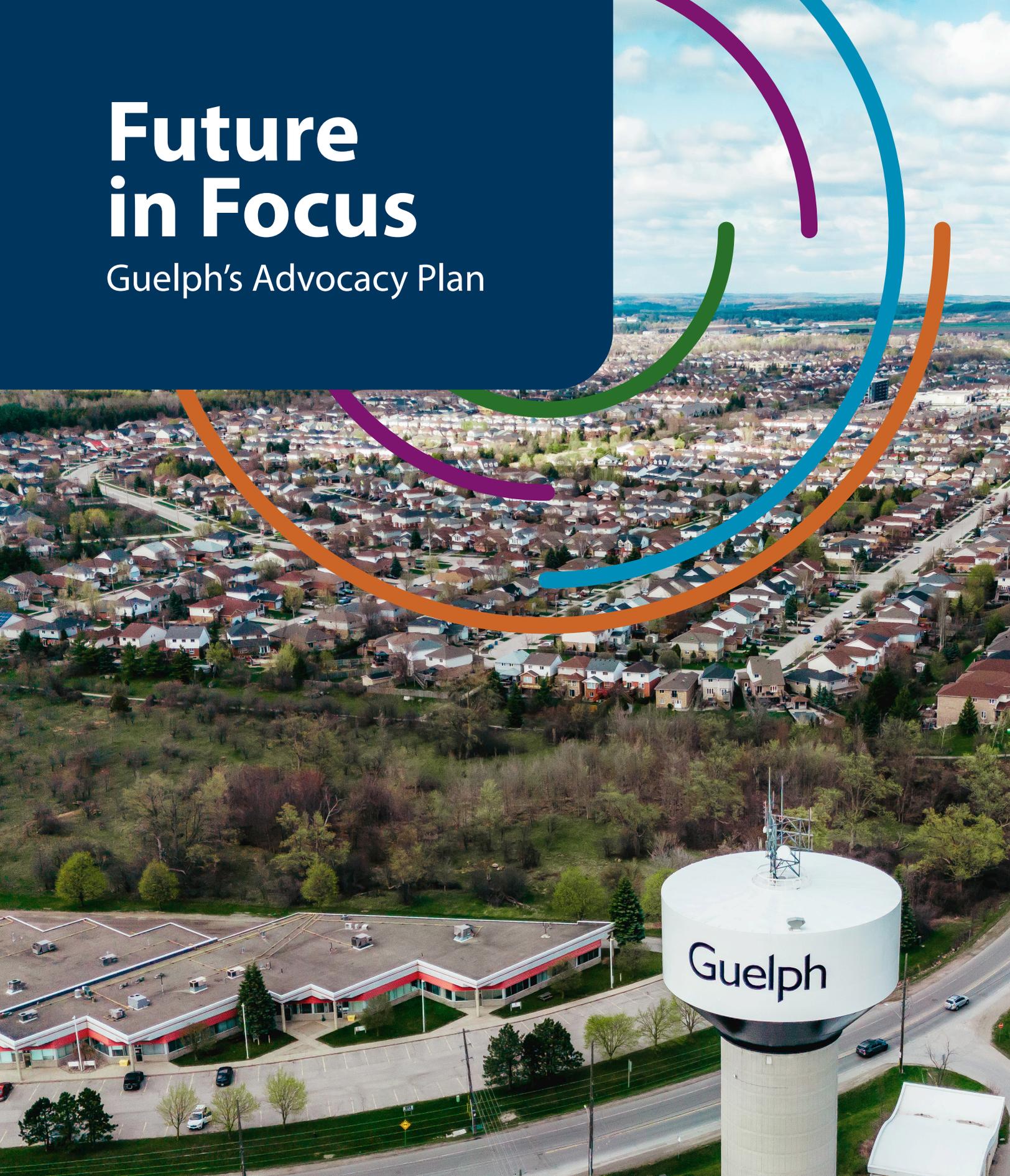
