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Clerk's Office
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Dec 10, 2024 Council Meeting Agenda items 3.2
Guelph Housing Affordability Strategy 2024

General

I support and applaud the draft Housing Affordability Strategy and propose that it go further to address our housing crisis.

Planning should be proactive not re-active to development proposals.
For example: several projects in Guelph require zoning amendments including hospice, humane society, places of worship, group homes, shelters, long term supportive housing, lodging homes and cohousing projects.

To meet the housing needs we have to adapt to innovative lifestyles such as cohousing, co-living, Abbeyfield Society and expanded occupancy for lodging homes to support cultural needs of new Canadians, nuclear families and organizations or groups especially not-for-profit and social service organizations.

We need to change our attitude from being planning police enforcing bylaws and complicated regulations to proactive forward thinking visionary planners to engage sociologists, psychologists and community planners.

We need to educate staff, Councillors and the public about the priority of communal good, healthy families, neighbourhood best practices, rather than societal tendency for individual rights, privacy, separation, antagonism and isolation.

We need to share information websites, have talks, slide shows, invite speakers, debates, competitions to highlight innovative new and future developments.

We need to further streamline the site plan approval process and speed up comments, accepting common standards adopted by other municipalities that are not accepted by Guelph Engineering & Works (for example acoustical, permeable paving, urban design with front doors facing the street and fake second floors).

Zone sites and infill development for not-for-profits who can't afford to compete with commercial, industrial or market priced housing.
We need to educate neighbourhood associations and the public before development applications are submitted. Bring in Ward Councillors to pre-consultation meetings,

facilitate design charettes, promote a collaborative design process and conduct mediation and arbitration where necessary.

Avoid restrictive exclusionary zoning and allow multiple compatible especially residential uses on properties such as Office Residential zoning on both sides of Woolwich St from London Rd to Powell.

Promote community land trusts and cooperative partner ownership to secure properties for affordable housing in perpetuity. Facilitate land purchases to stimulate this model with City lands, boards of education, Grand River Conservation Authority, provincial and federal land holdings.

As done for Hanlon Creek Industrial Park, initiate purchase of land for sale to developers of multi-residential affordable housing for example Dolime quarry, and the Yorklands.

Encourage mid rise (3-4 storey) development throughout the City rather than high rise glass towers and their shadows, winds, temperature drops, lack of street contact, neighbourhood impact, landscaping, negative impact on pedestrian and grade level places, parks, amenity spaces.

It is better to integrate affordable housing units into all new developments rather than separate buildings, promote diversity and mixed uses.

Encourage mixed use developments with wide range of compatible complimentary uses in addition to affordable rental housings, for employment, education, childcare, retail, public use, worship, entertainment, café, parkettes.

We need to disallow removal of current affordable housing and encourage renovation, upgrading and retention of existing affordable housing projects...or as part of the construction of additional building require retention, replacement or increase of affordable units to ensure none are lost and hopefully more are constructed.

The Dwelling Unit definition does not address alternative communal living lifestyles known to be healthy, sustainable and climate resilient such as co-living, cohousing, extended family units.

Lift restrictions to the number of unrelated persons. What does this have to do with a dwelling unit. How do you define a nuclear family or relatives?

Design and provide funding for climate resilient centres, emergency shelter buildings
There will be more floods, ice storms, power outages, water and sewer system failures, pandemics and weather events.

Allowing 4 dwelling units per property across the City is too much and not enough depending on grading, property boundaries (triangular lots, long narrow lots, infill, trees,

heritage structures, available services, class of street (major arterial or narrow old residential streets).

I recommend standards be loosened up to suit specific site conditions.

Close sections of residential streets to break up traffic patterns, speed and slow cars, provide walking, pedal bike streets, parking at ends, parkettes and roundabouts (like Vancouver) and woonerf in Netherlands.

Separate motorized scooter e-bikes from pedestrian walks, install speed bumps, guard rails to narrow the path especially before sharp turns, pedestrian intersections, building entrances, loose gravel sections for traffic calming.

Provide public more portable toilets in parks, along trails and public spaces for elderly and winter season when public washrooms are locked.

Provide parkettes like Japanese mini tree plantations to increase tree cover.

Locate high use public buildings in parks such as libraries, restaurants, cafes, work places, childcare, schools and seniors activity centres.

Design public buildings for easy conversion and follow great examples such as the Drill Hall to visual art centre, bowling alley to Evergreen Seniors Centre, seed mill to Youth Music Centre, Navy League to the Boathouse. Consider public private partnerships vs City managed facilities.

Collaborate with community organizations and private partners to maximize use of existing buildings in off hours (Evergreen is under-utilized at night and early mornings, schools, chamber of commerce, social service agencies, not-for-profits, community service).

