

September 5th, 2024

Community Input with 10C:

Proposed Skyline Development 26-42 Carden St & 27-39 Macdonnell St.

Attn: City of Guelph

My name is Nicole Hogg and I am the owner of Atmosphere cafe + etc. in downtown Guelph. As a University of Guelph alumnus my appreciation for the City of Guelph grew during my studies and led me to purchase my first home here and open my business in 2004.

I am writing to formally express my concerns to the proposed Skyline development at 26-42 Carden Street & 27-39 Macdonnell Street. As a business owner on Carden Street for over twenty years, I have witnessed numerous development projects in our immediacy. These include, the new City Hall, Carden Street redesign, Market Square, Market Parkade, Wilson Street redesign, CN Rail Bridges, and various condo developments. Each of these projects has significantly impacted our business operations, and we are now again facing further disruption this September with the upcoming removal of paver-stones for the overhaul of the gas main infrastructure on Carden. We are very familiar with the impacts of prolonged construction projects and the effects thereof, on our business.

We believe the proposed development will lead to significant interruptions in our daily business activities, including:

1. **Decreased foot traffic:** Noise, and restricted access, which can severely impact sales and overall business viability.
2. **Increased Noise Pollution:** generated from construction activities can affect the quality of life for residents and deter customers from visiting, leading to potential revenue losses and diminished customer satisfaction.
3. **Traffic Congestion:** Construction can exacerbate traffic, creating inconvenience for customers and employees, which may result in decreased business patronage and reduced operational efficiency.
4. **Environmental Degradation:** Urban construction can lead to increased air and water pollution, which can negatively impact local ecosystems and the health of the surrounding community.
5. **Visual Aesthetics:** The presence of large construction sites can detract from the visual appeal of an area, making it less attractive to potential customers and out of town visitors.
6. **Accessibility Issues:** Construction can obstruct sidewalks and entryways, making it difficult for individuals with disabilities to access businesses, potentially leading to legal compliance issues and loss of customers.
7. **Economic Displacement:** As construction projects alter the local economic landscape, businesses may face increased competition, higher operational costs, and even displacement.

- 8. Impact on Property Values:** Prolonged construction activities can lead to a temporary decrease in property values, which may adversely affect the financial stability of businesses and property owners.

Since the acquisition of 26-42 Carden Street & 27-39 Macdonell Street, the action and inaction on the part of Skyline has been concerning.

Firstly, was Skyline's inability to recognize the impact of the vacant storefronts at 26-42 Carden Street on the local business environment. As each business's lease expired, we witnessed the decline of this once vibrant commercial area. Skyline management was contacted via email with suggestions to activate the vacant spaces, such as using attractive lighting and holiday decorations to create a more inviting environment. We were successful at the lighting initiative, however, our requests for access were dismissed, with the response from a Portfolio Manager that indicated: "As we are getting close to the start of construction on this site... I'm sorry that we cannot host anyone this year", December 2022.

We also have concerns regarding the transparency and engagement efforts of the developers. Starting specifically with the "community meeting/open house" on October 19th, 2023. We were given no prior notice of the session and attended only by-chance. Predictably, the meeting was not well attended.

At the conclusion of this information session, I suggested to the Vice President of Skyline Retail that short-term commercial leases be investigated so the space did not continue to sit idle as a "dead zone" along the commercial corridor. I was told that such leases were not sought after or viable. Follow-up emails discussing the possibility of art installation projects, such as those garnering great success on Barton Street in Hamilton (<https://www.bartonvillage.ca/anything-is-possible-on-barton>) were pointed out. We were politely informed that well thought out proposals would be considered, specifically those that "wouldn't cause major heartburn". Nothing ever came of our efforts for suggested improvement of the storefronts, other than feelings of being dismissed.

It was only after persistent requests in Spring of 2024 that Skyline agreed to the idea of applying of temporary paper to the vacant storefront windows. This provided a more aesthetically pleasing uniform appearance to the dis-jointed facades and this gave the illusion to the possibility of upcoming activity.

Furthermore, the proposed Skyline development represents an excessive departure from the existing zoning regulations outlined in the Downtown Secondary Plan. This plan specifically directs that the tallest buildings be situated in the lowest geographical areas along Wellington and beside the Speed River, with a maximum height of six stories in the core to preserve the city's heritage character. Altering these bylaws would undermine the extensive work invested by city staff and citizens in creating this extensively researched plan.

We at Atmosphere cafe + etc. believe the development at 26-42 Carden Street & 27-39 Macdonell Street directly threatens the viability of our business. The aforementioned list of concerns notwithstanding, we currently have an encroachment agreement with the City of Guelph for space fronting on Carden street for seasonal patio usage until December 2034. This development will not only infringe upon that agreement, but it will also make it next to impossible to feasibly operate a patio in the first place.

While we acknowledge the potential benefits of increased housing in downtown Guelph, we urge you to reconsider the height variance and maintain the six-story limit. We also recommend setting a firm start-date and end-date for the project to minimize the duration of disruptions. The smaller the scale, the shorter the time frame of overall disruption.

Skyline's investment in Guelph should not overshadow or negatively impact long-standing independent businesses in the area. We are deeply concerned that our once-thriving commercial street will not be able to withstand another major challenge.

Thank you for considering our input.

Sincerely,

Nicole Hogg  
owner/operator.  
Atmosphere cafe + etc.  
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We are appreciative of the collective efforts of the team at 10C to provide accurate information and public knowledge of input. We thank and commend them for their efforts to compile a community submission to this proposal.