



City of Guelph Council Composition and Ward Boundary Review Phase 2 study findings and recommendations

Council meeting
June 21, 2021

Study overview



- The consultant team: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd., in association with ICA Associates Inc. and Drs. David Siegel and Robert J. Williams
- Retained by the City of Guelph in January 2020 to conduct a comprehensive council composition and ward boundary review:
 - Phase 1 – Council composition and employment status review
 - Phase 2 – Ward boundary review

Phase 1 – Key questions addressed and Council direction



The consultant team submitted a report that Council considered on November 5, 2020. The report addressed four main questions:

- How many councillors are appropriate?
- Should councillors continue to be elected in wards or city-wide?
- If so, how many councillors should be elected in each ward?
- Would the City of Guelph benefit from having City councillors who could devote themselves full time to their Council responsibilities or should they remain part time?

Phase 1 – Key questions addressed and Council direction

(cont'd)



City Council gave direction to the consultants in relation to phase 2 of the project that:

- Guelph City councillors should be elected in a ward system
- Additional rounds of community engagement include:
 - scenarios that include eight, ten or twelve councillors
 - the number of councillors elected per ward
 - the employment status of councillors



Ward Boundary Review

Overview

Ward Boundary Review

Overview



The objective of the W.B.R.:

- evaluate the suitability of the existing wards in terms of guiding principles
- develop alternative designs that are consistent with the principles to reflect the present distribution of the population and neighbourhoods
- W.B.R.s are not mandatory in Ontario but ward boundaries in Guelph have remained largely unchanged since 1991 – 30 years ago

Ward Boundary Review

Public engagement process

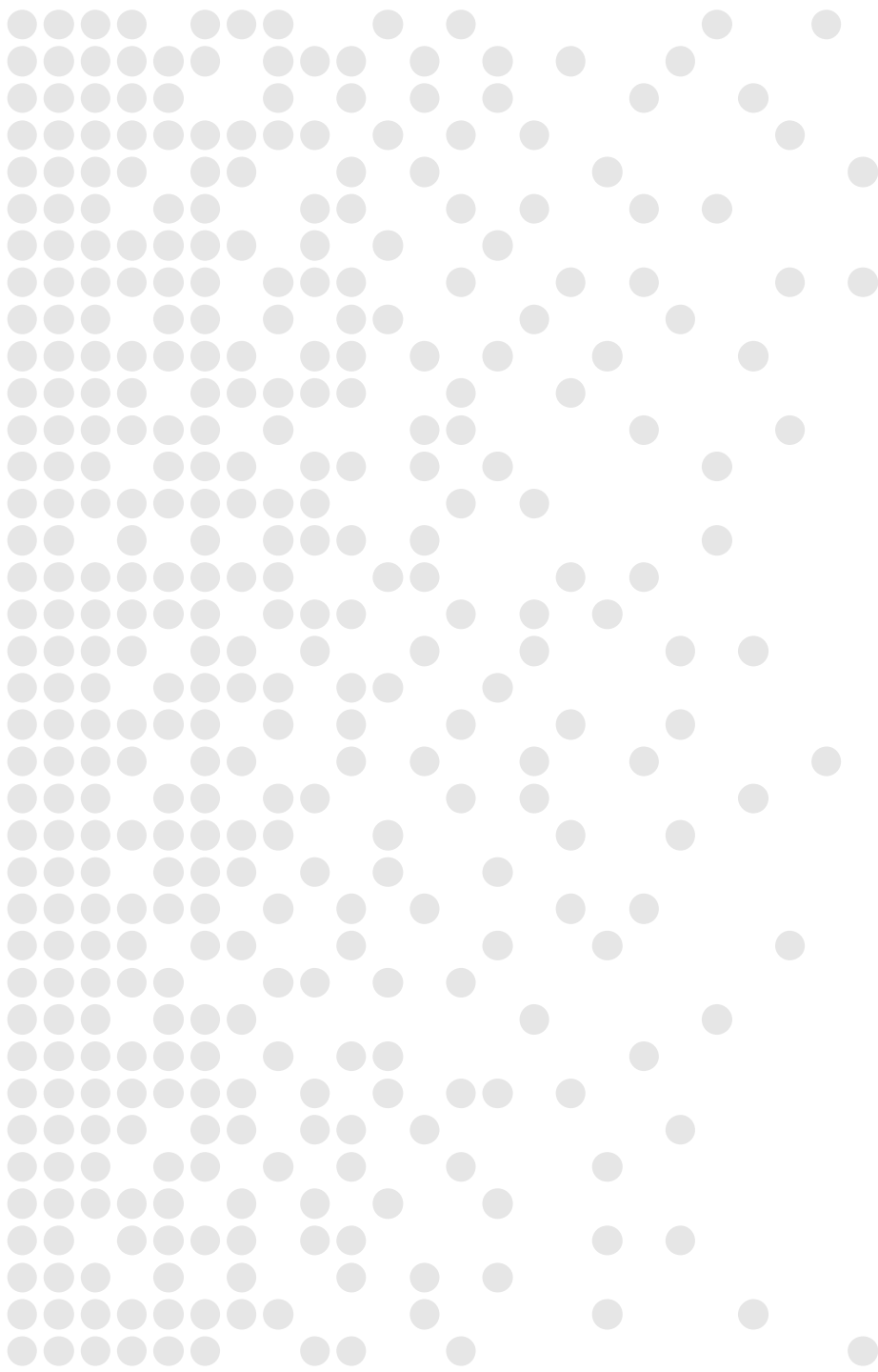


- Round 1 (January 2021): engaged residents to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the existing ward structure, then to rank the design principles
- Round 2 (February to March 2021): provided residents with an opportunity to comment on a wide range of preliminary alternative ward configurations developed by the consultant team
- Round 3 (April 2021): gathered final input from the community on the final options before a report and recommendations are submitted to Council

Public engagement



- The key features of the public consultation process in the W.B.R. include: three rounds of virtual town hall meetings, three rounds of surveys, on-line resources including interactive messaging and mapping tools, and ongoing communication and promotional activities
- A substantial volume of responses was received from the community through various channels, most of high quality
- A detailed summary of the public consultation process is found in the preliminary options report and in the phase 2 report



