlord faces increasing property expenses, municipal costs matter.

My starting point is simple:

Protect core services and deliver them well.

Bring municipal spending growth under better control.

Maintain what we already own before creating unnecessary new expenses.

Rebuild our reserves instead of continually drawing them down.

And make the full cost of every major decision visible before asking residents to pay for it.

1. Get Spending Growth Under Control

The first question should not automatically be how much more revenue the City needs.

It should be whether the City is making the best possible use of the money it already receives.

That means examining existing spending before adding new permanent costs.

I want Council to distinguish between expenses that are necessary to maintain existing services, costs associated with population growth, inflationary pressures, infrastructure renewal and new discretionary commitments.

Those are different types of spending, and they should not all be treated as unavoidable increases to the base budget.

Work Toward Spending Growth That Is More Closely Aligned With Inflation

Inflation affects the cost of municipal services.

Fuel, construction materials, equipment, utilities, insurance and wages can all increase in price.

But I do not believe inflation should automatically become an excuse for every budget increase.

When spending grows faster than inflation, residents should understand why.

Is it because Guelph is providing more service to a growing population?

Is an existing service becoming more expensive?

Are previous capital investments creating new operating expenses?

Are social-service or other costs being transferred to the municipality?

Or is Council approving new spending that could reasonably be delayed, reduced or delivered differently?

I want Guelph to work toward keeping the growth of existing municipal operating costs more closely aligned with inflation wherever practical.

That does not mean imposing the same percentage limit on every department or automatically cutting a service that faces legitimate cost pressures.

It means requiring a clear explanation when spending increases beyond what is necessary to maintain an existing level of service.

Inflation should be a starting point for examining the budget, not an automatic spending allowance.

Measure More Than the Annual Tax Increase

A property-tax increase and an operating-budget increase are not necessarily the same thing.

The City receives revenue from sources other than property taxes, including user fees, utility rates, grants, permits and other recoveries.

New development can also add to the assessment base, although the amount and timing of that growth vary.

Council should understand whether spending is increasing because Guelph is serving more residents, because the cost of providing existing services is increasing, or because it is providing additional services.

I want annual budget reporting to distinguish between:

Changes in the cost of existing services.

Changes in the number of residents or households served.
Growth-related operating and infrastructure requirements.
New programs and service enhancements.
Revenue from assessment growth and other sources.
Costs or funding changes originating with other levels of government.

That would give residents a clearer picture of what is actually driving the tax requirement.

2. Understand What Residents Are Paying

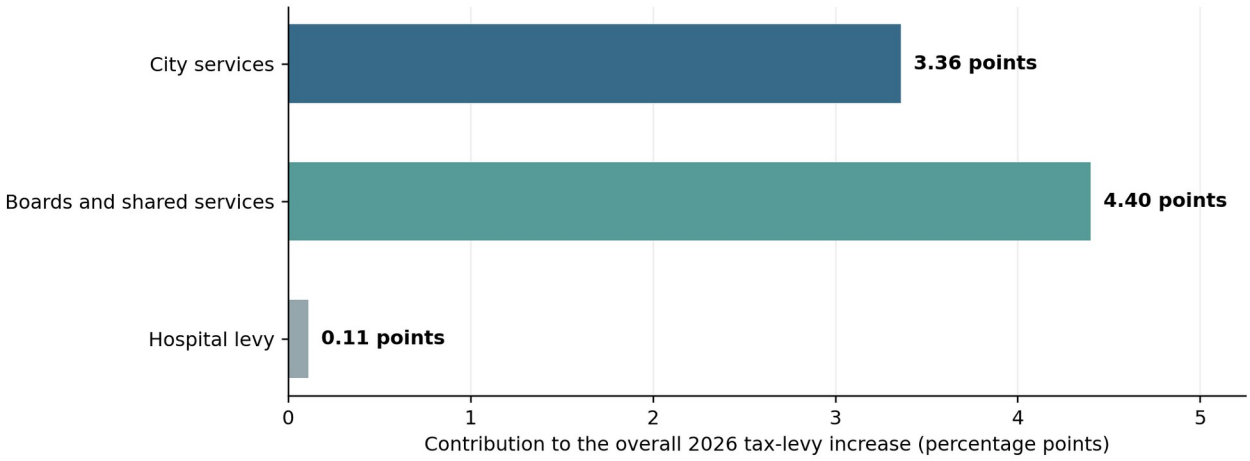
The 2026 confirmed budget provides an example of why the entire tax increase should be explained rather than presented as a single number.

The total approved tax-levy increase is 7.87%.

Of that amount, City-operated services account for 3.36 percentage points, local boards and shared services account for 4.40 points, and the hospital levy accounts for 0.11 points.

Guelph's 2026 property-tax increase

Confirmed tax-levy increase, broken down by responsibility



Total confirmed 2026 tax-levy increase: 7.87%. Approximately $401.62 more annually for the City's representative single-detached property, based on the 2025 median assessed value and tax policy. Source: City of Guelph, 2026 Confirmed Budget. The three percentages are contributions to the overall tax-levy increase, not independent tax-rate increases. Individual property-tax bills vary.

All three contribute to the property-tax burden.

But they involve different responsibilities and different opportunities for Council to influence spending.

Show Residents Where the Money Goes

I want the City to provide a straightforward explanation of how changes in its budget affect the typical residential tax bill.

Residents should be able to see what portion of an increase is associated with City-operated services, policing, libraries, social services, other shared services and any dedicated levies.

They should also be able to distinguish recurring costs from one-time expenses.

If a new program requires $500,000 every year, residents should understand that it is a continuing commitment.

If a one-time infrastructure repair costs $500,000, that is a different financial decision.

The City should explain not just how much the budget is increasing, but why it is increasing and whether the additional spending will continue in future years.

Council Must Be Clear About Its Authority

Local boards and shared-service organizations provide important services.

But their governance arrangements are not identical to those of City departments.

The 2026 budget documentation specifically distinguishes City-operated services from local boards and shared services and notes that Council's budget authority varies according to the applicable legislation.

I want Guelph to pursue transparent financial reporting and measurable service outcomes across the entire municipal tax-supported system while respecting those legal responsibilities.

The City should work cooperatively with its service partners to understand budget pressures and identify opportunities to improve efficiency.

That includes examining shared purchasing, coordinated planning, administrative efficiencies and other opportunities where they are practical and legally permitted.

The goal should be to understand the complete financial picture without pretending that Council has direct operational control over every organization it funds.

3. Rebuild Our Reserves Instead of Continually Drawing Them Down

Reserves are an important part of the City's financial protection.

Some help pay for infrastructure.

Some are restricted to particular purposes.

Others provide flexibility when unexpected operating costs arise.

Those different purposes matter.

A municipality can have substantial money in reserves overall and still have very little available to deal with an unexpected operating problem.

Guelph's Financial Safety Net Needs Attention

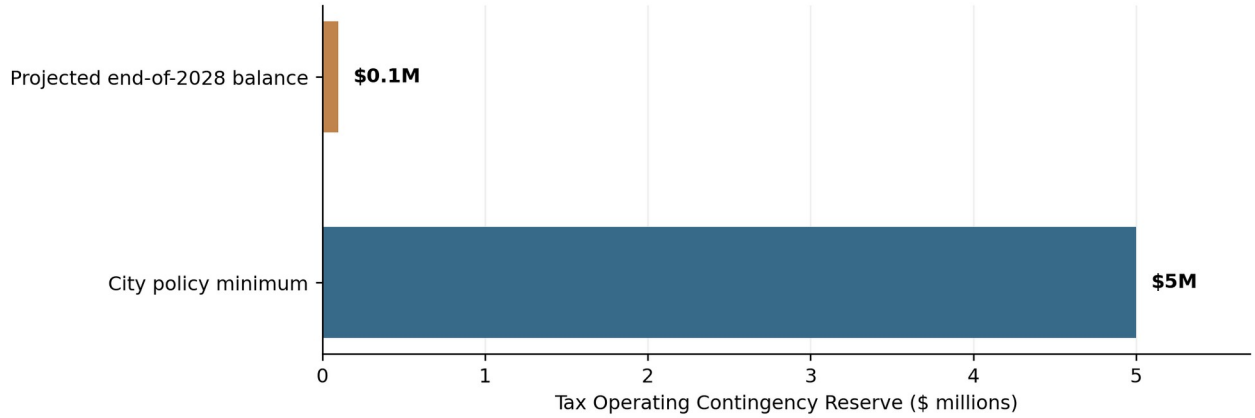
The City's 2026 budget forecasts that its tax-supported corporate contingency reserves will remain at approximately 14% to 19% of their policy target from 2026 through 2029.

The City also projects that its Tax Operating Contingency Reserve could fall to approximately $100,000 by the end of 2028, compared with a policy minimum of $5 million.

These are forecasts, not confirmed future balances. But they demonstrate the need for a clear reserve-rebuilding plan.

Guelph's projected Tax Operating Contingency Reserve

End-of-2028 forecast compared with the City's policy minimum



Source: City of Guelph, 2026 Confirmed Budget, Long-term Financing Tools. The projected balance is subject to future budget decisions, financial results and reserve transfers. This is one specific operating contingency reserve, not the City's total reserve balance.

When the financial safety net becomes too small, the City has less flexibility to manage unexpected costs without cutting services, increasing taxes or drawing money away from other priorities.

That is not a sustainable long-term approach.

Preserve the Reserve-Rebuilding Commitment Already Established in This Platform

My existing platform establishes the goal of working toward rebuilding Guelph's main contingency reserves to at least 50% of their policy target during the next Council term.

That remains my first-term milestone, not the final destination.

I would begin by examining future operating surpluses, unused project funding that is genuinely available for reallocation, one-time revenues and permanent operating efficiencies.

I would also examine whether future budgets can avoid additional discretionary withdrawals from the reserves that provide essential operating protection.

The City should not treat money that is legally restricted, already committed or needed to maintain another service as available simply because it appears in a reserve account.

My First Answer Will Not Be a Special Reserve-Rebuilding Tax Increase

I want to rebuild the City's financial safety net.

But I do not want the first solution to be another dedicated tax increase.

My approach would begin with existing resources, spending discipline and a clear understanding of the City's longer-term financial requirements.

If those measures are insufficient to meet the established reserve targets, Council should be transparent about the remaining gap, the available options and their consequences.

Rebuilding reserves matters. So does ensuring that the method used to rebuild them does not create unnecessary financial pressure on residents.

4. Stop Using One-Time Money to Hide Permanent Costs

One-time funding can be useful.

A grant may help purchase equipment.

A reserve may provide temporary protection from an unexpected operating expense.

A year-end surplus may help address a one-time financial obligation.

But those sources should not be confused with permanent operating revenue.

A Temporary Funding Source Does Not Eliminate a Permanent Expense

Guelph's 2026 budget provides a relevant example.

The City is using $1.4 million from its Tax Operating Contingency Reserve in 2026 to continue phasing in earlier increases in social-service costs, with the full cost scheduled to be funded through the tax levy by 2027.

The reserve transfer reduces the immediate tax impact, but it does not eliminate the underlying annual expense.

I want Council to recognize that distinction whenever it approves temporary funding for an ongoing service.

If a new program requires permanent funding, show where that funding will come from after any temporary grants, reserve transfers or pilot allocations expire.

Plan Before Temporary Funding Runs Out

Before approving a service that depends on temporary funding, I want the City to establish what will happen when that funding ends.

Can the program continue within existing resources?

Is there a sustainable outside funding arrangement?

Can another organization provide the service more efficiently?

Should the program be modified or discontinued if the expected results are not achieved?

And what obligations will the City have if funding ends?

These questions should be answered before permanent staffing, buildings or other long-term commitments are established.

The same principle applies to the proposed two-year modular housing pilot in the housing section of this platform.

