

Staff Report



To	Committee of the Whole
Service Area	Infrastructure, Development and Enterprise Services
Date	Tuesday, June 6, 2023
Subject	Downtown Renewal: Status Update

Recommendation

1. That the report titled Downtown Renewal: Status Update dated June 6, 2023, be received.
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Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to update Council on Downtown Renewal efforts and in particular, the City’s Downtown Infrastructure Renewal Program (DTIRP). The short lists of options from two ongoing Class Environmental Assessments (EAs), for Wyndham Street and for the Macdonell Street bridge and Allan’s Dam structures are included in this report for information.

Key Findings

This is an exciting time for Downtown Guelph. The recent completion of a number of master plans within the city, together with the need to replace, upgrade and modernize our infrastructure, and the recent amendments to the City’s Official Plan through Official Plan Amendment 80 (OPA 80), including the provincial amendments, create an opportunity for transformational change in our Downtown. We have a rare opportunity to examine and build on the things we love about Downtown, as well as propose to make changes where there is room for improvement.

The City’s Downtown Renewal efforts encompass a number of projects that are underway and upcoming. These projects are inter-related and through the City’s Downtown Revitalization Advisor and Downtown Coordination Group, staff work to ensure that there is synergy between projects and that they are all advancing toward a shared goal of a healthy, vibrant and beautiful Downtown for generations.

The Downtown Infrastructure Renewal Program (DTIRP) is one of many projects under the overarching Downtown Renewal efforts. At this time, it is necessary for the City to replace and upgrade critical infrastructure in our core. We have a unique opportunity as we replace critical underground infrastructure to also transform how Downtown looks, feels and functions. The goal is for the reconstructed Downtown streets to be beautiful, safe and accessible for people to live, work, play, visit and enjoy Downtown.

Significant effort over the past decade has gone into preparing the City to undertake a generational renewal of municipal downtown infrastructure. With intentional and responsible planning, the infrastructure we build today will create the foundation for prosperity, sustainability and well-being for half a century or longer.

Strategic Plan Alignment

All projects that are part of the City's Downtown Renewal efforts work together in a cohesive fashion to align with the City's Strategic Plan pillars.

Downtown Renewal advances the Building our Future Strategic pillar as it promotes improving historic places and streets to create new places for gathering and recreation. It aligns with the Building our Future Strategic pillar as it reinforces and expands the role of the core as a prosperous, attractive and welcoming regional centre for residents, businesses and visitors alike.

It ties with the Sustaining our Future Strategic pillar through building quality infrastructure in a sustainable way that preserves our environment and improves the quality of life for all.

It also contributes to the Navigating our Future Strategic pillar as it explores new and improved infrastructure that safely and comfortably accommodates all urban modes of travel, while encouraging environment-friendly modes of movement.

Finally, it provides a unique opportunity to improve how the City communicates with residents and delivers services as well as continuously improve the delivery of our core services. This benefit directly ties to the objectives of Working Together for our Future Strategic pillar.

Financial Implications

The overarching Downtown Renewal Program is a significant multi-year financial investment that includes a number of projects and initiatives that in some cases have approved budgets (e.g. Baker District Redevelopment) and others that have been in the planning stages and included in the budget forecast for a number of years (e.g. DTIRP and future downtown riverfront park). It's important to note that the City's investment in the Downtown unlocks growth revenues and economic activity required to meet the goals of the Strategic Plan as well as commitments in the Housing Pledge.

A significant amount of budget sequencing and alignment work is currently underway to ensure these projects are coordinated for greatest efficiency and that all available revenue streams are leveraged. Through the 2024-2027 Budget, a summary of the project investments will be provided in more detail, and in addition, Council will continue to receive quarterly progress updates through the Tier 1 capital project reporting and the capital budget monitoring reporting.

Report

Downtown Renewal

Over the past decade, the City's efforts to revitalize Guelph's Downtown have been met with great success. We have renewed places and open spaces in our Downtown core and attracted new businesses and residents. To help mitigate the impact of COVID-19 felt by Downtown businesses, residents and visitors, we launched new

programs and initiatives to support economic recovery. Today, our Downtown remains an appealing destination, contributing to the economic vitality of the City.

