

Dear Mayor Guthrie and City Councillors:

With respect to the staff recommendation to make the Seasonal Patio Program permanent I would like to make the following comments.

The patio program as implemented takes public space - sidewalks and parking - and turns it into private space with access only to those persons who can afford to patronize the establishments offering service on those patios. I would suggest that while this benefits individual businesses it actually moves away from some of the stated goals in your Future Ready Plan such as ensuring that public spaces are available to everyone, to apply an equity lens to everything you do and to make downtown a vibrant space for everyone. There is another way to accommodate downtown establishments as well as achieving equity goals. Many cities both in Canada and around the world make their streets vibrant by offering seating and amenities to everyone using the space. These spaces can also include planters and electrical outlets with free wifi access. They can be animated with art, activities for young and old as well as performing arts, welcoming everyone to participate regardless of their economic circumstances. These kinds of programs build a sense of community and togetherness that is at the heart of your Future Ready plan.

An example of this kind of program takes place each summer on Wellington Street in Verdun, Quebec. In 2022 Rue Wellington was named the coolest street in the world by Time Out magazine. Having visited many times I see the joy on people's faces as they stroll the street interacting with visitors and neighbours. Verdun is not a wealthy community. They see the value in ensuring that their residents have access to lively. public spaces. Obviously there is the economic benefit of people frequenting the shops and restaurants in the area as well. There many other examples nearby.

So before you make a decision to make the current patio program permanent I would ask you to consider if there is a better way to use our public space downtown.

Sincerely

Teresa McKeeman

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Guelph