A pilot should have a defined budget, measurable outcomes and a plan for what happens after the evaluation period.

One-time money can help solve a problem. It should not be used to disguise a permanent expense.

5. Maintain Existing Infrastructure Before Creating New Obligations

Guelph owns an extensive network of roads, water and wastewater infrastructure, municipal buildings, vehicles, parks and other community assets.

Those assets require maintenance and eventual replacement.

Delaying necessary repairs may make a current budget appear more affordable while increasing the amount future taxpayers must spend.

That is why the existing Core Services First platform places maintenance and the state of good repair ahead of unnecessary new discretionary assets.

A Fully Funded Capital Plan Still Requires Financial Discipline

Guelph's total confirmed 2026 capital budget is approximately $371.2 million. That total includes approximately $366.4 million for City services, $4.43 million for Guelph Police Services and $0.30 million for Guelph Public Library capital spending.

The City's published ten-year capital budget and forecast totals approximately $2.5 billion, with a significant focus on infrastructure renewal and growth-related investments.

These figures refer to capital spending and should not be confused with the City's annual operating budget.

The City describes its capital forecast as fully funded, but the underlying financing plan depends on revenue projections, reserve balances, debt and the timing of major projects.

I want major capital spending decisions examined against those assumptions rather than treating a project as affordable simply because it appears in an approved long-term plan.

Make Maintenance a Financial Priority

When infrastructure is allowed to deteriorate, the cost of maintaining service can increase.

An aging vehicle may require more frequent repairs.

A deteriorating road may require more extensive reconstruction.

A building that needs major maintenance may also become more expensive to operate.

The City's 2026 budget identifies deferred infrastructure renewal as an ongoing source of operating-budget pressure.

That reinforces the importance of maintaining existing assets before committing to additional infrastructure that will also require maintenance.

Plan Once. Dig Once.

The infrastructure sections of this platform already establish the principle of coordinating road, water, wastewater and other necessary repairs wherever practical.

I want that approach applied consistently through the capital budget.

When a road is scheduled for reconstruction, the City should understand the condition of the infrastructure beneath and beside it.

If another necessary repair can be completed efficiently at the same time, examine that option before scheduling a separate project that would require reopening the same area.

However, coordination should not mean replacing an asset that has substantial useful life remaining simply because it is nearby.

The decision should depend on condition, risk and lifetime cost.

Show the Full Cost Before Saying Yes

A new municipal facility does not stop costing money when construction is finished.

It may require staffing, utilities, cleaning, insurance, repairs, debt payments and eventual replacement.

Before approving major new assets, I want Council to understand their full capital and operating costs over their expected lifespan.

That includes identifying the permanent source of funding.

An outside grant that pays for construction may reduce the initial municipal contribution.

It does not automatically pay for the next thirty years of operation.

The purchase price is not the full cost of a project.

6. Use Debt Carefully and Explain the Long-Term Cost

Borrowing can sometimes be an appropriate way to finance long-lived infrastructure.

A major water facility, road project or other essential asset may provide services over several decades.

Financing part of that cost over time can allow the City to complete necessary work without requiring residents to pay the entire amount immediately.

But debt is not free money.

Borrowing creates future repayment obligations and interest costs that must be covered by municipal revenues.

Look Beyond the Legal Debt Limit

The City's 2026 financing strategy projects that its debt burden, measured against operating revenue, will exceed 30% during part of the 2027–2029 period.

The City also reports that its debt remains within its own debt-policy limits, while S&P has identified the projected debt burden as a factor relevant to its credit-rating assessment.

This does not establish that every proposed borrowing decision is unaffordable.

It does mean Council should understand the combined effect of existing and proposed debt.

Before supporting significant new borrowing, I want to know:

What essential service or infrastructure will the borrowing support?

What is the expected useful life of the asset?

What will the total interest and repayment cost be?

How will those payments affect future operating budgets?

What existing debt obligations are already scheduled?

And what would happen if expected growth-related revenue or other funding does not arrive on schedule?

Do Not Borrow Simply to Avoid Difficult Operating Decisions

Debt financing should be connected to an appropriate capital purpose.

It should not become a way to disguise an ongoing operating problem or make permanent spending appear more affordable.

Ontario's Municipal Act establishes requirements for municipal budgets, including accounting for reserve-fund transactions and making provision for previous-year operating deficits.

The City cannot sustainably replace recurring operating revenue with repeated borrowing or temporary funding.

Use debt where it makes financial sense, but do not pass avoidable operating expenses on to future taxpayers.

7. Make Growth Contribute Its Fair Share

A growing population can create additional demand for infrastructure and municipal services.

New homes and businesses can also contribute assessment and other revenues.

Both sides need to be considered.

Growth does not automatically pay for itself, and existing residents should not automatically be expected to cover every infrastructure cost associated with new development.

Protect Growth-Related Revenue

Guelph's 2026 financial planning identifies uncertainty around development-charge collections and the timing of development.

The City's forecast shows that its development-charge reserve funds, considered as a group after debt, could remain in a negative position through much of the forecast period as major growth-related infrastructure projects proceed.

Those are financial forecasts rather than confirmation that every projected shortfall will occur.

They demonstrate why the City should examine the timing of development activity, infrastructure spending, developer contributions and other available funding.

I want growth-related projects evaluated using realistic development assumptions rather than assuming that future construction and revenues will arrive exactly as forecast.

Distinguish Existing Infrastructure Needs From Growth-Related Costs

An aging watermain may require replacement regardless of whether new housing is built.

A larger pipe or additional servicing capacity may be needed specifically to accommodate growth.

Those are different costs.

Council should understand which portion of a project is required to maintain existing service and which portion is attributable to new development.

Where provincial legislation permits, eligible growth-related costs should be recovered through development charges and other appropriate funding mechanisms.

At the same time, charges should be understandable and supported by the actual costs they are intended to recover.

Report Whether Growth Is Producing the Expected Financial Results

The City should compare forecast and actual development activity, assessment growth, development-charge revenue and infrastructure spending.

When development is delayed, Council should understand whether the delay also affects infrastructure requirements and whether the timing of capital spending should be reconsidered.

But necessary repairs to existing infrastructure should not automatically be postponed because growth-related revenue is slower than expected.

Plan growth responsibly without making existing residents bear avoidable costs or neglecting the infrastructure they already depend on.

8. Find Permanent Savings Before Creating Permanent New Spending

A financial efficiency should improve how the City operates without simply moving the same cost somewhere else.

A reduction in one department's budget is not necessarily a saving if it causes higher costs in another department.

The same principle applies to contracting out, purchasing new technology or changing staffing arrangements.

The full effect matters.

Review Existing Services Before Automatically Expanding Them

Before creating a new permanent municipal program or substantially expanding an existing one, I want Council to examine whether the same outcome can be achieved through existing resources.

That could involve improving scheduling, reducing unnecessary duplication, coordinating purchasing, using existing facilities more effectively or working with an organization that already provides a similar service.

Where a service is not achieving its intended results, the first response should be to understand why.

Sometimes the problem is insufficient resources.

Sometimes it is poor coordination, an outdated process or a program that needs to be redesigned.

And sometimes a service may no longer be justified at its existing scale.

Each situation requires evidence rather than an automatic decision to cut or expand spending.

Learn From Barrie's Budget Presentation

Barrie's 2026 operating-budget materials distinguish the base staffing complement and service-level changes. Its budget also publishes separate information on proposed new investments and service recommendations.

Guelph already publishes detailed operating-budget information, including existing service costs, proposed adjustments and longer-term forecasts.

The opportunity is not to introduce financial reporting from scratch.

It is to make existing information easier for residents and Council to use when comparing the costs and consequences of different choices.

I want major proposed additions to the budget presented alongside reasonable alternatives, including maintaining the current service, changing how it is delivered, delaying the proposed investment where appropriate, or proceeding with the full request.

The comparison should show both the financial effect and the expected service outcome.

Make Procurement and Contracting Demonstrate Value

The City purchases goods and services from outside organizations.

Those purchases should be examined for opportunities to improve value through competitive processes, coordinated procurement, appropriate contract lengths and consistent performance requirements.

But a lower contract price does not automatically mean lower overall costs.

The City should understand the costs of administering a contract, monitoring performance, addressing service failures and maintaining accountability.

Where a proposed contract would affect workers, service quality or the City's ability to provide an essential service, those consequences should also be considered.

A saving is only a saving if the City can still deliver the service residents are paying for.

9. Keep Property Taxes and Utility Rates Affordable

Property taxes affect more than homeowners.

Homeowners pay them directly.

Rental property owners also face municipal taxes as part of their operating costs, although the extent to which those costs affect rent depends on market conditions, tenancy rules and the individual property.

Businesses also pay municipal taxes and account for those costs when making financial decisions.

I do not believe Council should treat increasing property taxes as the automatic solution whenever an additional expense is proposed.

Look at the Entire Municipal Cost of Living

Residents pay more than property taxes to the City.

Water, wastewater, stormwater, transit fares, parking, recreation fees and other municipal charges can also affect household budgets.

Guelph's confirmed 2026 budget includes a 10.14% aggregate rate-requirement increase for utility-supported City services. The City estimates that the resulting water, wastewater and stormwater changes will increase the representative residential customer's combined bill by approximately $9.63 per month.

Those utility increases are separate from the 7.87% property-tax levy increase.

I want Council to consider the combined financial effect of municipal decisions on residents instead of examining each new charge in isolation.

Explain the Difference Between Property Assessment and Market Value

Ontario's 2026 property-tax assessments continue to use a January 1, 2016 valuation date, subject to adjustments for changes to individual properties and other assessment matters.

A property's assessed value is therefore not necessarily its current market value.

Residents should be able to understand how the assessed value of their property, the applicable tax rate and other municipal charges affect their actual bill.

When the City discusses the financial impact of a budget, I want it to provide understandable examples using representative properties while making clear that individual bills vary.

Avoid Simply Moving Costs From Taxes to Fees

Increasing a user fee may reduce the amount of a service paid through general taxation.

But that does not automatically reduce the total amount residents pay.

It changes who pays and how the cost is collected.

Before increasing a fee, Council should understand whether the service is intended to be funded primarily by its users, whether there are broader public benefits, and what the increase would mean for residents who depend on it.

A fee increase should not be presented as a municipal saving if it merely transfers an unchanged expense from one group of residents to another.

10. Protect Essential Services While Examining User Fees

Some municipal services are funded primarily through property taxes.

Others are supported partly or substantially through user fees.

Guelph's 2026 budget documentation states that the City's revenue policy generally seeks to adjust user fees as costs increase, taking account of the intended level of cost recovery and who benefits from the service.

That provides a starting point for examining individual fees.

Keep Targeted Assistance Where It Is Needed

The recreation and transit sections of this platform already establish support for targeted assistance that helps residents who would otherwise struggle to access necessary or beneficial services.

That commitment remains unchanged.

Before making major fee increases, I want Council to understand the amount of the increase, the full cost of delivering the service, the availability of assistance and the potential effect on participation.

Some services may justify a substantial user contribution.

Others may provide broader community benefits that warrant support through general taxation.

The decision should be based on the actual service rather than applying the same cost-recovery requirement to everything.

Make Fees More Transparent

Residents should be able to understand what a municipal fee pays for and how it is determined.

When a major fee increase is proposed, the City should explain whether it reflects higher operating costs, a change in service, a change in the intended user contribution or another financial decision.

Where comparable services are offered by other Ontario municipalities, those comparisons may help inform the discussion.

But differences in service levels, facilities, operating arrangements and user eligibility must be considered.

Keep services accessible where they need to be, recover appropriate costs fairly, and explain the financial consequences of major fee decisions.

11. Make Multi-Year Budgeting More Accountable

Guelph already uses multi-year budgeting.

That provides an opportunity to plan ahead, consider future financial pressures and avoid making every decision in isolation.