Guiding principles

Relative importance in designing
ward boundaries

Guiding principles

Overview and survey responses



- Provincial legislation provides no established criteria for municipal electoral arrangements: the Guelph W.B.R. applies the following guiding principles in developing and evaluating potential alternative options:
 - a) Representation by population
 - b) Projected growth patterns
 - c) Communities of interest
 - d) Natural boundaries and geographic features
- PLUS, the “overriding” principle of “effective representation” that embraces the other four guiding principles

Guiding principles (cont'd)

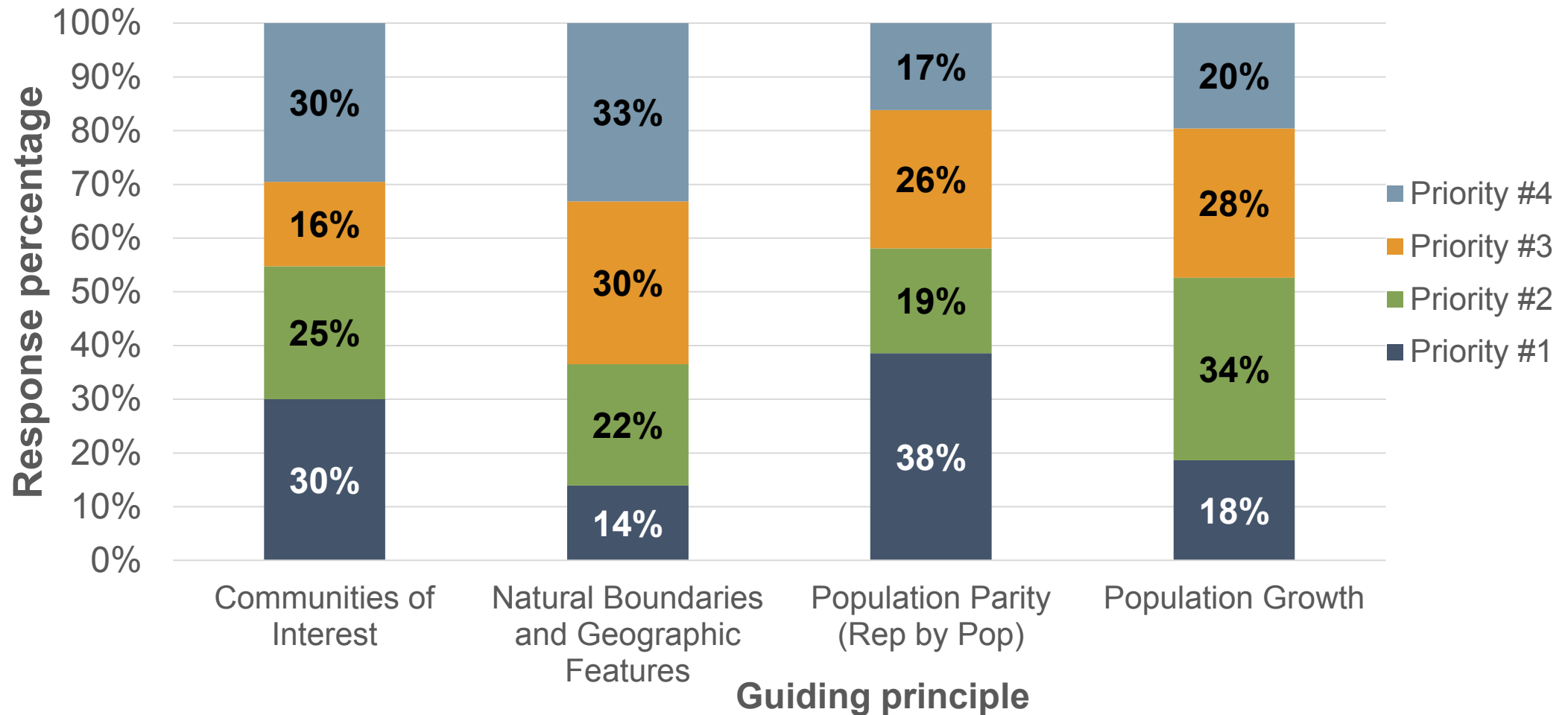
Overview and survey responses



- No ward system design can uniformly meet all the guiding principles since some criteria may work at cross purposes to one another
- The priority attached to certain principles makes some designs more desirable in the eyes of different observers
- In round one of public consultation, residents were asked to prioritize the guiding principles they believe are most important to address in the development of ward boundaries for Guelph

Guiding principles (cont'd)

Overview and survey responses



Guiding principles (cont'd)

Overview and survey responses



- Population parity is the most important principle to the majority of people who answered the survey, especially when combined with the people who emphasize future population growth
- Respondents who prioritize communities of interest reflect a strong sense of community in Guelph
- In light of these responses, all preliminary options attempt to make improvements on the current imbalances in population, but show due regard for all the guiding principles



