



City of Guelph Dark Sky Bylaw Community Engagement Summary Report



March 7, 2024
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Introduction

In consideration of a possible Dark Sky Bylaw, the City of Guelph engaged the community through two facilitated sessions and an online survey, seeking input about various dimensions of light pollution. Approximately 50 individuals attended the focus group sessions in November 2023, and 704 individuals completed the survey that was open for almost six weeks in January and February 2024. The report that follows captures the highlights from the community engagement activities to inform the staff report. Full verbatim responses are available here: [public meeting notes](#) and [survey summary](#).

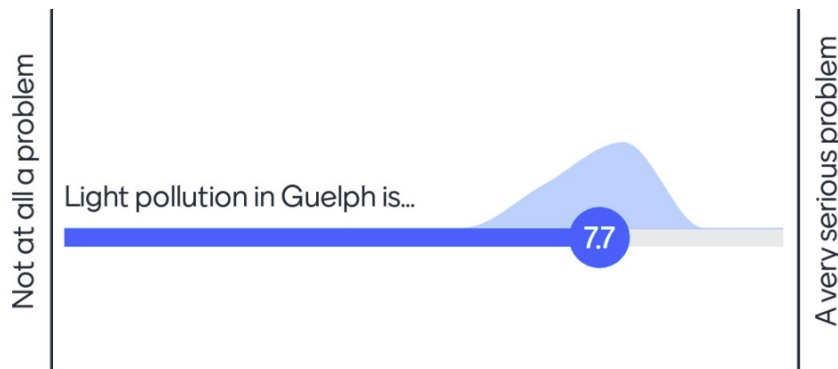


Focus Groups

- Approx. 50 participants attended at digital meeting, with 37 providing input in Mentimeter
- 12 people attended the in-person meeting (a few had also attended the digital meeting)

Based on what you've heard, how big a problem is light pollution in Guelph?





What level of City involvement would be appropriate in managing light pollution?

	Nov 9	Nov 14
Strong enforceable bylaw	24	1
Limited enforceable bylaw	9	3
Optional guidelines	2	0
Less than the current level	1	0
Keep it the same	0	0

To whom should regulations apply?

	Nov 9	Nov 14
Everywhere	30	2
All industrial and new builds	8	1
Same as now	1	0

Any other comments or advice as the City considers a Dark Sky regulation?

The discussions at these meetings were wide-ranging and several participants were appreciative of them being educational. Participants, for example from astronomical societies, offered links to further resources. Harm of overlighting to wildlife was highlighted, as was the need for targeted interventions such as lighting adjustments in timing, direction, brightness and colour.

Survey

- 86.4% of survey respondents did not attend one of the sessions in November; 10.2% preferred not to say if they did attend; 3.4% attended one or more of the sessions
- 667 of the respondents identified themselves as residents, 74 are business or industrial property owners, 27 are business or industrial property managers
- The positions held by respondents are mixed. 40.9% consider light pollution a significant or very big problem in Guelph, 34.1% consider it somewhat or a very small problem, 25.1% say light pollution is not a problem at all

Appropriate level of City involvement

Across various types of structures, respondents were invited to identify whether there should be:

- A bylaw to regulate all outdoor lights to some extent
- A bylaw to regulate just light trespass (when light is cast on a neighbouring property or structure)
- Optional guidelines to inspire less light pollution
- No regulations or interventions from the City

People were mostly supportive of a bylaw to regulate outdoor lighting, with between 36 and 59% of respondents choosing that response. Support for regulation was highest for signs/billboards, new industrial and new non-industrial businesses. It was lowest for existing residential. Schools, existing industrial/business and new residential fell in between.

The next most common response was for no City regulations. Those responses fell in the 17 to 24% range and were highest for residential buildings and schools. These response rates were very similar to those advocating for regulations just to limit light trespass.

Support for optional guidelines was lowest, ranging from 8 to 17%.

When asked an open-ended question about other property types or levels of City involvement, beyond indicating no City involvement, the most common answers referred to limiting streetlights, lights on in businesses when they are closed, sports fields, municipal businesses and parking lots.

Most responses indicated that there should be no exclusions from restrictions (122), but the next most common answers (30 each) involved safety/security considerations and emergency services such as hospitals.

Lighting quality

Many respondents were supportive of regulations addressing lights that cast an upward glow (467), a glow on other properties (434), a glow above the ground (368) and lights on after hours (345).

Concerns with regulations

The main concern with potential regulations was safety or security (125), followed by enforcement limitations (51) and potential costs to taxpayers of both enforcement and compliance (33). Twenty-seven people explicitly noted they had no concerns.

Other possible interventions

When asked about other anti-light pollution interventions beyond City guidelines or a bylaw, 79 people said “none” and 62 people mentioned “education”. The next most common answers generated 17 responses or fewer and mostly overlap with suggestions already mentioned above. Other new responses included rebates, timers and community events.

Definition of success

When asked “When the next generation looks up into a clear night sky in Guelph, what would you like them to see?” 274 people mentioned stars, moon, planets, and darkness. Other responses, such as safety, “same as we see now” and having “realistic expectations in a city” generated fewer than 15 responses each.

Other comments

In this section, 70 people indicated this issue should not be a priority for the City, particularly given other critical issues more deserving of City attention, such as affordable housing, rising taxes etc. Thirty people mentioned the importance of awareness and education. Twenty-eight expressed gratitude for this initiative, twenty-two mentioned safety concerns, and all other answers appeared fewer than 15 times.