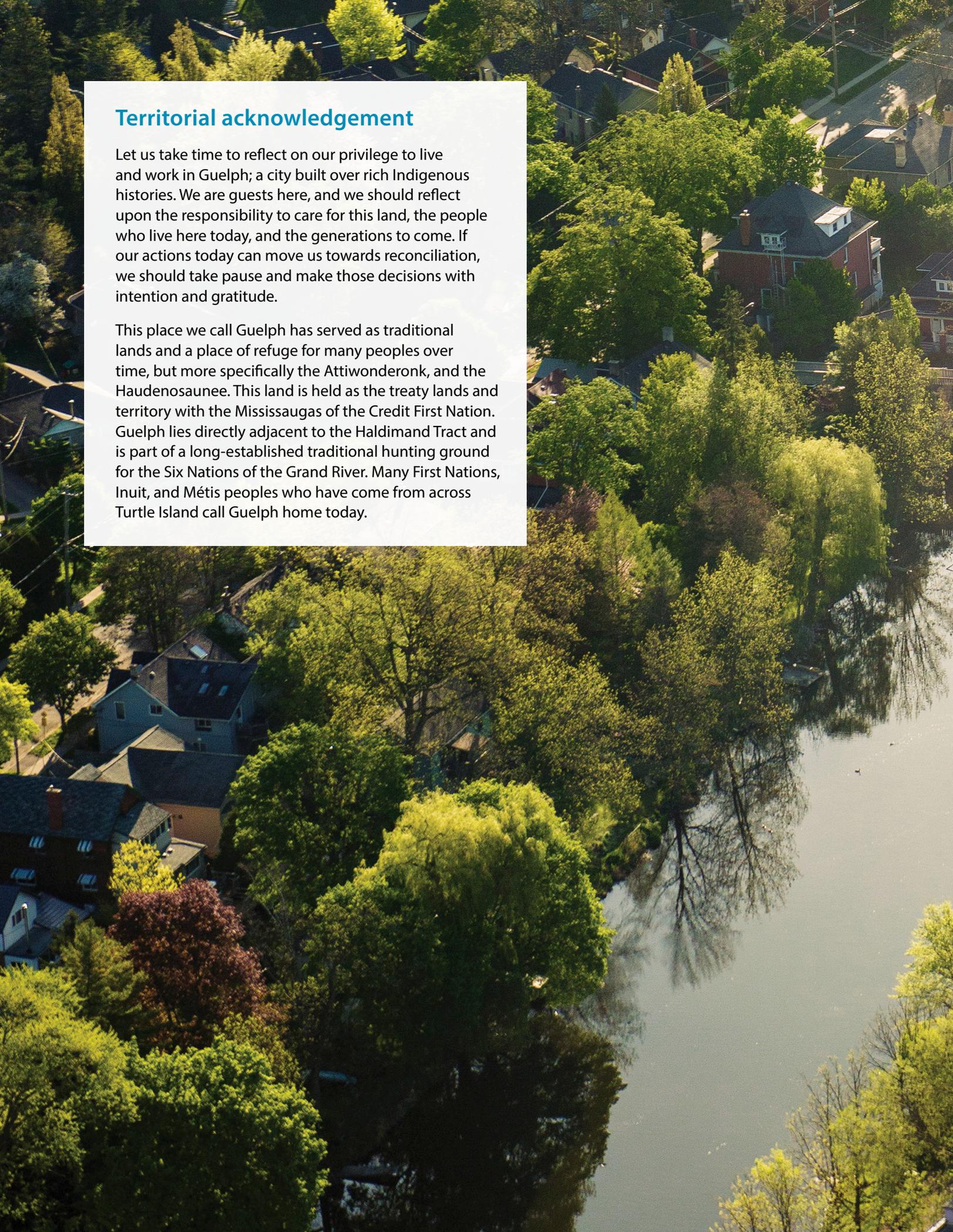