Guelph's existing ward structure

Overview and assessment

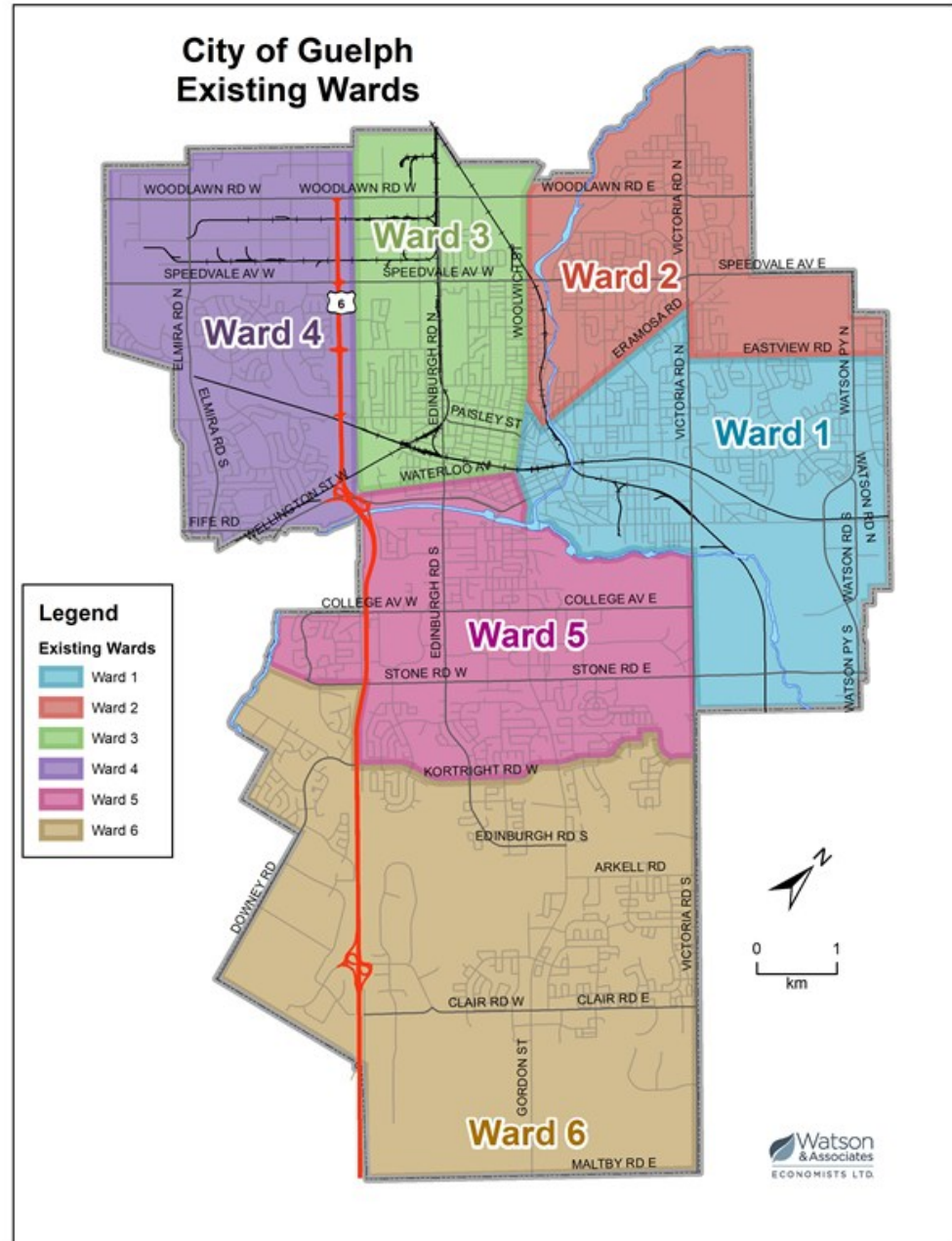
Guelph's existing ward structure

Features, strengths, weaknesses

- Guelph's wards should be an accurate reflection of the contemporary distribution of communities and people across the city

Ward	2021		2031	
	Population	Variance	Population	Variance
Ward 1	29,560	1.10	37,920	1.19
Ward 2	21,630	0.81	23,870	0.75
Ward 3	20,400	0.76	22,140	0.70
Ward 4	24,430	0.91	26,320	0.83
Ward 5	30,180	1.12	32,620	1.03
Ward 6	34,900	1.30	47,830	1.50
City-wide	161,100		190,700	
Ward Average	26,850		31,790	

Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd.



Guelph's existing ward structure (cont'd)

Features, strengths, weaknesses



Assessment

Principle	Does the ward structure meet the respective principle?	Comment
Representation by population	No	One ward exceeds the acceptable range of variation, another is at the bottom of the range.
Projected growth patterns	No	One ward exceeds the acceptable range of variation, two others are at or outside the bottom of the range.
Communities of interest	Largely successful	Communities are not divided internally, except Downtown is included in three wards. Some wards do not consist of communities with common interests.
Natural boundaries and geographic features	Partially successful	Present wards are not designed using many of the recognizable features within Guelph.
Effective representation	Partially successful	Residents do not have an equitable voice in Council deliberations nor comparable access to their elected officials.

Guelph's existing ward structure (cont'd)

Features, strengths, weaknesses



Phase 2 survey responses: Round one

- Many respondents viewed the strengths and weaknesses of the present wards in terms of the performance of their councillors: 48% thought the current ward boundaries provided them with effective representation
- 35% of the respondents said they did not feel the current ward boundaries provided them with effective representation
- Many commented on the differences in the populations of the wards and anticipated this imbalance to worsen; a few had specific concerns about particular boundaries



Preliminary options

Overview

Preliminary options

Overview



Council direction:

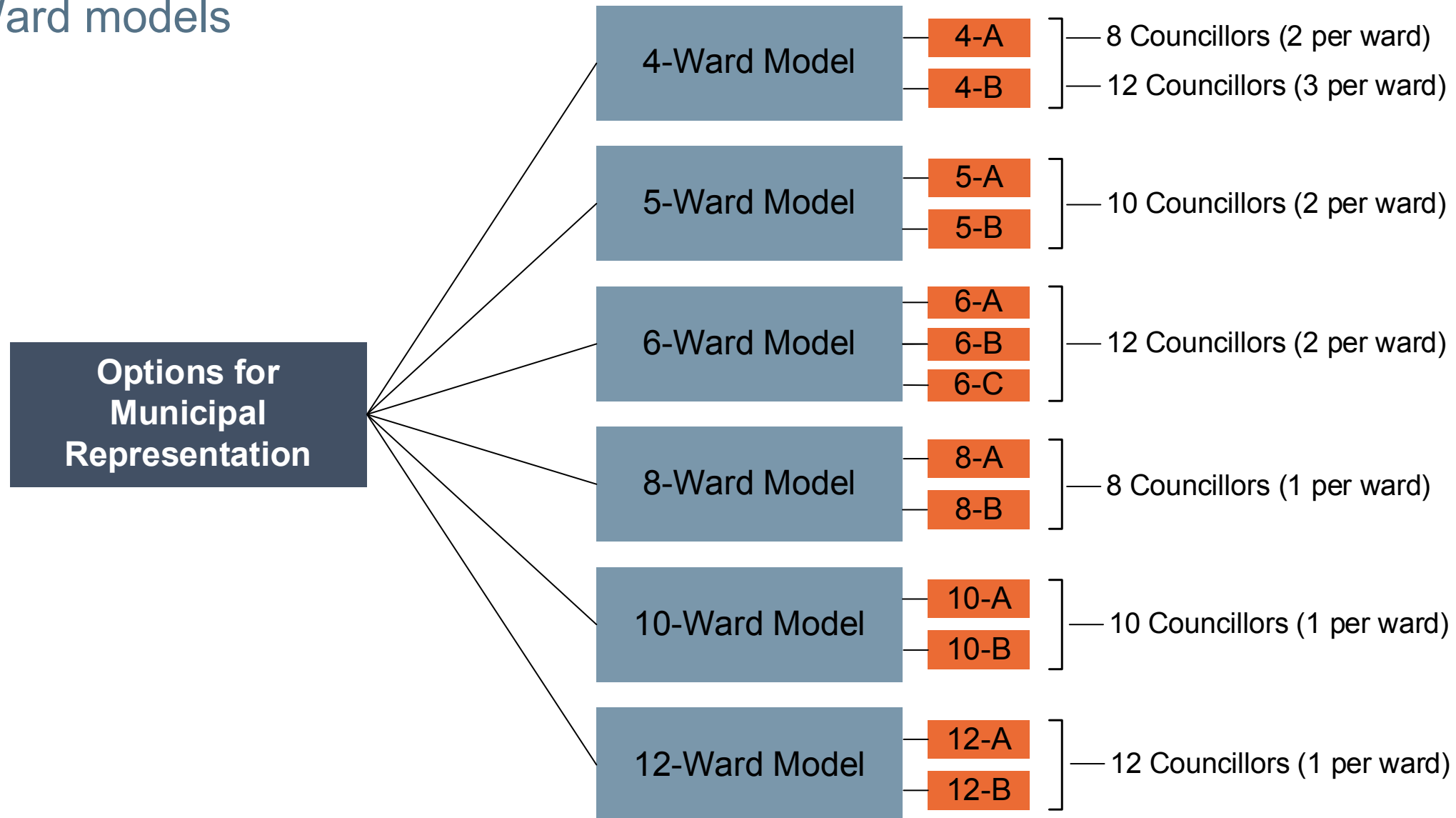
- scenarios that include 8, 10 or 12 councillors
- the number of councillors elected per ward

Results in six different “models” for representation:

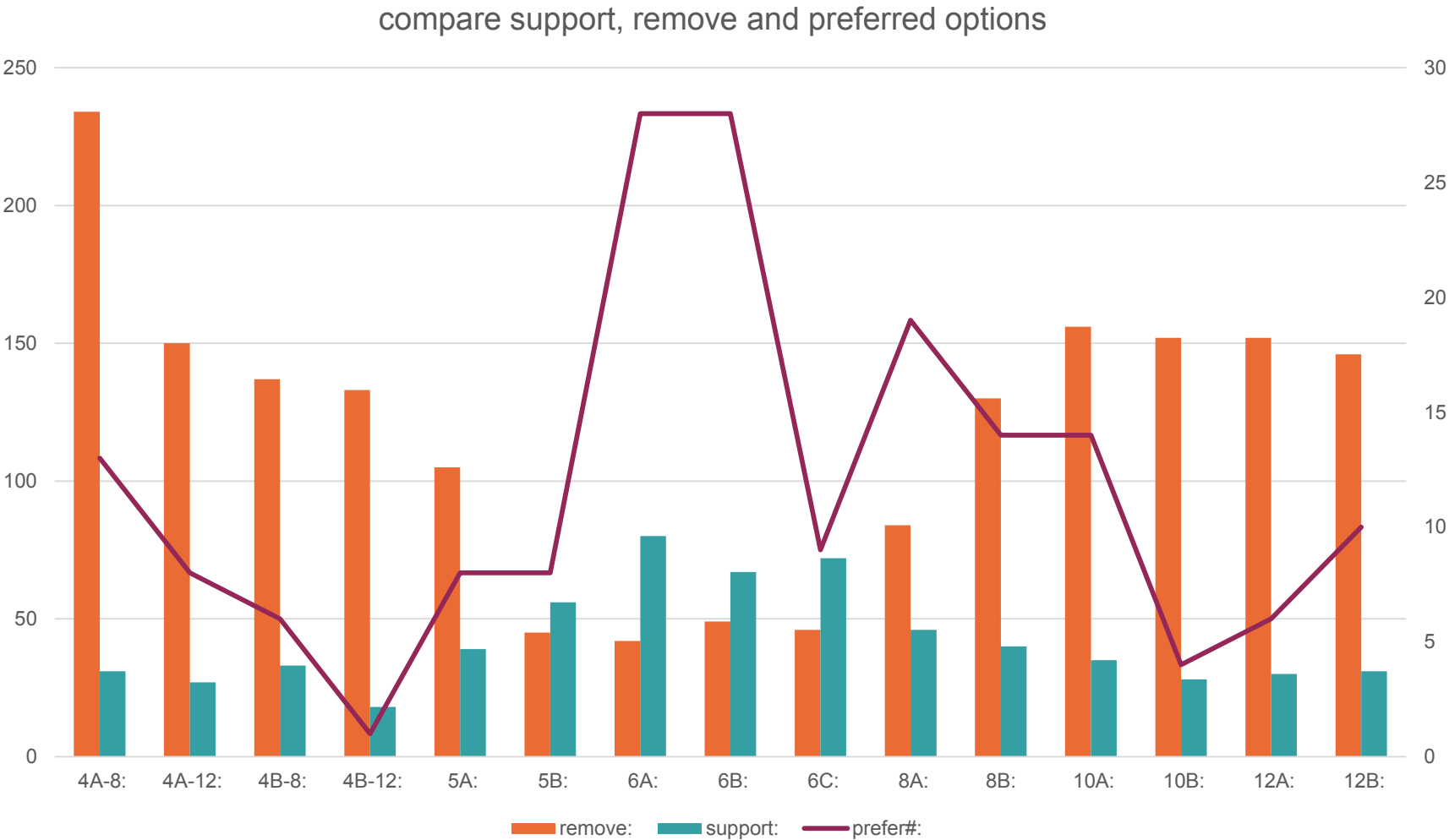
- 4, 5, 6, 8, 10 and 12 wards
- at least two “options” for each model plus the present system
- total number of options = 13