But a multi-year budget should not mean that spending commitments become immune from review.

The City's confirmed 2026 budget forecasts a further 7.48% tax-levy increase for 2027. That is a forecast, not a final approved 2027 tax increase.

The distinction is important.

Residents should understand what has already been approved, what is forecast and what can still change through the budget process.

Require Clear Explanations When Forecasts Change

I want the City to explain significant differences between earlier budget forecasts and the amounts ultimately proposed or approved.

Did construction costs increase?

Did projected development revenue fail to materialize?

Did another level of government change its funding?

Did the City approve a new service or discover that an existing asset requires additional work?

Or did an earlier estimate fail to reflect the full cost?

The explanation should identify the cause, the financial impact and the choices available to Council.

Do Not Automatically Carry Forward Every Previous Commitment

Multi-year planning should help establish priorities.

But changing circumstances may require those priorities to be reconsidered.

Before committing to a major future-year expenditure, Council should understand whether it remains necessary, whether the expected cost has changed and whether other needs have become more urgent.

That does not mean abandoning necessary infrastructure work every time the budget becomes difficult.

It means making decisions using current information rather than assuming that every previously proposed project must proceed exactly as originally planned.

Make Major Financial Choices Understandable

For significant budget proposals, residents should be able to see the available options and their consequences.

For example, maintaining an existing service, increasing its funding or changing how it is delivered may produce different costs and different results.

When a service reduction is proposed, the City should explain what residents would lose.

When additional spending is proposed, the City should explain what they would receive.

When a project is deferred, the City should identify the expected financial savings, future costs and risks.

An informed budget decision requires understanding both the money and the service.

12. Make Financial Performance Part of the Core Services Scorecard

The existing Core Services Scorecard is intended to show residents what their municipal services cost and whether those services are improving.

The same approach should apply to the City's overall financial performance.

I want annual reporting that allows residents to understand whether Guelph is controlling costs, maintaining its infrastructure and rebuilding its financial safety net.

Financial Scorecard Measures

Taxes, Budgeting and Affordability

Measures to report

Area	What should be reported
Property taxes	Annual tax-levy changes, representative residential tax bills and the breakdown between City services, local boards, shared services and dedicated levies.
Operating costs	Changes in existing service costs, inflationary pressures, population growth, new spending commitments and the net cost per resident where meaningful.
Municipal affordability	Changes in major utility rates and user fees, including their combined effect on representative households.
Reserves	Balances relative to policy targets, planned and actual withdrawals, contributions, and progress toward the established first-term reserve-rebuilding milestone.

Area	What should be reported
Infrastructure	Asset condition, renewal spending, deferred maintenance, funding gaps and changes in the backlog of necessary work.
Debt	Outstanding debt, scheduled repayment and interest costs, debt relative to municipal revenues and available borrowing capacity.
Growth funding	Actual versus forecast development activity, assessment growth, development-charge collections, growth-related spending and related reserve positions.
Operating efficiencies	Verified recurring savings, one-time savings, implementation costs, and the effect of changes on service delivery.
Capital projects	Approved and actual costs, schedule changes, future operating obligations and performance against the originally approved business case.
Budget accuracy	Significant differences between forecasts, approved budgets and actual financial results, with explanations of the underlying causes.

The scorecard should distinguish between spending that is genuinely reduced and costs that are merely deferred or transferred elsewhere.

It should also distinguish one-time financial improvements from permanent operating savings.

A favourable year-end result may provide an opportunity to strengthen reserves, but it does not automatically establish that the City has permanently reduced the cost of delivering a service.

The purpose is to make financial performance understandable without oversimplifying the decisions involved.

My Approach

Guelph needs municipal services that residents can rely on and a financial plan that recognizes what households can reasonably afford.

Those goals should be considered together.

My approach will be:

Protect core services and deliver them well.

Work toward keeping the growth of existing municipal operating costs more closely aligned with inflation wherever practical.

Require clear explanations when spending grows faster than necessary to maintain an existing service.

Examine existing spending, service delivery and permanent efficiencies before approving additional permanent costs.

Make the full cost of major projects and programs visible before committing taxpayers to them.

Maintain the infrastructure residents already own rather than continually deferring necessary repairs.

Rebuild the City's contingency reserves according to risk, working toward the existing first-term goal of reaching at least 50% of their policy target.

Look first to existing resources, responsible efficiencies and available one-time funding before proposing a dedicated reserve-rebuilding tax increase.

Avoid using temporary funding to disguise permanent operating expenses.

Use borrowing carefully and understand its effects on future budgets.

Make growth contribute its fair share toward eligible infrastructure costs while protecting existing services.

Consider the combined impact of property taxes, utility rates and municipal fees on lower- and middle-income households.

Require clear financial reporting from City services and work with local boards and shared-service organizations to understand their costs and results.

And publicly report whether Guelph is controlling spending, rebuilding its financial protection and delivering the services residents are paying for.

Fiscal responsibility does not mean cutting everything. And protecting municipal services does not mean approving every spending request.

The goal should be to understand what residents need, what it costs to deliver it, whether there is a better way to provide it, and how the City will pay for it over the long term.

Protect what is working. Fix what isn't. Maintain what we own. Rebuild our financial safety net. And make every tax dollar count.

Taxes, Budgeting and Affordability — Source Notes

1. City of Guelph, 2026 Confirmed Budget (7.87% tax-levy increase, 2027 forecast, $401.62 median-property illustration and 10.14% utility-rate change): https://guelph.ca/city-government/budget-and-finance/city-budget/2026-budget/

2. City of Guelph, 2026 Confirmed Budget: Operating Budget (City services, user fees, budget categories, $1.4M social-service phase-in and $9.63 monthly representative utility increase): https://guelph.ca/city-government/budget-and-finance/city-budget/2026-budget/2026-budget-update-operating-budget/

3. City of Guelph, 2026 Confirmed Budget: Capital Budget and Budget Summary (2026 total confirmed capital budget of about $371.2M, including about $366.4M for City services plus Police and Library capital; ten-year capital forecast of about $2.5B and long-term operating effects): https://guelph.ca/city-government/budget-and-finance/city-budget/2026-budget/2026-budget-update-capital-budget/

4. City of Guelph, 2026 Confirmed Budget: Long-Term Financing Tools (contingency reserves, 2028 outlook, reserve policy minimum, projected debt burden and development-charge reserve forecasts): https://guelph.ca/city-government/budget-and-finance/city-budget/2026-budget/2026-budget-update-long-term-financing-tools/

5. City of Guelph, 2026 Confirmed Budget: Long-Term Financial Strategies (reserve funding, borrowing and asset-renewal approach): https://guelph.ca/city-government/budget-and-finance/city-budget/2026-budget/2026-budget-update-long-term-financial-strategies/

6. City of Guelph, 2026 Confirmed Budget: Local Boards and Shared Services (governance arrangements and levy contribution): https://guelph.ca/city-government/budget-and-finance/city-budget/2026-budget/2026-budget-update-local-boards-and-shared-services/

7. Municipal Act, 2001, Ontario, section 290 (municipal budgets, borrowing and previous-year deficits): https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/01m25

8. Municipal Property Assessment Corporation, Ontario property assessment information (January 1, 2016 valuation date for 2026): https://www.mpac.ca/en/UnderstandingYourAssessment/PropertyAssessmentandPropertyTaxes

9. City of Barrie, 2026 Budget (base services, staffing and new investment presentation): https://www.barrie.ca/government/budget

Governance, Transparency and Accountability

Listen to Residents. Explain Decisions. Show the Results.

Trust in municipal government depends on more than what elected officials say.

Residents need to understand what City Hall is doing, why decisions are being made, what those decisions will cost and whether the expected results are being delivered.

They also need opportunities to raise concerns, ask questions and participate in decisions that affect their neighbourhoods.

Guelph already publishes substantial information about Council meetings, budgets, infrastructure, planning and municipal services.

But making information publicly available and making it understandable are not necessarily the same thing.

My approach is simple:

Listen to residents and remain accessible.

Explain important decisions in plain language.

Make public spending and service performance easier to understand.

Respect the responsibilities of Council, municipal staff and independent boards.

And measure whether the decisions made at City Hall are producing the results residents were promised.

1. Keep Council Accessible to the People It Represents

A councillor's responsibility does not end when a Council meeting is over.

Residents may need assistance understanding a municipal decision, resolving a service problem or bringing an issue to the attention of the appropriate City department.

I want residents to be able to contact their councillor directly and receive a meaningful response.

That does not mean a councillor can personally resolve every complaint or guarantee a particular outcome.

It means taking the concern seriously, explaining what can be done and helping residents understand the process.

Direct Communication Matters

I do not believe communication with residents should depend entirely on social media.

Social media can be useful for distributing information, but it should not replace direct conversations, telephone calls, email, community meetings or other ways residents can make their concerns known.

I want my time as a councillor focused on understanding residents' concerns and doing the work of representing them, rather than simply producing online content.

Residents should be able to contact me when something in their neighbourhood needs attention.

And where an issue cannot be resolved immediately, I want to explain what is happening, who is responsible and what the next steps are.

Represent the Entire Ward

The residents who attend Council meetings or participate in public consultations are not necessarily representative of everyone affected by a decision.

Some people cannot attend evening meetings because they work shifts.

Others have childcare responsibilities, disabilities, language barriers or limited access to transportation and technology.

Some residents may simply be unfamiliar with how municipal government works.

I want community engagement to consider those barriers rather than assuming that the people who participate most frequently represent every perspective.

A councillor needs to hear from residents who agree with a proposal, residents who oppose it and residents who may be affected but have not yet participated.

The purpose of listening is to understand the people a decision affects, not simply to count the number of messages received on either side.

2. Make Important Council Decisions Easier to Understand

Guelph already publishes Council agendas, minutes and meeting recordings.

Residents can attend open meetings, submit written comments and register to speak about matters on the agenda. The City also provides options for participating in person, electronically or by telephone.

Those existing opportunities matter.

But a resident should not have to read a lengthy staff report or watch several hours of Council proceedings simply to understand how a decision may affect their neighbourhood or property taxes.

Explain the Decision, the Cost and the Alternatives

For significant proposals, I want the public-facing explanation to answer:

What problem is Council trying to solve?

What is being proposed?

What alternatives were considered?

What will the proposal cost, both immediately and over the long term?

Who will pay?

What will change for residents?

And how will Council know whether the decision achieved its intended purpose?

Where there is an unavoidable trade-off, that should be explained.

A proposal may improve one service while reducing funding available for another.

A development may provide additional housing while creating new infrastructure requirements.

A capital project may be necessary even if residents would prefer a lower tax increase.

Residents should be able to understand those choices before a decision is made.

Explain What Happened After the Vote

Once Council makes a significant decision, residents should be able to find a plain-language explanation of what was approved, what it will cost and when the next steps are expected.

Where relevant, that explanation should also identify what changed from the original proposal.

A resident should not have to search through multiple meeting agendas to determine whether a project was approved, deferred, amended or cancelled.

Guelph already maintains meeting records and publishes project and financial reporting. The opportunity is to make those existing sources easier to connect and understand.

3. Make Public Engagement Meaningful

Public consultation should provide residents with a genuine opportunity to contribute information and identify concerns before a decision is made.

That does not mean Council will always agree with every submission.

Different residents may have competing needs, and some decisions must also comply with provincial legislation, existing municipal obligations or other requirements.

But the public should be able to understand how its input was considered.

Build on Guelph's Existing Engagement Framework

Guelph already has a Community Engagement Framework, updated following a review completed in 2022, and the Have Your Say platform, which allows residents to participate in consultations and follow engagement activities.

I want the City to build on those existing tools.

For major consultations, residents should be able to understand:

What is still open for discussion?

What decisions have already been made?

What alternatives are being considered?

When will the public have an opportunity to participate?

And how will the City report the results?