Future in Focus

Guelph's Advocacy Plan



An aerial photograph of a residential neighborhood in Guelph, Ontario, Canada. The image shows a mix of houses, some with dark roofs and others with lighter colors, interspersed with lush green trees. A river or stream flows through the lower right portion of the image, reflecting the surrounding greenery. The overall scene is peaceful and scenic, capturing the natural beauty of the area.

Territorial acknowledgement

Let us take time to reflect on our privilege to live and work in Guelph; a city built over rich Indigenous histories. We are guests here, and we should reflect upon the responsibility to care for this land, the people who live here today, and the generations to come. If our actions today can move us towards reconciliation, we should take pause and make those decisions with intention and gratitude.

This place we call Guelph has served as traditional lands and a place of refuge for many peoples over time, but more specifically the Attiwonderonk, and the Haudenosaunee. This land is held as the treaty lands and territory with the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. Guelph lies directly adjacent to the Haldimand Tract and is part of a long-established traditional hunting ground for the Six Nations of the Grand River. Many First Nations, Inuit, and Métis peoples who have come from across Turtle Island call Guelph home today.



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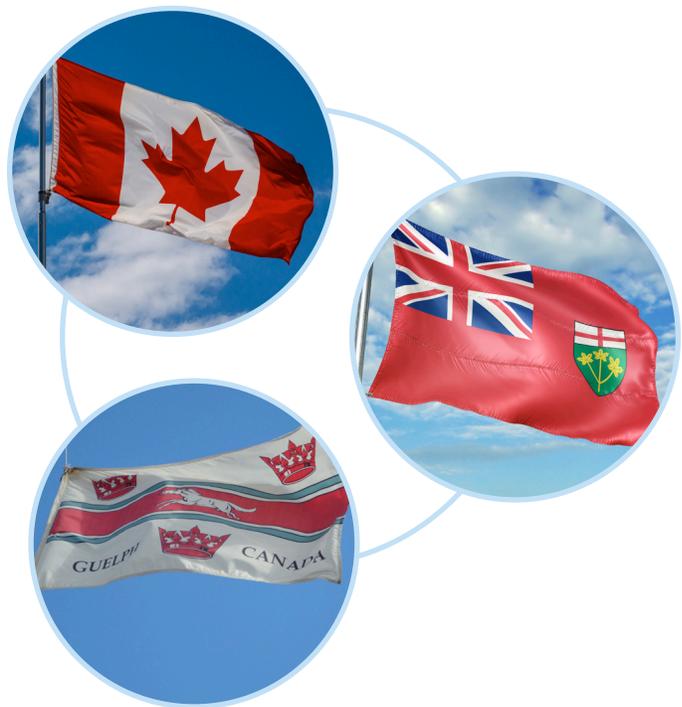
Introduction

Future in Focus—Guelph’s Advocacy Plan is one of the key initiatives under the Future Guelph Strategic Plan, and sets out a renewed and strategic approach to the City’s advocacy work. Developed through extensive engagement with Council and City leadership, this plan sets out a consistent process for the City’s Policy and Intergovernmental Services division to identify, prioritize, and action key advocacy issues. It provides a systematic framework for evaluating advocacy opportunities, selecting appropriate tactics, and fostering a united advocacy voice. The plan also sets out the general directions for advocacy required to support the strategic themes of Future Guelph, providing a roadmap for the City’s advocacy in the coming years.

Why Advocate?

The City of Guelph faces many complex challenges which transcend municipal jurisdiction, and encompass multiple areas of focus. These challenges often have real impacts on the City’s ability to provide municipal services to the community, and require innovative approaches and intergovernmental collaboration to come to a solution. Advocacy is the process by which the City can create awareness of specific issues, work towards influencing decisions made by other levels of government to achieve desired results, and ultimately provide positive benefits to the community.

Through active advocacy on emerging and long-term issues impacting Guelph, decision makers become aware of, and can respond to Guelph’s calls to action. Advocacy is essential to secure the legislative, financial, and program support that helps the City serve the community, and support its progress towards the objectives set out in the Future Guelph Strategic Plan.



The Need for an Advocacy Plan

In recent years, the City has seen a rise in complex, multi-stakeholder issues identified as advocacy priorities, and a subsequent increase in direction from Council and City leadership to undertake advocacy work. The City of Guelph is not alone in this trend - municipalities across Ontario are also dealing with issues which require new, ambitious, and collaborative approaches to come to a solution.

As advocacy becomes increasingly important to advance municipal priorities, there is a clear need for an updated and strategic approach to the way that the City conducts its advocacy work. With limited opportunities available for the City to engage directly with decision makers, a strategic approach to selecting the most relevant and impactful topics for each opportunity is essential to avoid Guelph's voice being lost and overlooked by other levels of government. Another important role is coordinating the diversity of voices at the City. Council, City staff, and community partners all have valuable views and expertise to contribute to the City's advocacy, and a strategic approach is necessary to combine the diversity of perspectives into a clear and consistent united voice for the City.

Recognizing these challenges and the need for a strategic approach to advocacy, the development of an advocacy strategy was identified as a key initiative under the Future Guelph Strategic Plan. The Advocacy Plan builds on the legacy of Guelph's [2020 Intergovernmental Relations Strategic Framework](#), and represents a major collaborative effort between Council and leadership from across the organization.

