



City Clerk's Office
City Hall, 1 Carden Street
Guelph, ON
N1H 3A1

September 5, 2024

Re: 26-40 Carden St. and 27-39 Macdonell Street

Dear Mayor Guthrie and Members of Council:

10C has been an active part of Guelph's downtown community for 16 years. As an organization, we support over 250 changemaking individuals and organizations committed to improving their communities. Throughout its history, 10C has also contributed to the downtown community through the revitalization of key downtown properties, including transforming the Acker's furniture building into a shared coworking and community events hub and more recently taking on the activation of the Guelph Farmers' Market.

In response to the proposed development, 10C gathered feedback from members and the broader community that reflects both the potential benefits and concerns of the proposal. We received written and verbal feedback from 30 individuals who live, work and gather in downtown Guelph. This feedback recognizes a critical need for more diverse housing options across the city – including owned, rented, and supported units – while stressing the urgent demand for affordable housing options. We collectively believe that a vibrant downtown is not just a place for commerce or tourism, but a livable community where residents thrive with access to a variety of amenities, services and entertainment options. Increasing housing options downtown is necessary, and will enhance its vibrancy, stimulate economic activity, and create a more attractive and inclusive environment for locals and visitors alike.

While we – 10C and contributing community members – recognize the many potential benefits of creating more housing downtown – we believe that this development poses several risks and could negatively impact the existing downtown neighbourhood and businesses if approved as-is.

Our key concerns are:

- **Approval of the proposed development could set a precedent for further ad-hoc site-specific zoning amendments that are not aligned with the Downtown Secondary Plan (2012/2016) and undermine the democratic processes that supported development of this plan.** The existing and award-winning Downtown Secondary Plan represents a comprehensive vision for the development and revitalization of downtown and was developed with extensive input from the community. We believe that the vision, targets and implementation strategies communicated in this plan should be adhered to when making decisions about development proposals in Downtown Guelph.



We also recognize that the recent years have seen new issues arise that are impacting Guelph. Increasing housing density downtown is a clear path to addressing many of these challenges, however, we believe that this should be done with a comprehensive and strategic approach – rather than through ad-hoc rezoning applications such as this one. In the event that the existing Downtown Secondary Plan no longer represents a path forward to addressing current housing needs and affordability, then new comprehensive plans and strategies should be developed with ample community feedback and input. We urge city planning staff and Council to honour the community vision and strategic development approach articulated in the Downtown Secondary Plan and reject the proposal in its current form.

- **The proposed development does not include any affordable housing and therefore does not align well with the City’s current needs and priorities for new housing.** As densification and revitalization within the downtown core is encouraged, there is a real risk that gentrification could push out existing residents and make downtown inaccessible for many. To ensure that downtown living remains affordable and accessible to everyone, the City should continue to advocate for affordable housing and negotiate a commitment to a meaningful percentage of below-market rents for this, and other future development sites, in alignment with the City’s Housing Affordability Strategy.
- **The proposed development and building typology would disrupt the current human scale of the downtown core and impact enjoyment and use of surrounding public spaces.** The 6-storey building height limit outlined in the Downtown Secondary Plan allows for increased housing density to be achieved within the downtown core, while maintaining both human scale and heritage character. The proposed development at 14 storeys in the middle of a block, has the potential to significantly disrupt the current scale and character of downtown and impact the enjoyment of existing public spaces – including Market Square. Additionally, approval of this proposal opens the door for buildings of similar height and scale nearby that could further decrease livability and desirability of the neighbourhood. It should also be noted that while the Downtown Secondary plan limits building heights in the historic core – it has designated several zones where high-rise development should be permitted – including many existing sites near the river.
- **The proposal is based on an assumption that adding residential density of 120 units with 6,000+ sq ft of commercial/retail space would have little to no impact on traffic and circulation.** Proposals that aim to reduce car-dependency and encourage more sustainable transportation choices are encouraging and can provide many benefits to individuals and communities. However, with no off-street parking and only one loading zone to accommodate deliveries and all forms of building access this proposal demonstrates an extremely limited understanding of circulation needs and existing challenges facing downtown. Traffic patterns currently on Macdonell Street are challenging at best. A development of this size without any parking or loading zones has the potential to exacerbate downtown traffic congestion and pedestrian safety issues – particularly when future developments such as the new Conestoga College Campus are also considered. These issues will not only impact those living and working downtown, but will further discourage people visiting downtown.



- **The Downtown Guelph neighbourhood currently lacks amenities and services to support developments like this.** For example, there is no affordable grocery store within walking distance of the proposed development, which could pose food access challenges for future residents. Free and accessible quality public spaces are also currently limited within the downtown core.

In addition to concerns over the long term impacts of the proposal outlined above, 10C and our members have concerns about the short-term disruptions this development will cause. While understandable and unavoidable, these impacts should be mitigated as much as possible through ongoing and open dialogue with property and business owners throughout the process.

We are particularly concerned about issues such as:

- Decreased foot traffic for businesses with frontage on Carden and Macdonell Streets. Restricted sidewalk and street access will impact the accessibility and visibility of businesses and service organizations – including 10C and our co-tenants. Additionally, obstruction of sidewalks could limit access for people with mobility challenges. The City and developer must ensure that accommodations are in place to ensure ongoing and equitable access.
- The construction period will reduce the availability of already scarce parking downtown and impact traffic circulation. Temporary solutions such as free access to the Market Parkade and clear signage should be considered to ensure access to businesses and service organizations surrounding the development.
- Increased noise and general disruptions. 10C operates an active coworking space with hundreds of daily users accessing offices, shared kitchen facilities and meeting and event spaces. Noise and disruptions during the construction process could impact their use of the space and negatively impact revenue for 10C.

In summary, while recognizing the need for more housing options and increased density of uses downtown, we are concerned that this proposal conflicts with the Downtown Secondary Plan, lacks affordable housing options, and could lead to gentrification and a strain on existing services, amenities and resources in the neighbourhood. We urge staff and Council to reinforce the Downtown Secondary Plan as the guiding document for downtown development and ensure that new developments align with this vision for a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable downtown that supports current and future needs. Please include 10C in further updates on this matter at info@10carden.ca or by phone at 519-780-5030.

Sincerely,

10C Shared Space