

Dear Mayor Guthrie and Members of the Committee of the Whole,

I am writing to you to ask for your support of the city staff recommendation to implement protected bike lanes on Wyndham St as well as improve the safety for pedestrians. Having safe and accessible spaces is important for the vibrancy of our city. As someone who walks and bikes to shop at downtown businesses, I enthusiastically support any move to make the area more enjoyable to visit.

With your support of the staff recommended design outlined in 14.1, you are contributing to improving the economic vibrancy of the downtown, as well as making Guelph a safer, healthier, and more affordable place to live and work. A vibrant streetscape attracts people as well as new businesses, adding more economic value to the downtown area. The protected bike lanes will serve as a buffer between vehicular traffic and pedestrians and during the cafe patio season will provide a buffer from the lane of motor vehicles, making for a more comfortable and enjoyable patio experience for diners.

Cities such as Toronto and New York are reimagining their streets to better accommodate people who bike, walk, and take transit. Since New York began implementing bike lanes and pedestrian right of way improvements:

“49% fewer commercial vacancies” at Union Square (included widened sidewalks and a protected bike lane), compared to a 5% increase borough wide.

“Up to 49% increase in retail sales” in businesses located at 9th Ave. (where buffered bike lanes were added) compared to a 3% increase borough wide. New York City Department of Transportation, 2012

In 2016 Toronto implemented bike lanes on Bloor St W, a popular destination, and one of the most studied corridors, found that the addition of bike lanes AND the reduction of on-street parking, improved the economic vibrancy of the area:

Debit and credit card spending increased by 4.45% The percentage of shoppers arriving by car remained at just 9% Visitors arriving by bike more than doubled (7% to 18%).  
70% of all traffic to the area before and after the study came via active modes of transportation (walking, public transit, or biking)

Since 2016, Toronto has implemented over 100 km of bikeways.

It's time for Guelph to become a safer and more accessible place for people which will contribute to improving the post covid-recovery for local businesses.

Thank you in advance for your leadership and consideration on this important project.

Jeji Varghese