Objectives and Approach

The Advocacy Plan was developed to provide a strategic and systematic approach for evaluating, prioritizing and actioning both ongoing and emerging advocacy priorities. As municipalities continue to navigate an increasingly complex political, economic, and social landscape, the City must remain flexible to changing circumstances while maintaining focus on core issues and priorities. The Advocacy Plan intends to accomplish the following key objectives:

1. Maximize impacts of advocacy;
2. Create a united Guelph voice on advocacy issues;
3. Provide increased transparency on advocacy activities; and
4. Facilitate proactive and systematic advocacy work planning.

The Advocacy Plan aims to achieve these objectives by:

1. Setting out a consistent and strategic advocacy process to be followed by the City;
2. Identifying the key themes and directions that will inform the City's advocacy in the coming years; and
3. Outlining the work that will support the achievement of the plan's objectives.



The Advocacy Process

At the core of a strategic approach to advocacy is a well-defined and consistent advocacy process. The advocacy process outlined in this section sets out the scope of the City's advocacy function, and provides the guidance and structure for how the Policy and Intergovernmental Services division undertakes its evaluation, prioritization, and actioning of advocacy opportunities. This process assists the City in making data-driven and defensible advocacy decisions, enabling a strategic approach to advocacy in a quick-paced and constantly evolving advocacy environment.

Step 1—Issue Identification and Development

The role of the City's advocacy function is to promote the interests of the City and Council where they intersect with external policy, funding opportunities and decision making, or where there are opportunities for external collaboration. The topics which fall within the scope of the City's advocacy can range from specific regulatory and funding barriers affecting aspects of the City's work, to major complex issues impacting the community where the City is a stakeholder. These advocacy issues may be identified by City staff or Council, or brought to the City's attention by members of the community or a service delivery partner.

From the outset, it is important to note that the scope of the City's advocacy is somewhat limited to issues that are within its mandate as a municipality. There are many advocacy issues which may be important to the community, but have no relation to the City's activities and responsibilities, meaning that the City does not have the expertise, authority, or justification to advocate comprehensively on the topic.

Once an issue is brought to the City's attention, the first step is to determine whether the issue and the outcomes being advocated for fall within the City's mandate. Issues which lie outside the City's mandate may be referred to alternative advocacy channels where the City may be a partner, or actioned to a limited extent.

Where issues fall within the scope of the City's mandate, staff work with internal and external subject matter experts to develop the City's advocacy position on the topic. The Policy and Intergovernmental Services division gathers information on the specific issue, and identifies the ultimate desired outcomes of advocacy from the perspective of the City. Recognizing that many issues require long-term transformative change to come to a solution, the Policy and Intergovernmental Services division also identifies the short-term and intermediate outcomes of advocacy on the specific issue, as well as the timeframes each of the outcomes can be reasonably achieved. This collection of outcomes forms the foundation of the City's advocacy approach on specific issues, helping create a consistent and united advocacy voice and informing current and future requests or calls to action.



Step 2—Stakeholder Identification

At its core, advocacy is a collaborative process. The City engages with a wide variety of external actors to advance and elevate the City’s priorities.

There are two main typologies of external stakeholders as outlined below:

Decision Makers	Partners
<p>Decision makers are the primary targets of the City’s advocacy and calls to action. These are the individuals and organizations who have decision and policy-making authority to directly influence the realization of the City’s desired advocacy outcomes. These include provincial and federal ministers and government leaders, local members of legislature, senior ministry staff, and other decision makers.</p> <p>The City works directly with decision makers to share information, raise awareness on specific issues, and directly make requests to influence change. The City may provide advocacy materials, arrange meetings, and participate in formal engagements to communicate Guelph’s position and to make advocacy requests.</p>	<p>Partners are organizations and other entities which share advocacy goals with the City, and help amplify and otherwise support the City’s advocacy through expertise, networks and resources. This group may include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Municipal and Professional Associations (e.g. Association of Municipalities of Ontario)• Community organizations (e.g. Guelph Wellington Poverty Taskforce)• Service delivery partners (e.g. Wellington County) <p>Partners are the City’s key stakeholders in advancing and promoting the City’s advocacy positions. The City may share advocacy materials with these groups to leverage their reach and influence, and contribute to advocacy conducted by these groups to strengthen the City’s messaging. In the case of service delivery partners, the City may work collaboratively to develop joint advocacy positions and campaigns, and support these groups with their advocacy needs through the City’s internal capacity.</p>

For each issue, the Policy and Intergovernmental Services division maintains a list of relevant stakeholders. This allows the City to maintain awareness of new developments and advocacy directions on specific issues, and to identify partners for joint advocacy opportunities.