Our Future Downtown

1: Macdonell Street Conceptual Rendering (from the 2014 Streetscape Manual)



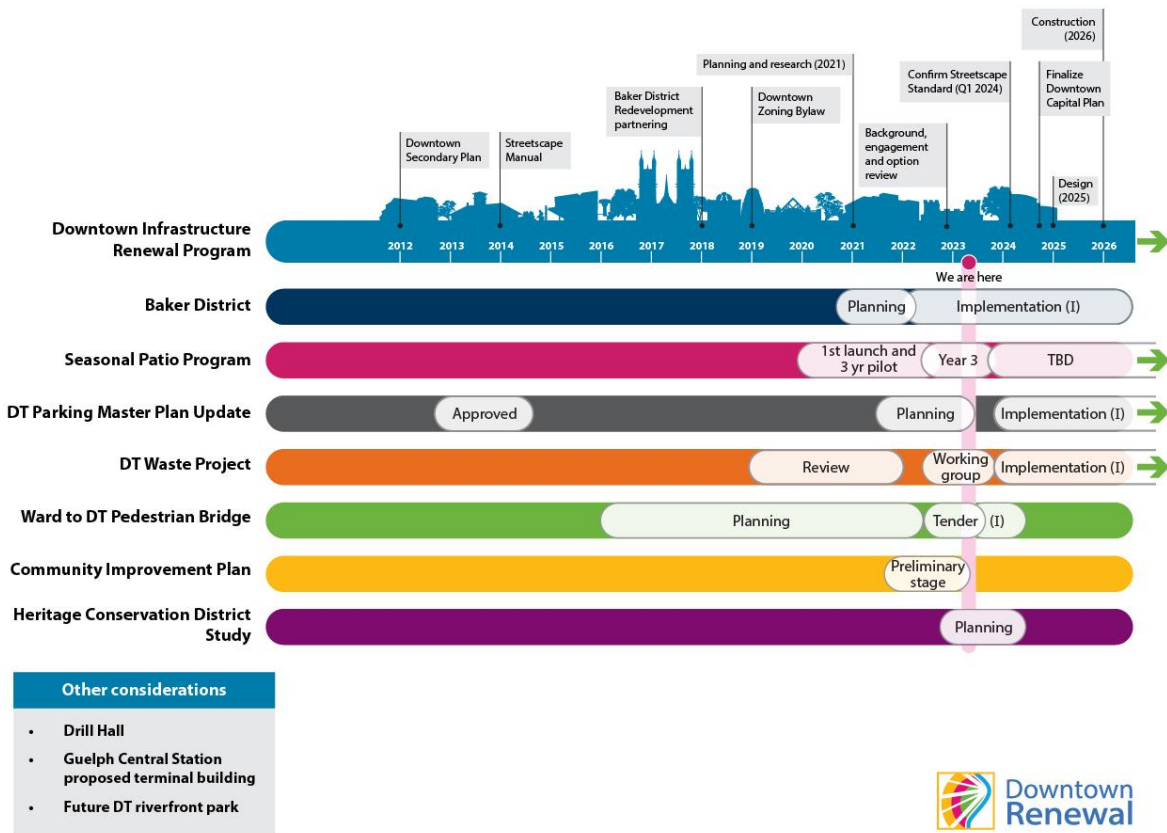
To build upon the past efforts and deliver on the compelling vision set through the Downtown Secondary Plan, the City is making significant investments in infrastructure, redevelopment, transportation, programs and initiatives over the next ten+ years. These investments are fueling several projects that are currently underway. The overall Downtown Renewal efforts will transform how Downtown looks, feels and functions, making it future ready to support growth to 2051 and beyond. We are working toward a common goal of renewing and revitalizing Downtown, resulting in a vibrant and thriving urban centre.

The Downtown Infrastructure Renewal Program (DTIRP) is one of many projects under the overarching Downtown Renewal Program. It is a [Tier-1 capital project](#) that will be transformative to how Downtown looks, feels and functions as it plans

to replace and upgrade the critical infrastructure in our core, ensuring that we have a stronger, safer and more accessible downtown for future generations.

To achieve the vision, the following projects are underway:

Figure 2: Downtown renewal program timelines



Since projects under the overarching Downtown Renewal Program are inter-related and mutually reinforcing, a critical component of the work involves ensuring that there is synergy between projects and that they are all advancing cohesively towards the shared vision of a transformed and revitalized Downtown. These projects are being strategically coordinated through the Downtown Revitalization Advisor and an internal working group known as the Downtown Coordination Group.

Impacts of OPA 80

City staff is in the early stages of reviewing the amendments of the OPA 80 related to Downtown (and the entire City) announced by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing on April 11, 2023.

The City does not see radical changes in the work scoped out for Downtown projects. However, there will be elements within some projects that will need to be reconsidered to accommodate the provincial changes related to Downtown (e.g., increased underground service sizes). All project teams will continue to work with Planning staff to understand the provincial amendments and the potential implications more fully.