Preliminary Options (cont'd)

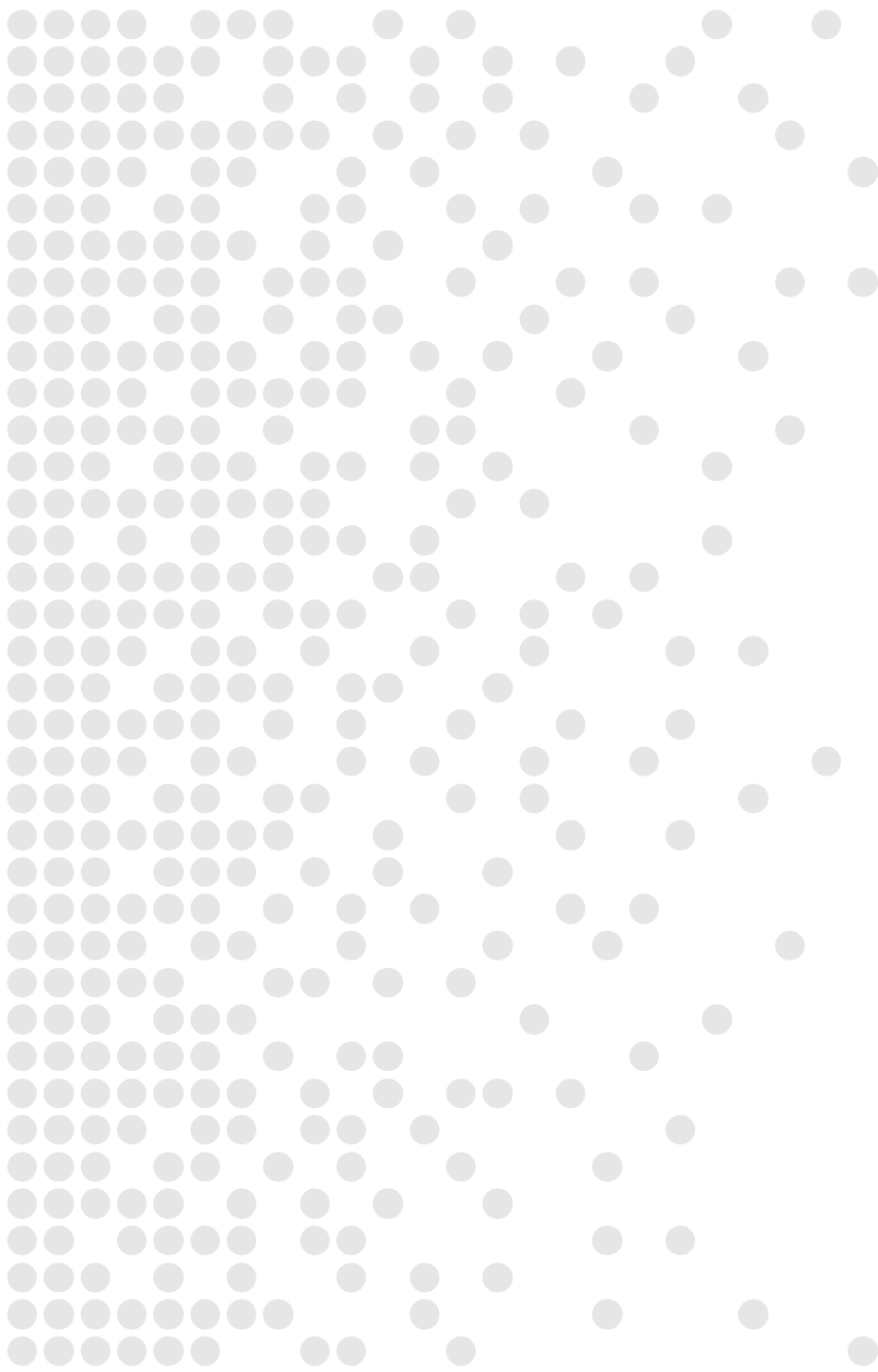
Ward models



From thirteen to four options



The range of options and models were assessed in light of input from the community in round two



Final options

Four “intermediate” options



- All the options are viable and each one provides effective representation – slightly different emphasis in the options
- Each option has benefits and drawbacks – there is no “perfect” solution
- Which combination of features (overall composition (size), one-member vs. two-member wards, full-time vs. part-time councillors) makes the most sense for Guelph?