Step 3—Issue Prioritization

Given the wide range and varying sources of advocacy issues appearing on the City’s radar, and the City’s limited advocacy resources, being able to evaluate and prioritize issues is essential. Prioritization allows the City to strategically allocate effort, identify appropriate tactics, and advance the most urgent and impactful issues. This also allows the City to effectively utilize limited engagement opportunities with decision makers to ensure the City’s top priorities are heard and considered by those most critical to advancing the issue.

To facilitate a consistent and objective prioritization process, the City utilizes a prioritization framework to evaluate all new and existing advocacy issues. This framework examines each issue against the following criteria:

- **Urgency and Risk**—the level of risk that the issue poses to the community, the environment, and/or municipal operations.
- **Formal Direction**—Council or Mayoral direction on the specific issue.
- **Alignment**—alignment of advocacy outcomes with the City’s mandate, corporate and community plans and objectives, and Federal and Provincial priorities.
- **Clarity of Ask**—the level of maturity/development of the City’s policy position and requests on the issue.
- **Feasibility of Ask**—the extent of fiscal, legislative and operational changes required to achieve the desired outcomes for the issue.

Issues are continuously evaluated and prioritized against these criteria to ensure that the City’s advocacy efforts remain relevant in an evolving and fast-paced landscape. Based on their relative score in the overall roster of advocacy issues, each issue is assigned into a priority category as described in the chart on the right. These priority levels help inform the level of effort and advocacy tactics most appropriate for each specific issue.

Priority Category	Description
A	High impact issues that warrant concentrated advocacy campaigns, dedicated materials, and continued dialogue with other levels of government to achieve major and transformative outcomes for the City and the community. Issues in this category may be complex, involve multiple stakeholders, and make ambitious requests from other levels of government.
B	Issues that are impactful, but can be resolved with smaller scale, lower profile tactics. Issues in this category may revolve around specific funding needs or ongoing projects and programs, and may be more technical in nature, requiring more targeted engagement of specific government agencies.
C	Issues which warrant future advocacy action, but require additional time and internal effort to put forward specific requests. These may be upcoming issues anticipated to become impactful in the future, issues on which the City’s position needs to be further developed, and issues where the opportunity window for advocacy is not yet open.
D	Issues where activities have been actioned to a reasonable extent, or those awaiting additional direction. These issues may not be subject to further advocacy efforts, but are continuously monitored, and may increase in priority based on new developments.

Step 4—Tactic Selection

The City exists within a constantly evolving legislative, political and economic environment. This means that opportunities for engaging decision makers are often limited, and the City's resources may be stretched across many different issues at once. High-quality advocacy is therefore essential to clearly deliver the City's message in a busy landscape, and focus the City's resources on impactful activities that are most likely to achieve tangible results. The preferred type of advocacy engages directly with policy and decision makers on key issues to build strong relationships and opens opportunities for future intergovernmental conversations and collaboration. This engagement focused approach, with an emphasis on relationship building, also makes clear requests, and presents the City's position in a favorable light for both the City, its partners, and decision makers.

To facilitate high-quality and impactful advocacy approaches, the Policy and Intergovernmental Services team employs a mix of engagement-based and supportive advocacy tactics. Engagement based advocacy has the highest potential to result in tangible change and present valuable relationship building opportunities, making it foundational to the City's advocacy approach. Engagement-based tactics include direct, often in-person engagements with decision makers to raise awareness, build support, and ultimately influence action on key issues. As these advocacy tactics require the most effort and time, they are often used in combination with other supportive tactics.

Supportive tactics help to provide consistent messaging on an issue, and to create awareness of the issue to elevate its position in public and political discourse as part of larger advocacy campaigns. Supportive tactics may include written communication, public-facing materials, and any other advocacy activities which do not directly engage decision makers. These supportive tactics alone should not be relied on to influence change, however, they are an important tool in specific situations.