Consultation should not create the impression that every aspect of a project is open to change when legal, financial or technical decisions have already limited the available options.

Show Residents What Happened to Their Input

For significant consultations, I want the City to provide a clear summary of the concerns and suggestions received, how they were considered and what changed as a result.

Where a proposal proceeds despite substantial concerns, Council should explain the reasons.

Where public input identifies a problem and the proposal is modified, residents should be able to see that connection.

The number of participants is useful information, but it is not the only measure of successful engagement.

Residents should be able to see what they were asked, what they said and what Council did with that information.

Use Different Ways to Reach Residents

Online surveys and public meetings have value, but they should not be the only ways to participate.

Depending on the decision, engagement may also involve neighbourhood meetings, written submissions, telephone participation, accessible materials and discussions with affected community organizations.

Cambridge's 2026 budget process provides an example of combining in-person community events with online engagement tools and a budget survey.

Guelph already offers several participation methods. The question is whether they are reaching the people affected by the decisions being made.

Before creating another engagement program, examine whether existing staff, community partnerships and communication channels can address any identified gaps.

4. Be Clear About the Role of Council and the Mayor

Residents need to understand which decisions their elected representatives can make and which responsibilities belong to other municipal officials or organizations.

That distinction has become particularly important under Ontario's strong mayor framework.

Strong Mayor Powers Change How Some Decisions Are Made

Guelph's mayor has additional powers under Part VI.1 of the Municipal Act, including the authority to propose the municipal budget, exercise certain appointment and organizational powers, and veto certain bylaws connected to provincial priorities.

Council retains powers to amend the proposed budget and, where the required voting threshold is met, override specified mayoral vetoes.

For a qualifying bylaw veto or a mayoral veto of Council's budget amendments, an override requires two-thirds of all Council members, not merely two-thirds of those attending the meeting. The ordinary decision-making rules continue to apply to other Council business, subject to the governing legislation.

These powers should be explained clearly when they are relevant to a decision.

Accountability Must Reflect Who Actually Made the Decision

Guelph publishes written mayoral decisions and directions involving the additional statutory powers.

I want residents to be able to understand the respective roles of the mayor, councillors and municipal staff when significant decisions are made.

A councillor should explain how they voted, what alternatives they considered and what opportunities remain to change or review a decision.

Where a decision is made through a special statutory power, the applicable process should be identified rather than presenting it as an ordinary Council vote.

Council Must Respect Staff Responsibilities

Council establishes municipal policy and exercises its responsibilities under provincial legislation.

Municipal staff provide professional advice and administer services under the City's governance structure.

A councillor should be able to question a recommendation, request clarification and examine alternative approaches.

But that does not mean interfering with individual employee decisions, directing staff outside established procedures or promising a resident an outcome that the councillor has no legal authority to deliver.

I want to be clear with residents about what I can do directly, what requires a Council decision and what belongs to the appropriate municipal official or independent body.

Accountability includes being clear about the limits of one's authority.

5. Protect the Integrity of Municipal Decision-Making

Transparency is particularly important when a municipal decision could provide a financial benefit to an individual, business or organization.

Residents should be able to understand the rules governing conflicts of interest, lobbying, gifts and the use of public resources.

Build on the Accountability Rules Guelph Already Has

Guelph already has an Integrity Commissioner, a Code of Conduct for Council and local boards, a public conflict-of-interest registry, gift-disclosure requirements and a lobbyist registry.

The City also maintains processes for investigating complaints about closed meetings and alleged breaches of applicable accountability requirements.

The platform does not need to promise to create systems that already exist.

The question is whether those systems are accessible, understood and operating as intended.

Disclose Interests and Follow the Rules

I would comply with the applicable requirements governing conflicts of interest, gifts, lobbying and councillor conduct.

Where a matter requires a formal declaration or recusal, the applicable process should be followed.

Residents should also be able to find information about the City's disclosure and complaint procedures without needing to understand the entire legal framework first.

The fact that someone meets with a councillor or advocates for a particular policy does not, by itself, establish improper conduct.

The City's own lobbying guidance distinguishes registrable lobbying from ordinary resident communications on neighbourhood and policy matters, public delegations and participation in City-led consultations.

Accountability should protect the integrity of municipal decisions while preserving residents' ability to communicate with their elected representatives.

Make Council Expenses Understandable

Guelph already publishes annual Council remuneration and expense reports. Its expense policy requires receipts for eligible reimbursements associated with activities such as conferences and municipal meetings.

I support making these existing records easy for residents to locate and understand.

Council expenses should be connected to legitimate municipal responsibilities and reported under the applicable rules.

Public accountability should apply to elected officials as well as the programs and services they oversee.

6. Follow Through on Audits and Major Project Commitments

Municipal government already produces large amounts of information.

An audit may identify a problem.

A staff report may recommend improvements.

Council may approve a major project with a defined budget and completion date.

But residents also need to know what happened afterward.

Make Existing Audits Produce Results

Guelph has an Internal Audit function that publishes its work plans, audit reports and periodic updates on outstanding recommendations.

Its 2026 work includes reviews of building permits, fleet maintenance and other operational areas.

I want Council to examine not only the findings of significant audits but also the progress made in addressing them.

For major recommendations, reporting should identify what corrective action was proposed, who is responsible, when it was expected to be completed and whether it has been implemented.

Where a recommendation remains outstanding, Council should understand the reason and the consequences.

This should build on the City's existing audit follow-up process rather than creating another independent reporting system to do the same work.

Major Projects Need Clear Financial Reporting

A project can be approved for a particular amount and subsequently experience changes in cost, schedule or scope.

Some changes may be unavoidable.

Others may result from incomplete planning, changes in requirements or decisions that could have been made differently.

For major projects, I want Council and residents to be able to compare the original approved business case with the project's current position.

That means reporting:

• Original and current approved budgets.

• Actual expenditure and remaining forecast costs.

• Original and revised completion dates.

• Significant changes in project scope.

• Reasons for material cost or schedule changes.

• Expected annual operating and maintenance costs.

• The service or public benefit the completed project is expected to deliver.

Where a project is materially different from what Council originally approved, the change should be explained before further major commitments are made, subject to applicable contractual and operational requirements.

Do Not Lose Track of Decisions After Approval

Guelph already publishes financial monitoring reports, strategic-plan progress information and other departmental performance reports.

The opportunity is to make it easier to connect the original Council decision with subsequent spending, implementation and results.

Residents should not need to search through several unrelated reports to determine whether a major project remains on schedule or whether its expected benefits were delivered.

7. Make Public Information Accessible and Useful

Public information has limited value if residents cannot find it, understand it or use it.

Guelph already has an open-government program and a public data hub. It publishes information on municipal finances, performance, infrastructure and community services.

I want to build on those existing resources rather than automatically creating a separate information platform.

Make the Core Services Scorecard Easy to Find

The Core Services Scorecard developed throughout this platform would bring together key measures from existing municipal reports.

For each major service, residents should be able to see:

What level of service was promised?

What was delivered?

What did it cost?

Did performance improve or deteriorate?

And how does Guelph compare with similar municipalities where a fair comparison is available?

The scorecard should link to the underlying source material and explain any important limitations in the data.

For example, a change in police-reported crime may reflect several factors, including changes in reporting or enforcement activity.

Likewise, an increase in spending may reflect a service expansion, inflation or the cost of maintaining an aging asset.

The purpose is not to produce a simple ranking that obscures those differences.

It is to make the underlying information understandable.

Avoid Building Another Expensive Reporting System

The City already produces strategic-plan updates, financial reports, asset-management information and service-specific performance data.

Before creating a new dashboard or purchasing additional reporting software, Council should examine whether the existing systems can provide the required information.

Where new technology is proposed, its full cost should be compared with the expected benefits.

That includes software licensing, staffing, maintenance, data management and accessibility requirements.

A reporting tool should make existing information more useful.

It should not become another permanent expense without a demonstrated need.

Protect Privacy and Confidential Information

Transparency does not mean publishing every piece of information held by the City.

Personal information, legally privileged material, security-sensitive records and other protected information must be handled according to applicable law.

Guelph's public-engagement materials already identify privacy considerations associated with collecting and publishing residents' comments.

Public reporting should provide meaningful information without unnecessarily exposing residents' private circumstances or compromising legitimate confidentiality requirements.

8. Governance and Accountability Measures for the Core Services Scorecard

The existing Core Services Scorecard can also track whether municipal government is following through on its own administrative and accountability commitments.

I would propose the following measures as an additional subsection, using information the City already collects wherever possible.

Governance, Transparency and Accountability

Measures to report

Area	What should be reported
Council decisions	Major decisions, voting records, approved costs, implementation status and material changes from the original proposal.

Area	What should be reported
Public engagement	Consultations completed, participation methods, major concerns raised, how input was considered and changes made following consultation.
Resident communication	Available communication channels, accessibility of public information and performance against established municipal response standards where applicable.
Major capital projects	Original and current approved budgets, expenditures, completion dates, scope changes, reasons for material variances and expected operating obligations.
Audit follow-through	Outstanding recommendations, implementation progress, overdue actions and the results of completed corrective measures.
Public accountability	Accessibility of existing conflict-of-interest, lobbying, gift-disclosure, Council expense and other legally required public records.
Service commitments	Progress against major Council-approved service standards and whether promised improvements have been delivered.
Reporting costs	Costs of significant new reporting systems, use of existing information and measurable improvements in public access to municipal data.

The scorecard should build on existing public records, financial reporting, audit follow-up and engagement processes.

It should distinguish between actions directly controlled by Council, responsibilities assigned to municipal staff and decisions made by independent boards or other levels of government.

The purpose is to improve access to useful information and make follow-through easier to assess, rather than creating additional reporting simply for its own sake.

My Approach

This governance section establishes the following commitments:

Maintain direct communication with residents and provide meaningful responses to their concerns.

Make major Council decisions, financial consequences and available alternatives easier to understand.

Use Guelph's existing engagement processes while examining whether residents who face barriers to participation are being reached.

Explain how public input was considered and what changed as a result.

Respect the legal responsibilities of Council, the mayor, municipal staff and independent boards.

Follow applicable conduct, conflict-of-interest, lobbying and disclosure requirements.

Connect audit findings and major Council decisions to measurable follow-through.

Make existing municipal performance information easier for residents to find and understand.

Protect personal information while making appropriate public records accessible.

And build on the established Core Services Scorecard so residents can see what was promised, what was delivered and what it cost.

The purpose of this section is to connect municipal decisions with clear explanations, accessible records and measurable results.

Governance, Transparency and Accountability — Source Notes

1. City of Guelph, Council Meetings (agendas, minutes, meeting schedule and public access): https://guelph.ca/city-government/mayor-and-council/city-council/agendas-and-minutes/

2. City of Guelph, Speak or Send Comments to Council or Committee (delegations, written comments, participation, recordings and privacy): https://guelph.ca/city-government/mayor-and-council/city-council/agendas-and-minutes/delegations-and-comments/

3. City of Guelph, Community Engagement Framework (2022 review and standards for meaningful community engagement): https://guelph.ca/plans-and-strategies/community-engagement-framework/

4. City of Guelph, Open Government (Have Your Say and Guelph Data Hub): https://guelph.ca/city-government/open-government/

5. City of Cambridge, 2026 Approved Budget and budget public engagement (community-event outreach and online survey): https://www.cambridge.ca/en/your-city/resources/2026ApprovedBudget_FINAL_WEB.pdf

6. City of Guelph, Mayoral Powers, Decisions and Directions Under the Municipal Act (strong mayor powers and published decisions): https://guelph.ca/city-government/mayor-and-council/city-council/mayoral-decisions/

7. Province of Ontario, Ontario Municipal Councillor’s Guide — Strong Mayor Powers and Duties (budget process and two-thirds override thresholds): https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-municipal-councillors-guide/10-strong-mayor-powers-and-duties

8. Province of Ontario, Municipal Act, 2001, Part VI.1 (strong mayor statutory framework): https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/01m25

9. City of Guelph, Accountability and Transparency (Integrity Commissioner, Code of Conduct, conflict-of-interest registry, gifts and closed-meeting accountability): https://guelph.ca/city-government/mayor-and-council/city-council/accountability/

10. City of Guelph, Lobbying (lobbyist registry rules and activities that are not considered lobbying): https://guelph.ca/lobbying/

11. City of Guelph, Council Remuneration (annual remuneration and expense reporting and receipt requirements): https://guelph.ca/city-government/mayor-and-council/city-council/council-remuneration/

12. City of Guelph, Internal Audit (2026 work plan, audit reports and follow-up on recommendations): https://guelph.ca/city-government/internal-audit/

13. City of Guelph, Corporate Performance Reporting and Financial Reports (strategic progress, departmental reports, audit reports and budget monitoring): https://guelph.ca/city-government/city-administrators-office/corporate-performance-reporting/ and https://guelph.ca/city-government/budget-and-finance/financial-reports/

Libraries, Culture and Community Assets

Protect What Makes Guelph Guelph. Keep It Accessible. Spend Responsibly.