Summary of options



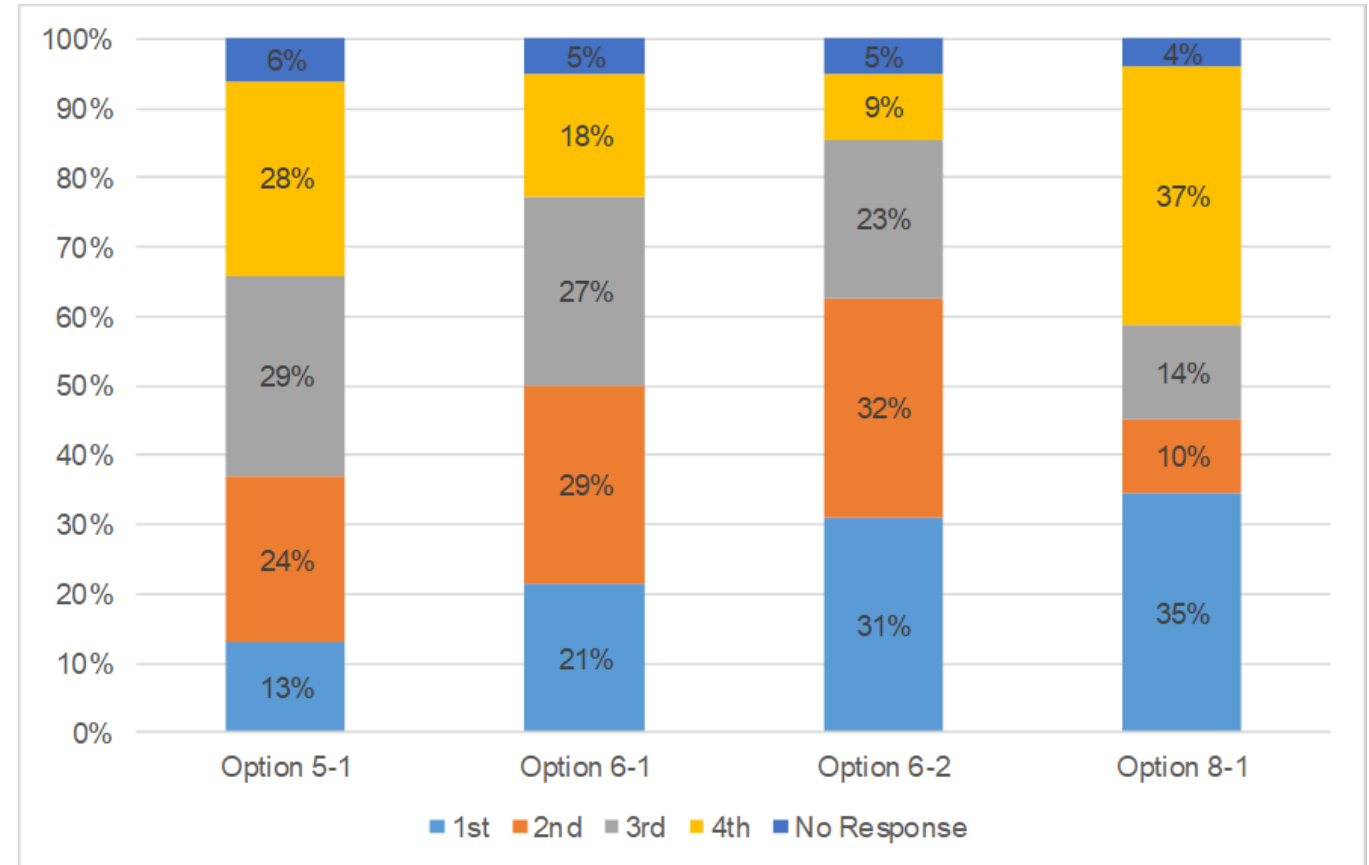
- All four options are favourable with respect to meeting the guiding principles

Element	6-1	6-2	5-1	8-1
Number of wards	6	6	5	8
Relative size of wards compared to status quo (affecting ease of candidates and councillors reaching all constituents)	Same	Same	Larger	Smaller
Councillors per ward (affecting perceived diversity of representation and electoral system possibilities)	2	2	2	1
Total council size (affecting overall representation versus governance efficiency)	12	12	10	8
Net degree of change from status quo	Least	Low	Medium	High

Public input on final options



- 35% of respondents identified option 8-1 as their most preferred option (1st ranking)
- If considered together, six-ward model is preferred
- No “clear winner”





Recommended option

Recommended option



We recommend that the City of Guelph adopt option 8-1 which has eight, single-member wards with full-time councillors

- The number of councillors is reduced from twelve to eight
- The smaller wards would provide residents with greater access to councillors
- Ward boundaries are based on preliminary option 8-A with minor adjustments based on the previous round of community consultation
- Full-time councillors could make the position attractive to a broader range of residents

Recommended option (cont'd)

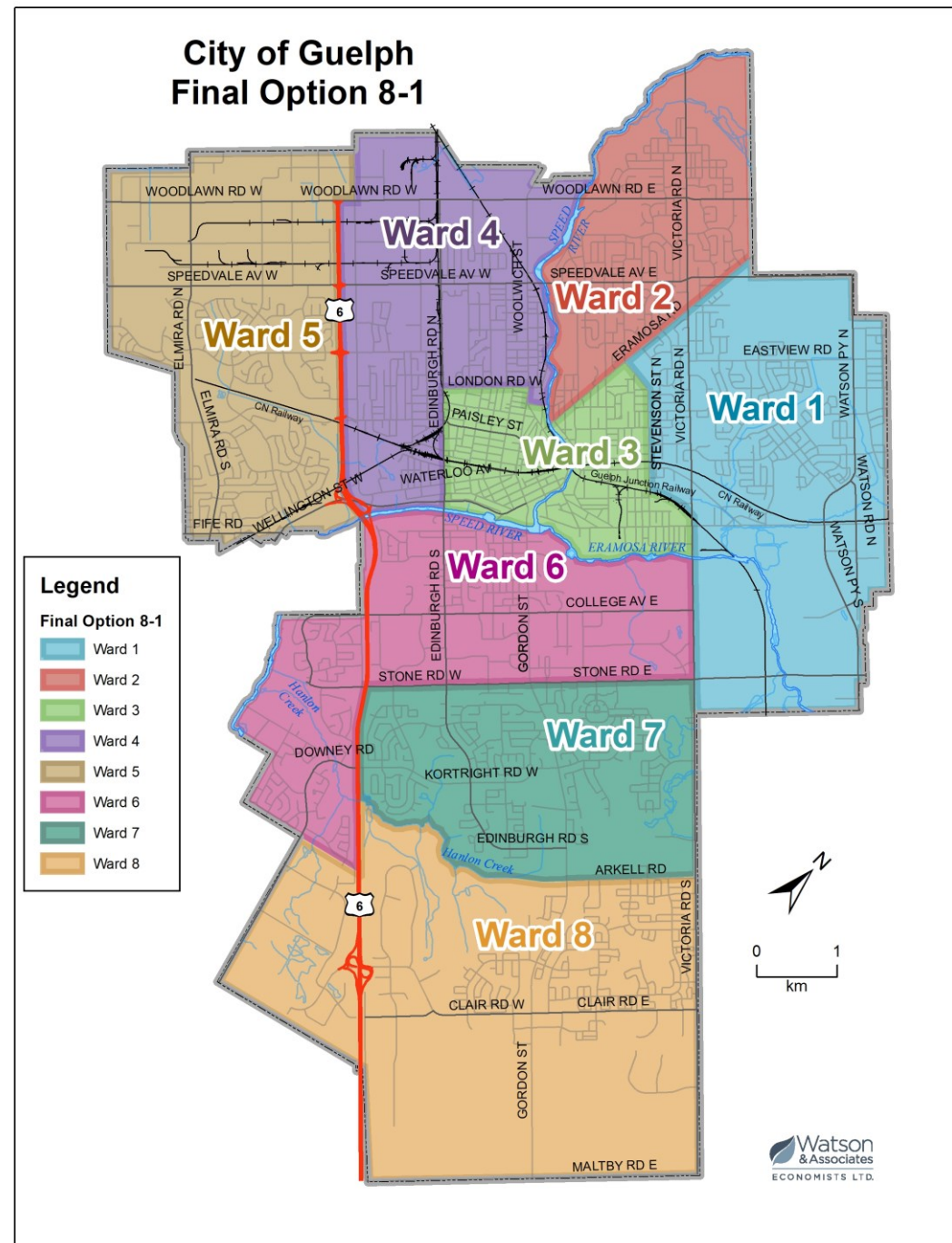
- Features approximately five wards north of the Speed and Eramosa Rivers and three wards to the south
- Favourable population parity in 2021 that erodes by 2031