The following is a non-exhaustive list of engagement-based and supportive advocacy tactics at the City's disposal that may be leveraged for any specific advocacy issue:

Engagement-based Tactics:

- **Attendance and delegations at municipal conferences:** participation of Council and senior City leadership in delegation meetings with decision makers at conferences to build relationships, present and discuss key issues and request support.
- **Guelph Days:** coordinated advocacy campaigns at Queens Park to promote the City's activities, raise awareness of key advocacy issues, and build relationships with senior decision makers.
- **Joint meetings with partners:** meetings involving Council, staff, and partners to discuss shared issues, advocacy approaches, and sharing resources (data, materials etc).
- **Meetings with Ministers:** Meetings between the Mayor, senior City leadership, and provincial or federal ministers to discuss key advocacy priorities and requests.
- **Meetings with ministry staff:** meetings between City leadership and provincial and federal ministry staff to discuss technical concerns with specific projects or programs, and to resolve these issues at the appropriate level of authority.
- **Official visits to Guelph:** coordination of visits to Guelph by ministers and other senior decision makers to build relationships, discuss specific issues, and build support of Guelph's advocacy requests.
- **Professional memberships and associations:** many members of Council and City's leadership hold roles within professional and municipal advocacy associations. These involvements can be leveraged to contribute Guelph's advocacy perspective to external advocacy campaigns led by these groups.
- **Three levels meetings:** regular meetings between Guelph's MP, MPP and Mayor to discuss and build support for cross-jurisdictional issues affecting the City.



Supportive Tactics:

- **Direct communications:** Letters, emails and other written communications addressed to decision makers intended to inform them of an issue and identify requests for support. Direct communications may be developed collaboratively with partners, and shared with other key stakeholders to generate awareness of the issue.
- **Election preparedness:** development of comprehensive advocacy priorities to communicate the City's key advocacy needs in advance of provincial and federal elections.
- **Intergovernmental consultations:** the City regularly provides responses to new policy proposals, and participates in the federal and provincial pre-budget consultation process. These opportunities can be used to advance the City's position on specific issues, and to inform decision makers of related strategic advocacy priorities.
- **Partner support:** the City may provide partners with information to inform their advocacy efforts, or support partners with the development of joint advocacy messaging, materials and campaigns.
- **Public materials and campaigns:** print materials, social media posts, briefing notes, and key messages to raise awareness and build support around specific advocacy issues.



Selecting the appropriate advocacy tactics for each issue is essential to maximize the impacts of the City's advocacy. The two key factors guiding the selection of advocacy tactics are 1) the priority level of the issue, and 2) the current desired outcomes of advocacy on the topic:

- **Priority Level:** Issues ranking high on the City's prioritization framework justify engagement-based tactics and a proactive approach to advocacy. This may look like proactively arranging dedicated advocacy opportunities with senior decision makers, and the development of advocacy materials and campaigns. Issues which rank lower within the prioritization framework may be more appropriately addressed through direct conversations with ministry staff, existing engagement opportunities with decision makers and other stakeholders, and through supportive tactics such as the development of more targeted advocacy materials
- **Desired Advocacy Outcomes:** In selecting advocacy tactics, it is important to understand the level of maturity of the issue, and the outcomes of the advocacy on this issue that are desired and feasible at this time. The outcomes of advocacy can be classified into three broad categories, each of which warrants the use of different tactics:
 - » **Informing and Raising Awareness:** for issues that are emerging or in the early stages of discussion, the outcomes of advocacy may focus around building awareness and an understanding of the issue. These issues may benefit from supportive tactics such as direct communication outlining the issues to stakeholders and decision makers, development of public facing materials, and joint advocacy meetings to raise awareness of the issue.
 - » **Engaging and Building Support:** where the City's position on an issue is more developed, the outcomes of advocacy may focus around engaging key stakeholders and building support for any advocacy requests and calls to action. Advocacy on these issues may include supportive tactics such as the development of advocacy materials for use in public facing settings, joint advocacy messaging, information sharing, and more engagement-based tactics such as the promotion of the issue during ongoing intergovernmental discussions.
 - » **Influencing Decision Making:** where the City has a well-developed and supported policy position on a specific issue, the outcomes of the City's advocacy may focus on influencing policy and decision makers to take action. Advocacy on these issues may involve high-effort and engagement-based tactics such as dedicated meetings with decision makers, prioritizing the issues in pre-existing engagement opportunities, and the development of public facing campaigns and broad public communications.

Informed by these considerations, the Policy and Intergovernmental Services division identifies the most appropriate tactics to be used for each specific issue. This process allows the City to best utilize its resources to achieve maximum advocacy impacts.