Provide municipal meeting space (City Hall, community centres, library, recreation centres) for not-for-profit non-partisan groups with an agenda to promote affordable housing.

Open gathering spaces, meeting rooms for free public use by fledgling not-for-profits with aims to promote environmental sustainability, climate change mitigation, social responsibility and community building organizations such as Guelph SCAN (Seniors for Climate Action Now), GCAN (Guelph Climate Action Network), Green Drinks, GCAT (Guelph Coalition for Active Transportation), eMerge, ...

Educate and provide linkages of affordable housing endeavours to U of G, Conestoga, UGDSB, WDGRCSB, Crestwicke Academy, Guelph Christian School, high school environmental and social justice clubs, alternative schools, outdoor education,...

Create sheltered south facing warm seating areas in parks for winter and should season use.

Opportunities for Affordable Housing

Brownfield site identification, remediation and re-development not necessarily for housing but for other less restrictive uses such as low occupancy warehousing, transportation, industrial, commercial uses when these other uses can be converted over to affordable housing.

Sponsor workshops for local Guelph builders, designers, architects, engineers, developers, planners, land surveyors and coordinate with professional chapters to collaborate and problem solve thru design charettes.

And most importantly listen and implement their findings and recommendations. I've attended and made comments in many other similar attempts inviting public input only to find these comments are shelved.

Prioritise local business through the circle economy.

Celebrate, award and promote successes, doors open for sustainable designed Passive Buildings, Net Zero, Healthy Buildings.

As of right, allow residential uses of commercial and office, commercial, light industrial zoned properties (due to COVID and working from home) convert to residential especially for affordable units.

Expand permitted home occupations to collaborative, live work places.

Avoid the need to require minor variances, severances, zoning amendments, OPA for conversions to residential uses.

Lifestyles have changed, there are more singles of all ages, growing elderly population. Family units are not 2 parents and 2 kids, cultures are no longer just European, the high cost of Guelph housing makes it very difficult for our children to stay in the City.

Integrate affordable housing units with market priced to avoid stigma of affordable And promote balanced housing reflecting the population.

Allow of alternative housing and lifestyles thinking particularly for youth, singles, young couples, new Canadians, extended families, single parents.

Innovative low cost, low rental "parking spaces" hostel, dormitory type accommodation with very small cubicle for bed and remainder of living spaces shared: communal kitchen, toilets, shower, open vanities, dining, study/work/offices, virtual meeting rooms, laundry, workshop, gardens.

Remove occupancy limits for lodging houses, rooming houses, group homes, co-living, cohousing and Abbeyfield Society Houses www.abbeyfield.ca

Permit temporary (1 yr renewable conditional on completion of affordable housing projects) tiny houses, modular homes, movable dwelling units (not trailers) and service hookups.

Educate neighbourhood associations in alternative and trending housing, needs and uses to promote balanced communities.

Offer and promote courses, workshops, evening programmes to high schools, resident groups, service clubs, high school clubs, developers, real estate agents, financial institutions, insurance underwriters

Loosen up building codes to allow for multi family housing, alternative measures, reduced exits, single stairs, sprinklering vs fire resistance, non-combustible construction, enhanced fire alarm detection systems, 24/7 supervision

Parking

Allow reduced or no parking if there is nearby parking, public transit, demonstrate landscaped, gardens, boulevard can be used to provide sufficient parking.

Reduce parking requirements on residential sites which have the ability to share parking for off peak times when capacity is available such as schools, churches, retail shopping centres, offices, commercial, industrial, apartment buildings, park, recreational buildings,.....

Large apartment buildings built in the 1970's with parking required for 1.25 per unit which often have vacancies, and parking spaces 10 ft x 20 ft, redo parking lots using 1:1 ratio and smaller spaces to gain building space for small affordable apartments.

Retail has changed significantly with online shopping which leaves many retail neighbourhood strip plazas with vacancies and under used parking lots which can be converted to affordable rental housing with a zoning amendment.

Require parking for delivery vehicles so they don't have to block traffic lanes.

Transportation

To improve public transportation to heavily travelled locations use Guelph Junction Railway for rapid transit corridor and extend rail line to the University.

Build minimal station platforms for barrier free accessibility and basic shelter.

Incentivise reuse, conversion of older buildings, industrial, heritage sites existing infrastructure.

Many neighbourhoods built form 1850 – 1915 functioned without cars, parking, 2 way roads and had functioning public and active transportation as walkable communities

Encourage narrow lanes, short one way roads with bypass spaces

At pedestrian crossings provide stop light buttons with short (10 second) activation of red lights for traffic.

I plan on delegating to Council to answer questions and elaborate on these items.



David McAuley