Ward	2021 total population ¹	2021 population variance	2031 total population ¹	2031 population variance
Ward 1	22,400	1.11	27,595	1.16
Ward 2	15,290	0.76	16,515	0.69
Ward 3	17,565	0.87	21,765	0.91
Ward 4	20,275	1.01	22,185	0.93
Ward 5	23,310	1.16	25,185	1.06
Ward 6	21,865	1.09	23,415	0.98
Ward 7	20,390	1.01	24,860	1.04
Ward 8	20,005	0.99	29,175	1.22
City-wide	161,100	-	190,700	-
Ward average	20,140	-	23,840	-

¹ Includes population captured in the census and non-permanent post-secondary student population. Includes census undercount of approximately 3.4%.

Note: Numbers have been rounded.

Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd.



Recommended option (cont'd)



How did we arrive at this recommendation?

Challenges:

- Significant population growth since 1990
- Significant population growth expected over the next decade
- Limited flexibility for additional representation with 6 x 2 system
- A single-tier municipality with full range of services
- Difficult for part-time councillors to provide undistracted attention to increasingly more complex Council business

Recommended option (cont'd)



How did we arrive at this recommendation?

Opportunities:

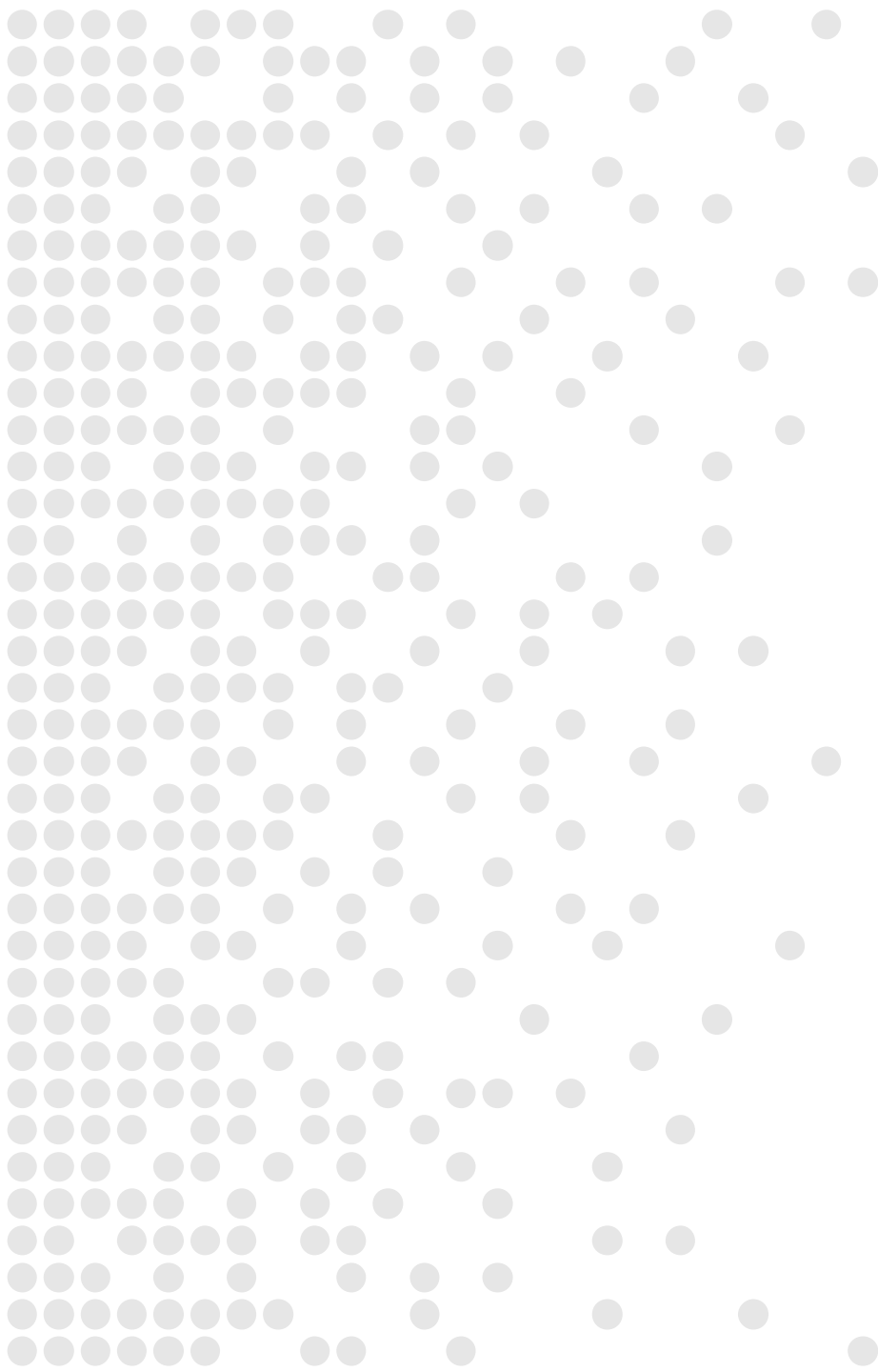
- Significant population growth expected over the next decade
- Organizational transformation open to the City as part of the W.B.R.
- Position Guelph for the future
- Show leadership, get ahead of public opinion
- Strengthen representation in more, smaller wards

Recommended option (cont'd)



How did we arrive at this recommendation?