Key Advocacy Directions

The City's advocacy efforts are dynamic, with key priorities constantly evolving in response to legislative, economic, and political developments. There are however overarching advocacy directions that are required to support the strategic themes identified in Future Guelph. Through comprehensive engagements with Council and City leadership, the following key advocacy directions were identified that will set the course for the City's advocacy in the coming years:

Future Guelph Theme	Future Focus Direction	Description
Foundations	Supporting Guelph's Fiscal Sustainability	Advocate for improved fiscal tools and frameworks which allow the City to build infrastructure and deliver public services without putting undue pressure on Guelph tax and rate payers.
Foundations	Enabling Effective Municipal Operations	Advocate for process improvements and legislative amendments to enhance the City's ability to effectively undertake its functions as a municipality and fulfill its legislated obligations.
City Building	Increasing Housing Supply and Maintaining Local Infrastructure	Advocate for policy change and housing enabling infrastructure funding to enable the construction of new housing, and to maintain existing housing supply.
City Building	Improving Connectivity and Supporting Transportation	Advocate for increased inter-regional connectivity, and for supportive policy and funding to improve roads, public transit, and active transportation networks in the City.
Environment	Mitigating Climate Change and Protecting the Environment	Advocate for funding and policy to support environmental and climate change mitigation initiatives within the City.
People and Economy	Supporting Community Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Advocate, often together with partners, for transformative policy, funding, and program changes across all levels of government to address the health, long-term care, mental health, homelessness, and substance use challenges in the community.
People and Economy	Investing in Strong Local Economies	Advocate for funding and program supports that allow Guelph to unlock new land for economic growth, and support local businesses and manufacturing

Implementing the Plan

The Advocacy Plan is a guiding document, setting out the direction and process for the City's advocacy in the coming years. Guided by the Advocacy Plan, the City will undertake the following activities to ensure the success of this plan:



Advocacy planning:

The Policy and Intergovernmental Services division will maintain an understanding of advocacy issues and outcomes which will be used to proactively plan advocacy activities. The advocacy issue prioritization framework will be applied to assess key priorities, and advocacy tactics will be identified that are required to advance the desired outcome for each issue. City staff will also continue to identify new opportunities for advocacy.



Issue profile development:

With input from City staff and professional/municipal associations, the Policy and Intergovernmental Services division will develop and maintain internal profiles for key advocacy issues. These will include the latest developments on key issues, as well as the City's advocacy requests and policy positions. These summaries will be used to inform public facing efforts and manage resources.



Stakeholder outreach:

As the City advocates on specific issues, the Policy and Intergovernmental Services division will work with key partners and subject matter experts to understand collaboration opportunities, and share information and materials to elevate the City's advocacy voice.



Execution of advocacy tactics:

Working with Council, City staff and advocacy stakeholders, the Policy and Intergovernmental Services division will undertake advocacy activities as informed by the advocacy planning process. Policy and Intergovernmental Services will also continue to respond to ad-hoc advocacy needs using the advocacy process, as new legislative, economic, and political developments arise.

Performance Evaluation

Performance evaluation is critical to ensure that the City's advocacy actions are resulting in the desired impacts. Regularly evaluating performance helps to ensure transparency and accountability in the City's advocacy efforts, and to facilitate continuous improvement as progress is achieved.

As the outcomes of advocacy are often realized over a long horizon and are typically outside of the control of the City, performance measurement largely relies on key performance indicators (KPIs) tracking the City's inputs and outputs. These KPIs contribute towards the City's Intergovernmental Performance Measurement Index, which uses a weighted methodology to calculate an overall score towards achieving a pre-set target for each performance measure. While this approach makes it challenging to confidently attribute specific advocacy efforts to ultimate government decisions and change, these KPIs are an important tool for monitoring the progress of campaigns and city-wide efforts.

To measure the activities and efforts planned as part of the implementation of the Advocacy Plan, the Policy and Intergovernmental Services division will seek opportunities to incorporate more outcome-based KPIs into the existing Intergovernmental Performance Management Index. With the Advocacy Plan focusing on targeted engagements and specific advocacy directions, Policy and Intergovernmental Services will have closer oversight of any decisions and developments related to the City's advocacy efforts, allowing for better tracking of outcomes. This increasingly outcome-based performance reporting will help the team continue to evaluate tactics, impacts and overall effectiveness to continuously seek opportunities adjust approaches and improve performance.

The Policy and Intergovernmental Services division will continue to provide updates on the enhanced Intergovernmental Performance Index as part of the annual strategic plan performance reporting.







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