The provincial changes made under OPA 80 includes modifying the maximum building height in the Downtown Secondary Plan area to 23 storeys. However, this

does not mean that there will be 23-storey buildings throughout Downtown in the immediate future. There are some areas within Downtown where this particular provincial change is not applicable including:

- Along Wellington Street and the rivers within the Special Policy Area.
- Within the protected view corridors of Basilica of Our Lady of the Immaculate.
- Where other policies related to things such as floor space index or gross floor area may restrict a site’s ability to achieve the height.

Note that the Special Policy Area along Wellington Street will be reviewed to address future development opportunities within that corridor.

Staff are working to calculate the changes to heights and future population projections to determine what it means for infrastructure improvements and amount of capacity required. Financially, the amendments to OPA 80 are considered favourable ([Shaping Guelph Financial Implications Summary](#)), as higher density translates to a higher net revenue position in this intensification area, bettering the City’s capacity to fund the planned investment.

Corporate Alignment

It is important that all projects comprising the Downtown Renewal program be guided by other strategies and plans that have been approved by Council.

Downtown Renewal considers the strategic direction and the objectives of the following corporate plans:

DT Renewal Corporate Alignment



Downtown Infrastructure Renewal Program Background

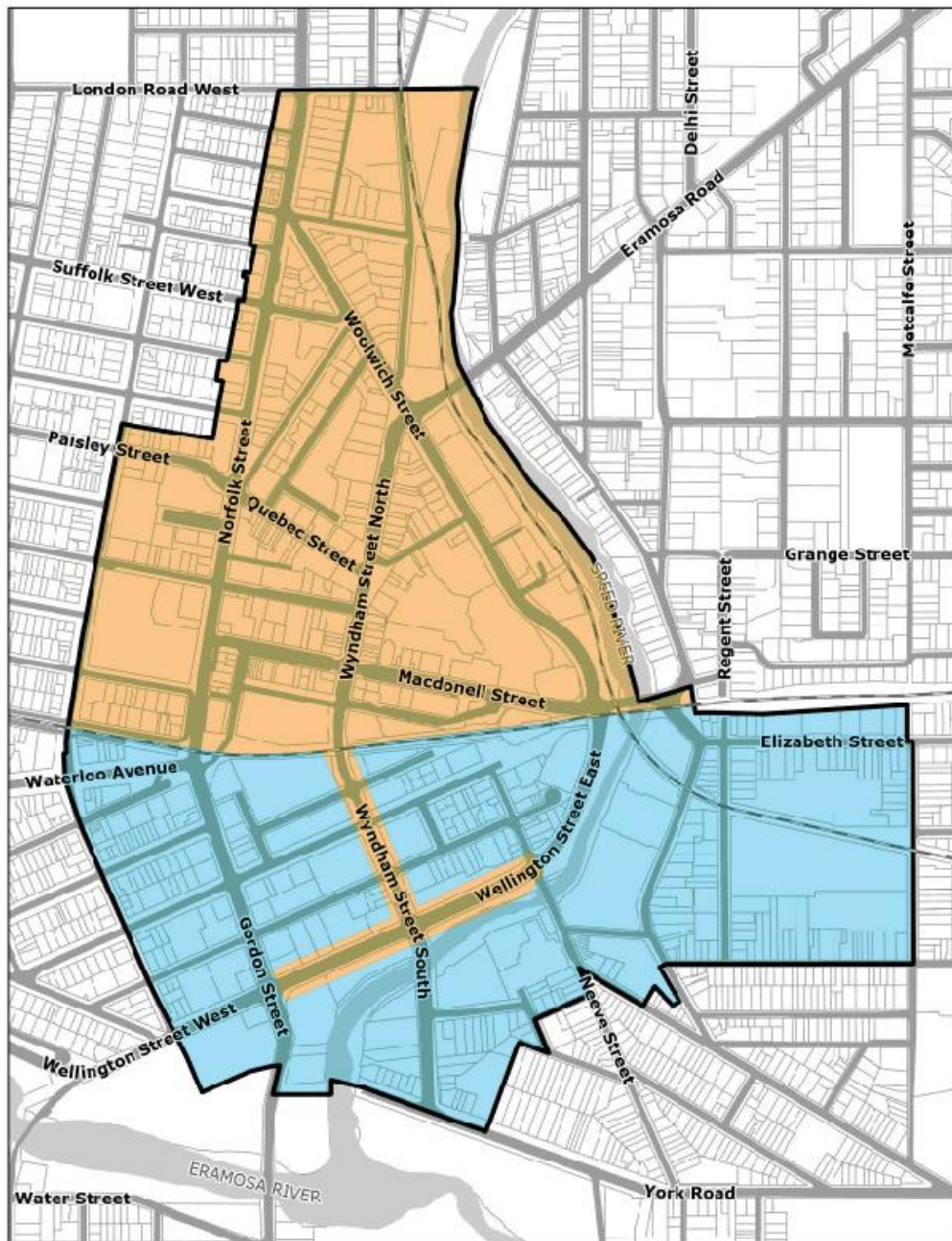
The Downtown Infrastructure Renewal Program (DTIRP) builds on vision set out in the Downtown Secondary Plan completed in 2012 and the 2014 Streetscape Manual. Significant effort over the past decade has gone into preparing the City to undertake a generational renewal of municipal downtown infrastructure. With intentional and responsible planning, the infrastructure we build today will create