Libraries, museums, cultural facilities, heritage buildings, public art and community events contribute to the quality of life in Guelph.

They provide places to learn, gather, create and participate in the community.

They also represent real financial commitments.

Buildings need maintenance. Collections and technology need to be renewed. Programs require staff and operating funding. New facilities create costs that continue long after construction is finished.

My approach is to protect the community assets residents use and value while applying the same financial discipline to them that I expect from every other municipal service.

Maintain what we already own.

Keep important community services accessible.

Measure participation and results.

Use existing facilities efficiently.

Support Guelph's cultural community without assuming every good idea requires a new City-funded program or building.

And understand the full cost before creating new permanent obligations.

1. Protect a Strong Public Library System

A modern public library is more than a place to borrow books.

Libraries provide physical and digital collections, internet and computer access, children's programming, meeting and study space, technology, educational resources and services for residents who may not have access to those resources at home.

Guelph residents make substantial use of those services.

In 2025, the Guelph Public Library reported 806,302 in-person visits, approximately 1.85 million online visits, 29,914 unique borrowers and more than 2.12 million checkouts. It also recorded more than 61,000 Wi-Fi users and almost 53,000 computer sessions.

Those numbers demonstrate that the library system remains an important municipal service.

Protect the Neighbourhood Library Network

The new Central Library should complement Guelph's branch system rather than make neighbourhood access less important.

GPL's 2025 reporting shows use spread throughout the system. The existing Main Library accounted for about 28% of branch visits, while Scottsdale accounted for approximately 23%, West End 16%, Westminster 13%, Bullfrog 11% and East Side 9%.

That distribution matters.

Residents should continue to have reasonable access to library services without necessarily travelling downtown for routine use.

I would evaluate the branch network based on actual use, population growth, accessibility, operating costs and geographic service needs before supporting significant changes.

The Bookmobile and digital services should also be considered part of that access strategy rather than treated separately from the physical branches.

The new Central Library should strengthen the overall system, not become the only measure of whether library services are succeeding.

2. Make the New Central Library Deliver the Value Residents Were Promised

The new Central Library is already a major municipal commitment.

The City reports an approved Central Library budget of approximately $62.07 million, funded approximately 21% through grants, 26% through development charges and 53% through tax-supported funding. It will be an approximately 88,000-square-foot, three-storey facility.

At this stage, the question is not whether Guelph should start the project.

The project is already under construction.

The responsibility of the next Council will be to make sure residents receive the value they were promised from that investment.

Track the Final Cost and Schedule

The City should continue publicly reporting:

• The approved project budget.

• Actual expenditures.

• Remaining forecast costs.

• Significant scope changes.

• Opening schedule.

• Funding sources.

• Any additional operating costs created by the new facility.

This should connect directly with the major-project reporting proposed elsewhere in this platform.

Watch the Operating Cost After Opening

The building cost is only part of the financial commitment.

GPL's approved 2026 operating budget is approximately $14.33 million, a 16% increase over 2025 as the system prepares for the new facility. The Library Board reduced its original 2026 request by approximately $594,800 by adjusting the timing of staffing expansions, but the Library has stated that some of those increases will carry forward into the 2027 budget.

That means the full ongoing operating impact of the new Central Library will not necessarily be visible in the 2026 budget.

Once the facility opens, I want Council to track its actual staffing, utilities, maintenance, security, programming and technology costs against the assumptions used when the project was approved.

The Library Board has statutory responsibilities for library operations, and Council's authority should be exercised consistently with the Public Libraries Act.

But taxpayers still deserve understandable reporting on the municipal funding provided and the services it supports.

Building the library is not the finish line. Making it work financially and delivering the expected service is.

3. Use the Existing Main Library Site Responsibly

The relocation of the Main Library creates another important public asset decision.

On September 25, 2026, the City announced that it is purchasing the existing library property at 100 Norfolk Street, using $3.69 million received through Ontario's Building Faster Fund.

The stated goal is to explore future housing on the property, including below-market affordable housing. The City expects to examine delivery options over the coming year.

The current Main Library is moving to the new Central Library at 1 Baker Street in 2027.

I support examining how publicly owned land can help address Guelph's housing needs.

But the same standards established in the housing section of this platform should apply.

Before choosing a development model, Council should understand:

• The value of the land.

• The number and type of homes that could reasonably be built.

• Infrastructure and servicing requirements.

• The cost of providing below-market housing.

• Potential partnerships with other governments or housing providers.

• Long-term affordability requirements.

• Financial risks to the City.

• Alternative uses or development approaches.

Public ownership creates an opportunity.

It does not eliminate the need for a sound business case.

The final decision should connect directly with the Housing, Affordability and Growth principles already established in this platform.

4. Maintain Cultural Facilities Before Building New Ones

Guelph already owns and operates significant cultural and community assets.

These include Guelph Museums, McCrae House, River Run Centre, Market Square and other facilities and public spaces supporting cultural activity.

Culture Plan 2030 also identifies demand for additional studio, rehearsal, exhibition and performance space.

Those needs should be considered.

But the first responsibility should be maintaining the facilities taxpayers already own.

State of Good Repair Comes First

Guelph's current capital plan includes continued renewal and upgrades to existing cultural facilities, including Guelph Museums and River Run Centre.

That approach is consistent with the broader infrastructure principles in this platform.

Before creating a new municipally owned cultural facility, I want Council to examine whether existing space can be used more effectively.

That includes partnerships, scheduling changes, shared spaces and adaptive use of existing municipal buildings where practical.

The planned arts programming and access for artists at the West End Community Centre's Pottery and Arts Centre provides an example of using an existing community facility to increase cultural space.

If additional facilities are eventually justified, the business case should include construction, staffing, utilities, maintenance, lifecycle renewal and expected use.

The City should not build a new cultural asset without understanding how it will maintain the cultural assets it already owns.

5. Implement Culture Plan 2030 Based on Results and Financial Capacity

Council approved Culture Plan 2030 in 2023.

It identifies goals related to arts, heritage, cultural participation, creative industries, public art, cultural space and support for Guelph's cultural sector.

But the City's financial circumstances have changed.

The 2026 capital plan now anticipates that work originally envisioned over seven years will instead take approximately 15 years, subject to future budget decisions.

Several proposed initiatives have been deferred for at least ten years, including additional cultural-sector spending, new cultural spaces, expanded public art, additional technical equipment and comprehensive support for the film industry.

I do not believe the responsible response is either to abandon the Culture Plan or automatically restore every deferred expenditure.

Prioritize the Plan

Each major Culture Plan initiative should be considered based on:

• Community participation and demonstrated demand.

• Existing service availability.

• Capital and ongoing operating costs.

• Opportunities to use existing facilities.

• Partnerships and outside funding.

• Accessibility.

• Economic or community benefits where those benefits can reasonably be measured.

• Other municipal priorities competing for the same funding.

Some initiatives may be relatively inexpensive and produce substantial community benefit.

Others may require major permanent spending.

They should not automatically receive the same priority.

A strategic plan should guide decisions. It should not become a blank cheque.

6. Support Arts and Culture Without Assuming the City Must Deliver Everything

Guelph's cultural community includes independent artists, non-profit organizations, festivals, community groups, businesses and institutions.

The City's role does not need to be the direct provider of every cultural activity.

Sometimes the most effective role may be providing space, coordinating organizations, removing unnecessary barriers, promoting events or providing targeted funding.

Use Partnerships Before Duplicating Existing Organizations

Before establishing a new City program, I want to know whether an organization in the community already provides something similar.

Where appropriate, the City can work with existing organizations rather than creating competing administrative structures.

That approach can preserve community independence while making better use of municipal resources.

Keep Grants Transparent and Measurable

Municipal grants can help community organizations provide services and activities that residents value.

But public funding should have a clear purpose.

Grant programs should publish eligibility requirements, assessment criteria, funding decisions and expected outcomes.

Smaller community organizations should have a reasonable opportunity to participate without creating an application process so complicated that only large organizations can navigate it.

At the same time, receiving municipal funding in one year should not automatically guarantee permanent funding in the future.

The City should periodically evaluate whether grant programs are reaching their intended communities and producing the outcomes they were created to support.

7. Keep Culture Accessible

Culture should not become something residents can participate in only if they can afford expensive tickets or program fees.

Libraries already provide one of the City's largest sources of free public access to educational and cultural resources.

Museums, community events, public spaces and cultural programming can provide additional opportunities.

Guelph Museums and Culture reported 27,976 visits in 2024, a 6% increase from the previous year, along with 91 public programs. More recent community data indicate Guelph Museums continued to receive roughly 21,000–24,000 annual visitors during 2023–2025.

Participation should be one of the measures used when evaluating cultural services.

Examine Barriers Before Simply Increasing Subsidies

Cost can be a barrier.

So can transportation, accessibility, scheduling, lack of awareness and whether programming reflects the interests of residents.

Before assuming that additional subsidy is the solution, I want the City to understand what is actually preventing participation.

Where financial assistance is justified, it should be targeted toward residents who would otherwise face difficulty participating.

Council has already directed staff to report through the 2027 budget process on the financial implications of potentially extending an existing youth facility subsidy to eligible rentals at facilities including River Run Centre and Guelph Museums. That analysis should help inform future decisions rather than predetermining the outcome.

8. Protect Guelph's Heritage While Allowing the City to Evolve

Guelph's historic buildings, landscapes, bridges and other heritage resources contribute to the character of the city.

The Municipal Register of Cultural Heritage Properties identifies designated and non-designated properties of cultural heritage value or interest, while formal designation under the Ontario Heritage Act provides additional protection to significant properties.

Heritage conservation and growth do not always have to be competing goals.

Older buildings can sometimes be adapted for new uses while preserving important heritage features.

In other cases, conservation requirements can create significant costs or constrain redevelopment.

Those decisions should be based on the actual heritage value of the property rather than treating every old building identically.

Be Clear About What Is Being Protected and Why

When the City considers heritage designation or conservation requirements, property owners and residents should be able to understand:

• What feature or history is significant?

• What restrictions would result?

• What reasonable uses remain possible?

• What costs could be created?

• Can important heritage features be incorporated into redevelopment?

• And are there practical alternatives?

Protecting Guelph's history matters.

So does allowing neighbourhoods and properties to adapt to changing community needs.

Heritage decisions should protect what is genuinely significant while allowing reasonable change.

9. Treat Public Art as a Public Investment

Guelph already has a Public Art Policy establishing processes for acquiring public art through purchase, commission or donation, with community and professional input through the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee.

I support maintaining a transparent process.

But public art also has acquisition, installation, maintenance and eventual restoration costs.

Those costs should be understood when new works are considered.