- Survey did not produce a clear “winner” - was intended to gather insights not to determine a single recommendation
- Preference for a smaller Council (48%) or keeping it the same size (52%) was almost evenly divided
- Option 8-1 ranked first by 35% of respondents, option 6-2 by 31%



Alternative option

Alternative option



If it is Council's preference to retain twelve councillors elected in two-member wards, we recommend that the City of Guelph adopt option 6-2

- Option 6-2 is one of two final options using a six-ward model and would involve electing twelve councillors, two in each ward
- The option is consistent with the present system of representation (in place for 30 years), but with significantly different ward boundaries
- Ward boundaries are based on preliminary option 6-B, with some minor improvements based on insights from the previous round of consultations
- Councillors could continue to play a part-time role



How did we arrive at this recommendation?

- Strong preferences in the community for six-ward options and for two councillors per ward option, if you include option 5-1 and if you look at input from the previous council composition review
- Survey did not produce one simple “winner” because it was intended to gather insights and help people examine the options
- Preference for keeping Council the same size (52%) was almost evenly divided with making Council smaller (48%)
- Option 6-2 was ranked first by 31% and was the preferred second choice for slightly more people (33%)

Option 6-2

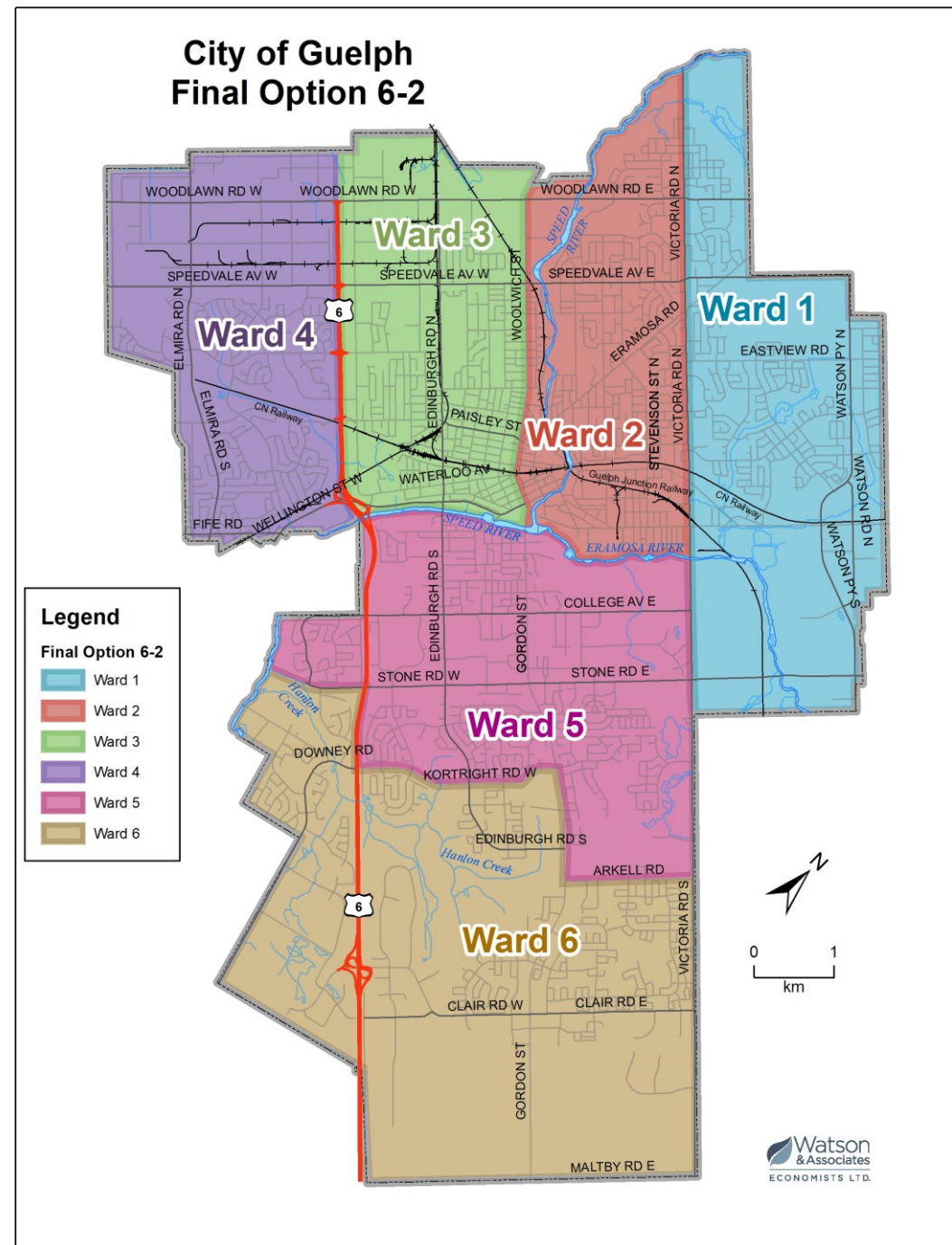
- Two wards south of rivers/west of Victoria Road
- Favourable population parity in 2021 while population parity is generally favourable in 2031, except in proposed ward 6

Ward	2021 total population ¹	2021 population variance	2031 total population ¹	2031 population variance
Ward 1	24,215	0.90	30,005	0.94
Ward 2	26,970	1.00	31,785	1.00
Ward 3	24,345	0.91	26,275	0.83
Ward 4	23,310	0.87	25,185	0.79
Ward 5	31,540	1.17	36,055	1.13
Ward 6	30,720	1.14	41,400	1.30
City-wide	161,100	-	190,700	-
Ward average	26,850	-	31,785	-

¹ Includes population captured in the census and non-permanent post-secondary student population. Includes census undercount of approximately 3.4%.

Note: Numbers have been rounded.

Source: Watson & Associates Economists Ltd.





Questions?



ECONOMISTS LTD.