the foundation for prosperity, sustainability and well-being for half a century or longer.

This transformational project aims to support anticipated new growth and also replace exiting, aging infrastructure. Some of the underground pipes are 100+ years old and need to be replaced before they start leaking or fail and cause considerable damage as well as disruption to essential services like water and wastewater. We also have an opportunity to upgrade the streetscape and enhance the quality of the public realm throughout Downtown. The overarching objective is to build more resilient, environment-friendly and socially inclusive infrastructure that transforms Guelph's Downtown into an even more prosperous urban centre where tens of thousands of people live, work, visit and play everyday.

The study area for the DTIRP is illustrated on the map below:

Figure 3: Study area for the Downtown Infrastructure Renewal program



Legend

- Area subject to current DTIRP
- future consideration

As part of this program of work the City is undertaking two Class Environmental Assessments (EA) as well as an overall Capital Implementation Plan.

Environmental Assessments consist of a problem/opportunity statement and involve undertaking technical studies and engaging the community to support decision making for large projects. The EAs are being completed in accordance with the Municipal Class Environmental Assessment process as per the Environmental Assessment Act. For DTIRP, the process will make determinations for:

- Wyndham Street EA: the function of Wyndham Street North for all users including the number of traffic lanes, available active transportation infrastructure and the configuration of the intersection of Wyndham Street and Quebec Street (St. George’s Square)
- Macdonell Street bridge and Allan’s Dam structures EA: confirm the requirements for required improvements and the preferred solution for the Macdonell Street bridge, the Allan’s Dam bridge, the Allan’s Dam spillway and sluiceway.

The Capital Implementation Plan will compile all the findings from the EAs, all background information and studies, as well as community engagement to determine the phasing, staging and timing of construction.

Following the completion of the two EAs and the Capital Implementation Plan in 2024, final detailed design will commence in 2025 and re-construction is anticipated to begin in 2026. The final timing for the completion of the work will be estimated as part of the Capital Implementation Plan, however, depending on the approach taken, it is anticipated that construction will take multiple years to complete.

Environmental Assessments – Short List of Options

An extensive list of options for both EAs was considered through community engagement and by key internal subject matter experts in late 2022 and early 2023. Based on the feedback received through those consultations as well as the technical information being developed through the ongoing work to support this project, some options on the extensive list have been eliminated. For the complete short lists for all options currently being considered through both EAs see Attachment-2.

Impacts of OPA 80 on DTIRP

The provincial amendments to OPA 80 significantly increase the potential density within the Downtown Secondary Plan area. While the buildingscape of the Downtown will change over time, the implications on the infrastructure renewal project at this time are not significant. Regardless of current and additional capacity challenges, the existing infrastructure is due for replacement to maintain critical works in a state of good repair. Through ongoing consultation with Planning, the DTIRP will use best available information to estimate the size of replacement underground piping. Sizing will be confirmed during final design to start in 2025. Surface works are not expected to be modified albeit pedestrian, cycling and vehicular use will increase. The increased density may mean that the underground servicing size will exceed the Local Service Policy limitations, which would mean more of the infrastructure would be eligible to be funded with development charges. This will be investigated and planned as part of the Capital Implementation Plan.

Next Steps

Downtown Infrastructure Renewal Program

The next steps for DTIRP will be community engagement over June and July 2023 as well as technical consultations to determine the preferred alternative for the two EAs to advance the preparation of the concept designs. It is anticipated that this project will come back to Council in 2024 to present the preferred options for the two EAs.

Following completion of the EAs, the phasing and staging will be developed through the Capital Implementation Plan throughout 2024.