Maintain the Collection We Already Have

Before significantly expanding the municipal public-art collection, the City should understand the condition and maintenance requirements of existing works.

Donated art should also be evaluated carefully.

A donation may have no purchase price while still creating installation, insurance, conservation or maintenance costs for taxpayers.

The City's existing policy already requires proposed donations to be reviewed.

The same full-cost principle used elsewhere in this platform should apply here.

A donated asset is not necessarily a free asset.

10. Connect Culture With Downtown and Economic Development

Arts, entertainment, museums, festivals and cultural events can contribute to downtown activity and Guelph's visitor economy.

But claims about economic benefits should be measurable rather than assumed.

The Economic Development section of this platform already establishes the principle that tourism and municipal economic-development initiatives should demonstrate identifiable benefits.

The same principle should apply to cultural investments justified partly on economic grounds.

Where the City supports a significant event or cultural initiative because of expected tourism or economic activity, reporting should examine available measures such as attendance, visitors, hotel activity where reliable information exists, downtown activity, outside funding and municipal costs.

Not every cultural activity needs to generate an economic return.

Community participation, education, heritage and quality of life can be legitimate public objectives.

But when an economic return is used to justify spending, Council should attempt to measure it.

11. Libraries and Culture Measures for the Core Services Scorecard

These measures would form the libraries and culture component of the Core Services Scorecard:

Area	What should be reported
Library use	In-person visits, digital use, circulation, active borrowers, program participation and branch-level use
Library finances	Municipal contribution, operating cost, capital spending, reserves and significant cost changes
New Central Library	Approved and actual capital cost, schedule, major scope changes and post-opening operating costs
Library access	Branch use, Bookmobile activity, digital access, technology use and accessibility
Cultural facilities	Attendance, utilization, operating costs, capital renewal requirements and asset condition
Museums	Attendance, programs, collections stewardship, operating costs and major capital requirements
Culture Plan 2030	Initiatives completed, deferred or underway, expenditures and measurable results
Grants	Funding awarded, recipients, program objectives and reported outcomes
Public art	New acquisitions, collection condition, maintenance requirements and expenditures
Heritage	Designations, conservation activity, major municipal heritage costs and adaptive-reuse outcomes where applicable
Accessibility	Participation barriers, targeted

Area	What should be reported
	assistance and accessibility improvements
Economic impact	Where economic benefits are used to justify significant cultural spending, the available evidence supporting those benefits

The goal would not be to reduce culture to a single financial calculation.

It would be to allow residents to understand what the City provides, how much it costs, how much it is used and whether major investments are achieving their intended purpose.

My Approach

Protect Guelph's public library system and continue neighbourhood access to library services.

Make the new Central Library deliver the services and value residents were promised.

Track its final capital cost and its full operating impact after opening.

Evaluate the former Main Library property using the housing and financial principles already established elsewhere in this platform.

Maintain existing cultural facilities before automatically building new ones.

Implement Culture Plan 2030 according to demonstrated need, measurable results and the City's financial capacity rather than treating every proposed initiative as an automatic spending commitment.

Work with Guelph's existing artists, cultural organizations and community groups rather than unnecessarily duplicating what they already provide.

Keep grant programs transparent and periodically evaluate their results.

Keep cultural opportunities accessible while targeting financial assistance where it is actually needed.

Protect genuinely significant heritage resources while allowing reasonable adaptation and redevelopment.

Understand the lifecycle costs of public art and maintain the collection the City already owns.

Measure economic benefits when economic development or tourism is used to justify significant cultural spending.

And include libraries and culture in the Core Services Scorecard so residents can see what they are receiving for their investment.

Libraries, culture and heritage contribute to what makes Guelph a community rather than simply a collection of roads and buildings.

The responsibility of Council is to protect those assets, make them accessible and ensure that the money invested in them produces lasting value for the people of Guelph.

Libraries, Culture and Community Assets — Source Notes

Source 1 — Guelph Public Library 2025 Annual Report

Guelph Public Library. 2025 Annual Report and 2026 reporting on digital circulation, technology use and programs. Used for visits, circulation, borrowers, technology use and branch-level activity.

Source 2 — Guelph Public Library 2026 Operating and Capital Budgets

Guelph Public Library. City Council approval of the Library's 2026 operating and capital budgets. Used for the approximately $14.33 million operating budget, 16% increase, reduced request and timing of staffing increases.

Source 3 — City of Guelph Baker District Redevelopment

City of Guelph. Baker District redevelopment and large-scale project reporting. Used for the Central Library project budget, construction status and project reporting.

Source 4 — City of Guelph, September 25, 2026 Main Library Site Acquisition

City of Guelph. "Housing coming to main site of the current Guelph Public Library, following City acquisition," September 25, 2026. Used for the $3.69 million Building Faster Fund acquisition, future housing intent and the confirmed 2027 move to the new Central Library at 1 Baker Street.

Source 5 — City of Guelph Culture Plan 2030

City of Guelph. Culture Plan 2030. Used for the City's cultural strategy, cultural-space needs and arts, heritage and creative-industry priorities.

Source 6 — City of Guelph 2026 Confirmed Capital Budget

City of Guelph. 2026 Confirmed Budget: Capital Budget. Used for cultural-facility renewal, West End arts programming and the revised approximately 15-year Culture Plan implementation horizon and deferred initiatives.

Source 7 — Guelph Museums and Culture Reporting

City of Guelph / Council reporting on Guelph Museums and Culture. Used for museum attendance and public-program participation.

Source 8 — City of Guelph Heritage Register

City of Guelph. Municipal Register of Cultural Heritage Properties and designated properties. Used for the description of municipal heritage identification and designation.

Source 9 — City of Guelph Public Art Policy

City of Guelph. Public Art Policy and Procedures. Used for public-art acquisition, commission, donation and review processes.

Source 10 — Ontario Public Libraries Act

Government of Ontario, Public Libraries Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.44, especially sections 3 and 20, together with Ontario's "About the Public Libraries Act" guidance (updated March 25, 2026). Used for statutory management and control of public libraries by library boards, board operating responsibilities and the municipality's funding/appointment role.
https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90p44 and
https://www.ontario.ca/page/about-public-libraries-act

Protect Guelph's Financial Safety Net

Rebuild Reserves Based on Risk

City reserves are basically savings accounts.

But they do not all have the same job.

Some protect City services when something unexpected happens.

Some help repair roads and buildings.

Some pay for costs we know are coming.

Some are reserved for special projects.

And some money is legally restricted and cannot simply be moved wherever Council wants.

Right now, some of Guelph's most important financial protection is too low.

First Priority: Emergency and Operating Protection

The City's contingency reserves help absorb unexpected operating problems, bad budget years and unusual costs without immediately cutting services or raising taxes.

My goal is to work toward getting the main contingency reserves to at least 50% of their policy target during the next Council term.

That is an initial milestone, not the final destination.

My First Answer Will Not Be a Special Tax Increase

I want to rebuild these reserves.

But my first solution will **not** be creating a special reserve-rebuilding tax increase.

I would first look to:

- future year-end operating surpluses;
- unused project money;
- one-time revenues;
- permanent savings and efficiencies;
- responsible transfers from reserves that are safely above their needs; and
- reducing unnecessary reserve withdrawals.

If those measures are not enough, I will be transparent with residents about the remaining gap and the choices in front of Council.

Maintain What We Already Own

Guelph owns billions of dollars worth of roads, pipes, buildings, vehicles, parks and other infrastructure.

Ignoring maintenance does not save money.

It often moves the bill into the future, where the problem becomes larger.

My general order of priority would be:

1. **Safety and legally required work**
2. **Maintaining existing assets and core services**
3. **Infrastructure required for necessary growth**
4. **Investments that clearly lower future costs or improve a core service**
5. **New discretionary assets and programs**

There will be exceptions.

But **state of good repair should be the starting point, not an afterthought.**

One Core Services Scorecard

Tell Residents What They Are Paying For

Residents should not have to read hundreds of pages of City reports to determine whether a service is getting better.

I will push for a simple annual **Core Services Scorecard**.

For each major service, it should answer:

What did we promise?

Did we deliver it?

What did it cost?

Are residents satisfied?

How do we compare with similar municipalities?

Is the service getting better or worse?

The detailed measures identified throughout this platform are components of this one scorecard. Together they cover transportation, public safety, fire and paramedics, water and wastewater, waste, parks and recreation, housing and homelessness, economic development, environment and stormwater, financial performance and reserves, governance and accountability, and libraries and culture.

Transportation

Snow

Track:

- clearing times;
- percentage completed within target;
- accessible sidewalks and transit stops;
- cost;
- unusual weather conditions; and
- satisfaction.

Roads

Track:

- average condition;
- percentage fair-or-better;
- preventative maintenance;
- kilometres renewed;
- cost per lane-kilometre; and
- satisfaction.

Transit

Track:

- ridership;
- cost per resident;
- cost per trip;
- passengers per service hour;
- on-time performance;
- cancellations;

- bus bunching;
- frequency;
- access to frequent service; and
- rider satisfaction.

Public Safety

Crime

Track:

- Crime Severity Index;
- violent and non-violent crime trends;
- crimes against people;
- property crime;
- break and enter;
- theft;
- robbery;
- sexual violence; and
- clearance rates.

Police Service

Track:

- calls for service;
- Priority 1 response time;
- staffing;
- overtime;
- cost per resident;
- peer cost comparison;
- online and alternative responses;
- external grant funding; and
- results associated with major new spending.

Downtown

Track:

- calls for service;
- crime trends;

- repeat locations;
- police visibility;
- community contacts; and
- measurable results from downtown initiatives.

Mental Health and Alternative Response

Track:

- mental-health calls;
- IMPACT responses;
- hospital diversions;
- calls redirected from frontline police; and
- referrals to appropriate community services.

Human Trafficking and Exploitation

Track:

- police-reported trafficking incidents;
- investigations;
- victims identified;
- charges;
- convictions where available;
- referrals to victim services;
- repeat offenders and networks disrupted where reporting is appropriate;
- prevention and training activity;
- accommodation-sector partnerships;
- youth-prevention efforts;
- senior-government funding secured; and
- municipal spending.

The public report should explain changes in context.

A higher reported trafficking number can sometimes mean stronger detection rather than more underlying trafficking.

Measure the result without creating incentives to hide the problem.

Fire and Emergency Response

Fire

Track:

call-processing, turnout, travel and total response times;
percentage of calls meeting approved response standards;
first-arriving response;
effective response force for major emergencies;
geographic areas consistently meeting or missing response standards;
station and apparatus availability;
minimum staffing;
overtime and backfill;
fire losses and significant incidents;
prevention and inspection activity;
equipment and asset condition; and
outside funding secured.

Paramedics

Track:

emergency call volume;
CTAS response-time performance;
ambulance availability;
hospital offload delay;
time lost to maintenance, restocking and other downtime;
staffing and overtime;
use of alternative response and destination models;
Community Paramedicine patients served;
repeat 911 calls before and after Community Paramedicine involvement where measurable;
patients safely treated or supported outside the emergency department;
provincial funding secured; and
measurable results from major new investments.

Water and Wastewater

Track:

- overall condition;
- percentage good, fair and poor;
- watermain breaks;
- sewer backups;
- kilometres inspected;
- kilometres repaired, lined or replaced;
- treatment-facility condition;
- renewal funding; and
- whether the backlog is growing or shrinking.

Waste

Track:

- collection reliability;
- resident satisfaction;
- cost per resident or household;
- kilograms sent to landfill;
- diversion rate;
- contamination;
- asset condition; and
- Blue Box savings.

Parks

Track:

- resident satisfaction;
- major asset condition;
- maintenance performance; and
- whether existing parks are keeping pace as Guelph grows.

Financial Reserves

Show:

- reserve balance;

- policy target;
- major commitments; and
- whether our financial protection is strengthening or weakening.

