



**GUELPH
CHAMBER**
OF COMMERCE

City of Guelph

Downtown Parking Master Plan (2016-2035)

Wednesday November 18, 2015

Submission

Background

As one of the fifth fastest growing jurisdictions in Canada, developing a parking strategy that sees a meaningful convergence between economic development, planning and growth objectives in Guelph is vitally important. It is with this in mind that the Guelph Chamber of Commerce, through the Downtown Advisory Committee has played an active role in informing the development of policy options for how to effectively move forward. Through all of the discussion and deliberation, one thing has been clear and that is, to do nothing would be detrimental to the city's capacity to attract business investment and generate economic growth. As the voice of business the Guelph Chamber of Commerce has over 900 members representing more than 30,000 employees. We have a diverse membership, ranging in size, industry, period of operation and location across Guelph. As part of the consultation process, we reached out to our membership and the wider business community to participate in the parking survey and actively engaged our membership to seek their input on this issue.

It is important to note that City staff have continued to be forthcoming and timely with information related to the downtown as well as the Chamber and the Downtown Advisory Committee, (which includes stakeholders in business, not-for-profit and community development) have worked diligently to arrive to this decision making point. Each of these elements showcase an on-going commitment to support meaningful stakeholder engagement and demonstrate the thoughtful arrival to a point where important decisions need to be made.

A recurring theme in the engagements was that Guelph's downtown continues to lead the way in punching above its weight. Like many downtowns in Canada our downtown occupies less than 1% of the city wide land area yet attracts an average of 20% of the city wide construction value. The downtown is accommodating a growing population base and has a steep upward growth trajectory. So to that end we have been following discussion on necessary city infrastructure to support this type of growth.

The key issues remain as follows:

- On-street parking is currently beyond capacity and is being used for both short-term and long term parking.
- Off-street supply is beyond capacity during the day time – further evidenced by a lengthy waiting list for daytime permits.

Analysis

The Guelph Chamber of Commerce recommendations have been informed by the Chamber's research and study of local city plans, specifically:

- Staff Report IDE-BDE 1510 – Downtown Parking Master Plan (2016-2035)
- *Prosperity 2020*
- *The Downtown Secondary Plan*

as well as research and study of work produced by the Canadian Urban Institute, the International Downtown Association and the Canadian Parking Association.

In addition to this intensive background research we have engaged in consultation with our members from a variety of sectors located both inside and outside the downtown. The downtown is an important economic engine for the community, with one of the highest job densities of comparable downtown jurisdictions, at approximately 6000 jobs per 100 hectares. However despite this growth there has been no net new parking inventory added to the downtown since 1983. As the downtown trajectory continues its upward trend the need becomes even greater to support existing and future businesses and activities that will serve to benefit the entire community and its economic output. Sound planning in this regard plays an important role in building a competitive environment that retains and attracts businesses. Already there are powerful signals that the city is open for investment, with a detailed downtown secondary plan. In order to support this, short term actions, as well as a long term parking strategy are key.

By 2031 the downtown is set to have 8000 residents and at least 8000 jobs – a net increase of 30%. It is therefore important to ensure that moving forward there is a parking strategy to address the short and long-term stability, growth and prosperity of the downtown core as a key pressure point as well as a lever of prosperity and economic competitiveness. As the fifth fastest growing jurisdiction in Canada, addressing this challenge with both short term actions with a focus on longer-term strategies is critically important.

The capacity for downtown to accommodate growth through vital infrastructure like parking will enable private sector investment. There is immense value in a progressive shared cost parking strategy that leverages private sector expertise, particularly given the advancements in Alternative Service Delivery methods related to parking that have been tried and tested in municipalities across Ontario.

Availability and access to parking continues to play an important role in business decision making. Through the recommendations that we have made, we seek to meaningfully contribute to the conversation to what is an important part of the ecosystem of doing business in Guelph. Parking is a key component of growth enabling infrastructure. Solutions to infrastructure for parking are therefore a central pillar of economic competitiveness and economic development.

Recommendations

As a means to unlock the economic capacity of Guelph through further enabling growth in the downtown, the Chamber recommends the following:

1. Move forward with Scenario 2 as presented in report #IDE-BDE 1510, with the following implementation innovations:
 - a. Immediately implement the Wilson Street Parkade Construction Project. This short term action will better inform long term strategy by providing actionable data on cost effective technology in parkade construction and operations. The methodological approach to this should include a public-private partnership.
 - b. Maintaining of current '2 hour' free, on-street parking and setting a timeline for review of this at the point where by new parking inventory is operationalized in the downtown following the completion of a new parkade. In addition, this period should be utilized to engage private sector technology providers to develop solutions that will maximise collection ratios and the efficiency of enforcement.
 - c. A revised 'phase in' schedule for fee changes to permit parking to a maximum of \$120 per month over 7 years. The 'phase in' should begin at the point where by new parking inventory is operationalized in the downtown following the completion of a new parkade. This 'phase in' period and maximum threshold takes into account what the market is able to bear and any potential economic impact.