Downtown Renewal

The next steps for Downtown Renewal include the ongoing and continuous integration of all projects. This will continue to occur through the City's internal Downtown Coordination Group and the Downtown Revitalization Advisor. The following things are anticipated to occur in the coming months:

- Baker District construction continues – including library groundbreaking
- Q2/Q3 2023 – Construction of Ward to Downtown Pedestrian Bridge
- Q3/Q4 2023 – Consideration of permanent Seasonal Patio Program; Downtown Parking Master Plan decision, Consideration of Downtown Waste Project recommendations
- Undertake the Downtown Heritage Conservation District Study
- Continue review of the City's Community Improvement Plan
- Planning for a new Guelph Central Station terminal building
- Work toward finding a final user for the Drill Hall
- Exploring costs and development a strategy for the proposed Downtown Riverfront Park

Financial Implications

The overarching Downtown Renewal Program is a significant multi-year financial investment that includes a number of projects and initiatives that in some cases have approved budgets (e.g. Baker District Redevelopment) and others that have been in the planning stages and included in the budget forecast for a number of years (e.g. Downtown Infrastructure Renewal and new downtown park). It's important to note that the City's investment in the Downtown unlocks growth revenues and economic activity required to meet the goals of the Strategic Plan as well as commitments in the Housing Pledge.

A significant amount of budget sequencing and alignment work is currently underway to ensure these projects are coordinated for greatest efficiency and that all available revenue streams are leveraged. Through the 2024-2027 Budget, a summary of the project investments will be provided in more detail, and in addition, Council will continue to receive quarterly progress updates through the Tier 1 capital project reporting and the capital budget monitoring reporting.

As part of the 2020 Budget, Council directed staff to review budget allocated to the Downtown Streetscapes and proposed civic square to identify good, better and best options for consideration and report back in 2022. This was directed due to preliminary cost estimates presented in the budget at that time which were based on preliminary design concepts in accordance with the approved Streetscape Manual. Since that time, staff have received preliminary costing options that will be considered and incorporated at the time of detailed design once the EAs are complete. Further, staff have worked to align preliminary streetscape costs within the project budgets and funded in alignment with all revenue sources, rather than isolating these to be just property tax funded. This is consistent with the budgeting approach for all other projects and will enable the use of additional funding sources like grants, municipal accommodation tax, new traffic calming revenues and community benefit charges.

Consultations

Community Engagement

Community engagement has been an important component of this project. From 2021 – 2022, we held several engagement events with our community to introduce the Downtown Infrastructure Renewal Program, set the context for the Wyndham Street Class EA and the Macdonell Class EA, present problem and opportunity statements and a list of all options before choosing the recommended option and solicit public feedback, questions and concerns about Downtown Renewal.

Over the course of two years, we have solicited public feedback through three online surveys launched on our Have Your Say platform, set up three pop-up events, sent notices to residents, met with the Downtown Guelph Business Association thrice and hosted our first Open House for the project. We've seen a satisfactory level of participation from the community. Our community has reflected their needs and desire for a transformed Downtown and their input has helped us develop a short list of options for both EAs.

Strategic Communications

The ongoing strategic communication efforts are ensuring that the community, including Downtown Businesses and residents, is well-informed about the project's milestones, community engagement opportunities and construction impacts early and consistently throughout the program. During the construction phase, communications will play an even more critical role to help mitigate construction impacts and gain the community's trust that the program is being managed well.

Internal communications are collaborative between Departments and Service Areas which is also contributing to the project's success.

Council Champion

This once in a generation project requires sustained political sponsorship and leadership to deliver the true benefits of the program and investment. To ensure the success of the program, staff have approached Councillor Klassen to fill the community champion role for Downtown Renewal. Councillor Klassen will work with staff as part of the program's overall change management to help educate and inspire the community to rally around this important work.

Internal Consultations

The DTIRP has compiled a list of over 40 internal subject matter experts (SMEs) from all affected departments across the City that the Program Team has called upon, and will continue to call upon, for their expertise. The DTIRP has held several consultations such as:

- Review of the 2014 Streetscape Manual with respect to legislative changes, materials availability and construction coordination challenges
- Development of potential options for the EAs, report review and shortlisting of the options, and,
- A Great Ideas Workshop to gather all potential ideas for service improvements amenity enhancements that could implemented during re-construction

The City's Internal Downtown Coordination Group meets regularly to discuss all ongoing projects and operational matters Downtown. These meetings ensure that

all project managers and operational leads are aware of what is occurring Downtown and what is planned for Downtown. This increased communication and coordination allows efficiencies to be identified and conflicts to be avoided.

Attachments

Attachment 1 – Downtown Renewal - Status Update Presentation

Attachment 2 – Environmental Assessments - Short Lists of Options

Departmental Approval

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