If Guelph is doing something well, residents should know it.

If something is falling behind, Council should know that too.

Show the Full Cost Before Saying Yes

The purchase price of a project is not its real cost.

A new facility or program may also require:

- employees;
- electricity and utilities;
- maintenance;
- insurance;
- vehicles;
- equipment;
- debt payments; and
- eventual replacement.

Before supporting a significant new City asset or permanent program, I want Council to see:

- startup or construction cost;
- annual staffing cost;
- annual operating cost;
- maintenance cost;
- financing cost;
- expected lifespan;
- future renewal or replacement cost;
- expected revenue or savings; and
- where the permanent funding will come from.

A project is not free simply because another level of government pays part of the construction cost.

If Guelph taxpayers have to operate it for the next 30 years, that cost belongs in the decision today.

No Blind Cuts. No Blank Cheques.

Fiscal responsibility does not mean cutting everything.

And caring about City services does not mean approving every spending request.

Sometimes a service genuinely needs more money.

Sometimes it needs to be managed differently.

Sometimes better planning, maintenance, scheduling, purchasing or technology can produce a better result without a major increase.

My job as a councillor would be to figure out which situation we are dealing with **before spending your money.**

What I Will Work Toward

Snow Removal

Clear public service standards, transparent reporting and action on the City's winter-maintenance review.

Roads

A measurable road-condition goal, stronger preventative maintenance and a better understanding of why Guelph's costs are comparatively high.

Transit

Compare Future Ready with frequency-first alternatives, test lower-cost improvements first, and build a long-term direction based on results.

Parks

Protect the parks and trails residents already value and actively advocate for a National Urban Park in Guelph.

Water

Protect today's reliable service and work over time to move overall infrastructure condition **from fair toward good**.

Wastewater

Stop deterioration, address the highest risks first and work to move the system **from poor toward fair**, using the funding already planned first.

Waste Collection

Protect reliable collection, improve diversion where it is cost-effective, keep landfill waste low and make sure taxpayers receive the benefit of the Blue Box funding change.

Public Safety

Protect strong emergency response, focus police resources on serious and repeat crime, use alternative response where appropriate, require measurable results from new police spending, and make public safety part of the Core Services Scorecard.

Human Trafficking

Maintain specialized investigative capacity where results justify it, target traffickers and networks, improve victim access to support, strengthen prevention and training, pursue outside funding, and publicly measure both enforcement and survivor support.

Fire and Emergency Response

Protect fast emergency response, publicly measure whether enough people and equipment are reaching emergencies when needed, identify geographic coverage gaps, maintain existing equipment and facilities, make better use of the ambulances we already have, expand alternative response and Community Paramedicine where the evidence supports it, and pursue provincial funding for health-care responsibilities.

Recreation and Community Facilities

Protect access to recreation, maintain the facilities residents already use, improve utilization and accessibility, and understand full operating and renewal costs before expanding municipal facilities.

Housing and Homelessness

Increase housing choices and affordability, measure whether housing initiatives are producing durable results, strengthen prevention and pathways to stable housing, and compare the cost of action with the cost of continuing to manage homelessness through emergency systems.

Economic Development, Jobs and Local Business

Support existing businesses and local jobs, protect employment land, make it easier to do business with City Hall, pursue growth that works for both businesses and workers, and measure the results of major economic-development spending and incentives.

Environment, Climate Resilience and Stormwater

Maintain stormwater infrastructure, identify flooding risks before emergencies, use green infrastructure where practical, protect natural assets and tree canopy, prepare for severe weather, and require transparent financial reporting for major environmental initiatives.

Governance, Transparency and Accountability

Keep residents informed and accessible to their councillor, make major decisions and financial consequences easier to understand, show how public input was considered, follow through on audits and major projects, and make public information easier to find and use.

Libraries, Culture and Community Assets

Protect neighbourhood library access, make the new Central Library deliver the value residents were promised, maintain existing cultural assets, keep participation accessible, implement Culture Plan 2030 according to demonstrated need and financial capacity, and protect significant heritage while allowing reasonable change.

Infrastructure

Plan once. Dig once. Fix what reasonably needs fixing.

Financial Reserves

Rebuild according to risk, starting with Guelph's emergency financial cushion and working toward at least **50% of the contingency-reserve policy target** as a first-term milestone.

Taxes and Utility Rates

Look first to existing funding, efficiencies, savings, reserves, outside funding, project coordination and better management before creating new dedicated increases.

Accountability

Maintain one public Core Services Scorecard covering the major municipal services and accountability measures set out throughout this platform.

My Commitment

I am not running to promise everything to everyone.

I believe City Hall has to set priorities.

Take care of what we have.
Deliver the basics well.
Protect the services people depend on.
Keep our neighbourhoods and public spaces safe.
Fix problems before they become emergencies.
Rebuild our financial safety net.
Measure the results.
And make every tax dollar count.

That is what **Core Services First** means to me.

Final Principle

The evidence throughout this platform does not point to one answer for every City service.

Snow removal

Spending is relatively low and satisfaction is poor.

Ask whether we are buying enough service and whether it is being delivered efficiently.

Roads

Spending is comparatively high while condition and satisfaction are weaker.

Focus on value, prevention and results.

Transit

Guelph already spends significantly and satisfaction remains modest.

Test whether better organization and frequency can improve service before automatically adding large amounts of spending.

Parks and Recreation

Parks are highly valued, while recreation facilities and programs require ongoing maintenance, accessibility and utilization decisions.

Protect what works, maintain what we own and understand the full cost before expanding facilities or programs.

Water

Service satisfaction is strong and funding appears comparatively healthy.

Protect it and move fair infrastructure toward good.

Wastewater

Today’s service works, but the infrastructure underneath it is poor.

Deal with the risk before residents experience the consequences.

Waste

Residents generally like the service and landfill performance is comparatively good.

Protect it, improve diversion sensibly and make sure taxpayers receive the savings from the Blue Box transition.

Public Safety

Guelph remains comparatively safe, emergency response has improved and standardized policing costs are near the large-municipality average, but serious crime, repeat crime and rising police costs still require close attention.

Protect what is working, focus resources on real problems and measure what new spending accomplishes.

Human Trafficking

Guelph recorded Canada's highest police-reported human-trafficking rate among CMAs in 2024.

Find victims. Target traffickers. Support survivors. Protect young people. Measure the results without confusing better detection with failure.

Fire and Paramedics

Emergency response depends on having the right people, vehicles and equipment available when residents need them.

Protect response capacity, maintain existing assets, measure coverage and downtime, use alternative response where evidence supports it, and pursue provincial funding for health-care responsibilities.

Housing and Homelessness

Housing affordability affects lower- and middle-income households while homelessness creates human and public-service costs across multiple systems.

Expand housing choices, test municipal interventions against measurable results, strengthen pathways to stable housing and compare the cost of action with the cost of doing nothing.

Economic Development

A strong local economy depends on existing businesses, employment land, infrastructure, workers and a City that can make timely, predictable decisions.

Be pro-business and pro-worker, measure public incentives carefully and distinguish municipal results from broader economic forces.

Environment and Stormwater

Flood protection, stormwater infrastructure, natural assets and climate resilience are long-term municipal responsibilities with significant financial consequences.

Maintain what we own, address the highest risks first, use practical solutions and make costs and results visible.

Libraries, Culture and Community Assets

Libraries and cultural assets are heavily used parts of community life, while the new Central Library and existing facilities create long-term operating and renewal responsibilities.

Protect access, maintain existing assets, measure participation and results, and understand the full cost before creating new permanent obligations.

Governance and Accountability

Good decisions are not enough if residents cannot understand them or see whether the promised results were delivered.

Keep information accessible, show how public input was considered, follow through on audits and major projects, and use one Core Services Scorecard to connect spending with results.

Reserves, Taxes and Financial Management

Guelph has substantial reserves overall, but its flexible financial safety net is too weak and residents are facing significant affordability pressures.

Rebuild the most important financial protection first, look for efficiencies and existing funding before new dedicated increases, and show the full lifecycle cost before making major commitments.

That is the purpose of Core Services First:

Different problems require different solutions, but every decision starts with the same question — are residents getting reliable services and good value for the money they already pay?

APPENDIX A

Understanding Guelph's Reserves

The word **"reserves"** can make it sound as though the City has one giant savings account.

It does not.

Different reserves have different jobs.

Corporate Contingency Reserves

Plain English: the City's rainy-day savings.

These protect the City from unexpected operating costs, budget problems and unusual events.

Priority: Highest.

Environment and Utility Contingency Reserve

Plain English: protection against unpredictable costs such as bad winters, fuel and utilities.

This is important to the snow-removal portion of the platform.

Priority: Highest.

WSIB Reserve

Plain English: money saved for workplace injury claims involving City employees.

This is a known financial obligation and should be managed according to risk.

Priority: High.

Capital Reserves

Plain English: savings used to repair and replace City infrastructure and equipment.

They help pay for:

- roads;
- buildings;
- vehicles;
- equipment; and
- other long-life assets.

Priority: High.

Strategic Reserves

Plain English: money for special initiatives, opportunities and property decisions.

Useful, but not the same thing as emergency savings.

Program-Specific Reserves

Plain English: money saved for a known future responsibility.

Development-Charge Reserve Funds

Plain English: money collected from development to help pay for infrastructure required by growth.

Obligatory Reserve Funds

Plain English: money that legally must be used for a particular purpose.

Rate-Supported Reserves

Plain English: savings belonging to services mainly funded by their own rates or fees.

My first approach is to address problems within those services through responsible rates, efficiencies, better forecasting and appropriate reserve use rather than automatically shifting costs to property taxpayers.

APPENDIX B

Guelph's Reserve Position and Peer Comparison

Guelph's reserve position must be looked at after existing commitments and restrictions are considered.

The BMA Municipal Study is useful because it provides a standardized comparison of municipal reserves relative to own-source revenue.

My conclusion is not that Guelph has "no reserves."

It is:

Guelph has significant reserves overall, but some of its most flexible emergency protection is weaker than it should be.

APPENDIX C

Reserve Recovery Plan

General Priority

1. Emergency and operating protection

2. Known high-risk obligations

3. Core infrastructure

4. Growth-related financial pressure

5. Strategic and discretionary reserves

This is a guide, not an automatic rule.

First-Term Contingency Goal

Work toward at least 50% of the City's contingency-reserve policy target during the next Council term.

How I Would Try to Rebuild It

Future year-end surpluses

Stop unnecessary draws

Clean up old capital projects

One-time money for one-time needs

Transfer money where risk justifies it

Use permanent efficiencies

What I Will Not Promise

I will **not** promise that every reserve can be completely rebuilt without ever affecting taxes.

My commitment is:

Use internal savings, surpluses, existing funds, one-time revenues and better management first.

APPENDIX D

Snow Removal — Detailed Comparison

Road Winter-Control Cost

Municipality	Cost per lane-km	Cost per resident
Guelph	**$2,812**	**$20**
Barrie	$4,808	$48
Kingston	$4,358	$53
Single-tier average	$3,284	$58
Single-tier median	$2,586	$51

Value-for-Money Review

The City's winter review should be used to guide future service-level decisions rather than duplicated.

APPENDIX E

Roads and Sidewalks — Detailed Comparison

Long-Term Guelph Outlook

Transportation portfolio:

- replacement value: roughly **$1.7 billion**
- present condition: **fair**
- forecast 2035 condition: **poor**

- 10-year renewal need: **$341 million**
- identified funding: **$209.6 million**
- gap: **$131.4 million**

The purpose of these forecasts is to show the direction of the system under existing assumptions, not to claim every road will fail on a fixed date.

APPENDIX F

Transit — Detailed Options and Evidence

Current Peer-Cost Question

The BMA comparison shows Guelph transit costs per resident above the large-municipality average but broadly similar to Kingston.

The question is whether a different network design can produce better frequency and reliability before the City commits to the full remaining expansion.

Four Options I Want Compared

Option 1

Current Future Ready.

Option 2

Cost-neutral redesign.

Option 3

Moderate frequency-first redesign.

Option 4

Frequency-first system using approximately the same long-term resource envelope as Future Ready.

Compare all four using the same measures.

APPENDIX G

Parks and the National Urban Park

National Urban Park Status

Guelph is **not currently a formal Parks Canada candidate site**.

Parks Canada currently lists Windsor as Ontario's candidate site.

My pledge therefore has a clear objective:

Move Guelph from community advocacy toward formal federal consideration.

No final financial commitment should be made until Guelph understands:

- ownership;
- governance;
- operating responsibility;
- capital responsibility;
- environmental obligations; and
- long-term municipal cost.

APPENDIX H

Water and Wastewater — Detailed Financial and Infrastructure Picture

Water

- about **569 km** of watermains
- replacement value: about **$1.24 billion**
- overall condition: **fair**
- 10-year renewal need: **$321 million**
- planned funding: **$337 million**
- surplus against identified need: about **$16 million**

Goal

Fair toward good.

Wastewater

- about **528 km** of wastewater mains
- replacement value: about **$983 million**
- overall condition: **poor**
- 10-year renewal need: **$302 million**
- identified funding: **$201.5 million**
- gap: about **$100.5 million**

Goal

Stop deterioration, then poor toward fair.

Rehabilitation

The City's 2025 asset plan says mid-life rehabilitation can extend sanitary-asset life and lower future renewal needs. It also recognizes that road, water and wastewater work may sensibly be combined even when every asset has not independently reached its theoretical replacement point.

APPENDIX I

Waste Collection — Detailed Evidence

Landfill Waste

2024 residential garbage sent to landfill:

- **Guelph: about 154 kg per resident**
- Ontario average: about **178 kg per resident**

Diversion

2024 Guelph diversion:

about 55%

Existing 2030 target:

62%

Blue Box Transition

Older collection-cost comparisons should not be presented as a current ranking until comparable post-transition data are available.

Reuse Existing Facilities

The City's capital plan includes repurposing part of the existing Materials Recovery Facility for collections operations rather than automatically building entirely new space.

APPENDIX J

Core Services Scorecard and Benchmarking Rules

Comparing cities can be useful.

It can also be misleading if we are careless.

Compare Similar Cities

Barrie and Kingston are often useful peers because they are similar in size and municipal responsibilities.

Compare the Same Service

Use standardized measures wherever possible.

Use BMA Carefully

The 2025 BMA Municipal Study includes 128 Ontario municipalities representing about 88.9% of the province's population and uses sources including municipal Financial Information Returns.

It is useful for benchmarking.

It is **not** a perfect municipal ranking.

Satisfaction Surveys

Questions and methods can differ between cities.

For this platform:

- Guelph's own survey identifies local strengths and weaknesses;
- peer surveys provide context;
- I will avoid claiming a formal ranking when the methods are not comparable.

Estimates

Planning estimates should be clearly labelled as estimates and confirmed by staff before Council bases a final financial decision on them.

The Rule

Benchmark to ask better questions, not to manufacture talking points.

APPENDIX K

Public Safety, Policing and Human Trafficking

2025 Crime Context

Statistics Canada reported:

CMA	2025 Crime Severity Index	Police-reported crime rate per 100,000
Barrie	46.9	3,777
Guelph	**57.8**	**4,288**
Kingston	61.5	5,005

These numbers provide context.

They should not be used to tell someone who has experienced crime that their concern does not matter.

Emergency Response

Guelph Police Priority 1 median response time:

- 2024: **6:38**
- 2025: **5:59**

The Service identifies the 2025 figure as its lowest median Priority 1 response time since 2014.

Staffing

2025 actual staffing:

- sworn: **243**
- civilian: **117.5**
- total actual FTEs: **360.5**

Overtime

- 2024 overtime hours: **36,521**
- 2025 overtime hours: **25,524**
- 2025 paid overtime cost: about **$1.46 million**

These figures should be monitored over multiple years before drawing strong conclusions about structural savings.

Police Budget

2025:

- net approved budget: about **$67.22 million**
- net operating expenditures: about **$65.67 million**
- Service-reported operating cost per capita: **$410**

2026 confirmed increase:

- approximately **$5.79 million**
- **9.9%** increase
- **1.65%** impact on total tax levy

Standardized BMA Police-Cost Comparison

Net cost per resident excluding amortization:

Municipality	Cost
Kingston	$313
Guelph	**$354**
Population >100,000 average	**$354**
Barrie	$393

Including amortization:

- Kingston: $326
- Guelph: $373
- 100,000 average: $367
- Barrie: $421

This is why I would not begin with the assumption that Guelph is a high-cost policing outlier.

Human Trafficking

Statistics Canada reported that in 2024:

- Guelph recorded **17 police-reported human-trafficking incidents**
- rate: **10.7 per 100,000**
- highest rate among Canadian CMAs
- overall CMA rate: **1.6 per 100,000**

Statistics Canada specifically warns that Guelph's high reported rate may be influenced by stronger detection, specialized enforcement and partnerships.

Guelph Police Human-Trafficking Activity

2025 Guelph Police reporting shows:

- HT/IPV unit expanded to **8 officers**
- human-trafficking-related calls increased from **52 to 80**
- human-trafficking-related charges increased from **21 to 25**
- more than **900 Catholic school-board staff** received human-trafficking and online-safety training

These figures should not be read as a simple "more is bad" or "more is good" trend.

More reported calls can reflect more trafficking, better reporting, stronger detection or a combination.

Youth Risk

Ontario reports approximately **two-thirds of police-identified trafficking victims are under 25**.

This supports prevention aimed at:

- youth;
- parents and caregivers;
- schools;
- service providers; and
- organizations working with vulnerable young people.

Ontario Strategy

Ontario's 2025–2030 strategy is built around:

1. awareness;
2. prevention and early intervention;
3. survivor support; and
4. holding offenders accountable.

The Province has committed more than **$345 million** over 2025–2030.

Guelph should use provincial systems and funding rather than trying to recreate everything municipally.

Accommodation Sector

Ontario's updated accommodation rules took effect January 1, 2026 and create standardized guest-register requirements intended in part to support trafficking investigations.

Local prevention should include making sure hotels and short-term accommodation operators understand their responsibilities.

IMPACT

During the 2026–27 fiscal year to date:

- 159 live IMPACT calls with police

- 111 people diverted from hospital
- diversion rate: **69.8%**

This is an example of measuring whether a specialized response is producing a concrete result.

Council's Authority

The Guelph Police Services Board:

- provides civilian oversight;
- develops police operating and capital estimates; and
- provides strategic governance.

The Chief manages daily police operations.

Ontario law allows the municipality to establish the Board's **overall budget** without being bound to adopt the Board's exact estimate, but the municipality does not have authority to approve or reject individual items within the estimate.

That distinction should remain clear in every campaign commitment.

SOURCE NOTES

Source 1 — City of Guelph 2026 Satisfaction Survey

City of Guelph, 2026 Community Satisfaction Survey / resident-satisfaction reporting (2026). Used for overall quality-of-life and City service-delivery satisfaction, including snow removal, roads/sidewalks, transit and parks/trails.

Source 2 — BMA Management Consulting Inc., 2025 Municipal Study

BMA Management Consulting Inc., Municipal Study 2025, hosted by the City of Guelph. Covers 128 Ontario municipalities representing about 88.9% of Ontario's population. Uses 2025 assessment, tax, rate and user-fee information and 2024 Financial Information Returns. Used for standardized comparisons involving winter road control, paved roads, conventional transit, policing, reserves and water/sewer costs. BMA cautions that expenditure/levy comparisons alone do not establish value for money or service effectiveness.
https://guelph.ca/wp-content/uploads/2025-BMA-Municipal-Study.pdf

Source 3 — City of Guelph Asset Management

City of Guelph, Asset Management Program and “The City’s Assets and Their Value” (2026 reporting). Used for transportation, water, wastewater, stormwater and other infrastructure condition, replacement value, ten-year renewal needs and funding-gap figures. https://guelph.ca/plans-and-strategies/asset-management-program/ and https://guelph.ca/plans-and-strategies/asset-management-program/the-citys-assets-and-their-value/

Source 4 — Wastewater Asset Management

City of Guelph wastewater asset-management and capital-planning information. Used for rehabilitation, lifecycle planning, condition and coordination of wastewater work with road and water projects. Cross-read with the City’s 2026 asset-management reporting and confirmed capital budget.

Source 5 — Solid Waste 2024 Progress Report

City of Guelph, Solid Waste Management Master Plan / 2024 progress reporting. Used for landfill-waste-per-person, waste-diversion performance and diversion target.

Source 6 — City of Guelph 2026 Confirmed Capital Budget

City of Guelph, 2026 Confirmed Budget: Capital Budget (confirmed November 2025). Used for solid-waste facility reuse and current capital-planning context. https://guelph.ca/city-government/budget-and-finance/city-budget/2026-budget/2026-budget-update-capital-budget/

Source 7 — Parks Canada National Urban Park Candidate Sites

Parks Canada, National Urban Parks program candidate-site information (status checked during 2026 platform research). Used to distinguish official candidate sites from Guelph’s proposed/advocated National Urban Park concept. Candidate status can change and should be rechecked before publication or major campaign use.

Source 8 — Statistics Canada 2025 Crime Severity Index

Statistics Canada, police-reported crime statistics and Crime Severity Index, 2025, released July 22, 2026. Used for 2025 Guelph, Barrie and Kingston crime-rate and Crime Severity Index comparisons. These are police-reported measures.

Source 9 — Guelph Police Service 2025 Annual Report

Guelph Police Service, 2025 Annual Report (2026 publication). Used for Priority 1 response time, staffing, overtime, operating expenditures, human-trafficking unit size, trafficking enforcement activity, road enforcement and prevention activity.

Source 10 — City of Guelph 2026 Police Budget

City of Guelph, 2026 Confirmed Budget and Local Boards and Shared Services reporting (confirmed November 2025). Used for the confirmed 2026 Guelph Police Service budget increase and municipal tax-levy impact. https://guelph.ca/city-government/budget-and-finance/city-budget/2026-budget/

Source 11 — Statistics Canada, Trafficking in Persons in Canada, 2024

Statistics Canada, Trafficking in Persons in Canada, 2024 (2025 publication). Used for Guelph's 17 police-reported incidents, 10.7-per-100,000 rate, highest police-reported CMA rate in 2024, national-CMA comparison, and Statistics Canada's caution regarding intensified enforcement/specialized initiatives and Highway 401 context. This is a police-reported rate, not a direct estimate of underlying prevalence.

Source 12 — Ontario Anti-Human-Trafficking Strategy 2025–2030

Government of Ontario, Anti-Human Trafficking Strategy 2025–2030. Used for provincial funding, survivor supports, youth vulnerability, prevention, training, enforcement and the provincial strategy framework.

Source 13 — Ontario Accommodation-Sector Requirements

Government of Ontario accommodation-sector requirements effective January 1, 2026. Used for the 2026 framework supporting human-trafficking investigations while establishing applicable record/reporting and privacy requirements.

Source 14 — Guelph IMPACT Program

Guelph Police Service / local IMPACT program reporting used during 2026 platform research. Used for clinician-and-police response activity and hospital-diversion figures. Because these are operational figures, the reporting period should remain attached whenever quoted.

Source 15 — Guelph Police Services Board and Ontario Community Safety and Policing Act

Guelph Police Services Board governance information and Government of Ontario, Community Safety and Policing Act, 2019. Used to distinguish Board oversight, the Chief's operational authority, Council's overall police-budget authority and Council's lack of authority over individual items within the Board's estimate.