

Hello Mayor Guthrie ,Councillors and City Staff,
my name is Mike Darmon and I am VP of Guelph Coalition for Active Transportation

Let me begin by first mentioning an important point. GCAT represents All Active Transportation modes including walking .There is a common misconception that we are strictly a biking advocacy group.

I will be speaking to both motions presented today but more broadly on one of GCATS proposals for Wyndham ST and downtown .

Most of my delegation is about trying to help preserve most of what many of us love about our City from the devastating affects of Covid19 and especially on our downtown businesses survival.Just think about the loss of our favourite restaurants ,coffee shops or local breweries downtown but also in your favourite location.

As we start to open up the economy and as the weather improves we need to think differently about our public space as the Covid 19 pandemic has changed the way we do everything. Its not business as usual and it looks like Public Health recommendtions for physical distancing may be around for a long time I t may also take some time for the public to feel safe in public even as restrictions are relaxed.Pedestrians will need vastly more space and restaurants will need much more space to remain viable. We will also need areas for queuing outside businesses and even though the existing sidewalks downtown seems wide, a lot more space is needed for multible uses.The only option is more public space outside and we need to make those spaces appealing too.

Back to downtown

I have provided 2 slides in your package and I hope you refer to these as I proceed.





The second image with flexible street dimensions is from a now slightly outdated Downtown secondary plan for Wyndham street N. Note the reduction to 2 travel lanes.

Imagine this plan as the gateway to our planned new Baker district library on the far left!

I am not proposing this exact image be the final design but merely a starting guide to show the new amount of additional public space for pedestrians and patios etc when we take away the planned removal of 2 car lanes as Wyndham Street has low car volumes. Note this design takes no parking away. You will also note the similarity to our highly successful and Flexible Carden St Market Square, but more needs to be done for this area to make it more like a Slow Street or Shared Street, where vehicle speed is more closer to walking speed.

You will also note the lack of bike infrastructure with outdated sharrow symbols. During the Covid emergency I am proposing with the 1 caveat of drastically reduced vehicle speed mentioned- that no bike lanes be installed-yes I repeat no bike lanes - to give the maximum amount of space to pedestrians patio users and queuing areas and not take away any current parking space and allow deliveries and curbside pickups to support struggling local business, in every way possible.

A Pilot Plan using tactical urbanism with for example , beautiful flower planters and prioritized existing city infrastructure , barriers could be installed and tested for a very reasonable cost. Some of the parking spaces also need to be reallocated strictly for deliveries and curbside pickup.

Taking away the 2 car lanes and with a change to safer parallel parking on both sides gives us a very wide 8.2 Metres or 27 feet of people space on each side of the street and with movable Tactical urbanism separators this space could be wider or narrower depending on where we need patios , queuing or deliveries etc. The end result would be a public space that is inviting to all users including pedestrians cyclists , drivers and tourists and supports local business. A bonus is the data from the pilot for a permanent plan.

This plan could also be used in areas of Macdonell st .

The main point of my delegation is that we also need a plan that maximizes our limited resources for the maximum return value in terms of protecting our health , our businesses and our environment. In other words temporary plans to deal with covid 19 should also be evaluated for their potential for permanency too. I am using the advice of the highly respected former chief planner of Vancouver Brent Todarian . In a recent interview on CBC The Current he was interviewed by Matt Galloway on the subject of Creating More Public Space during covid 19 . Later on Twitter he provided a video clip of the main message and I quote in part : "Think about all the money that will be going into our infrastructure programs during the economic recovery ...and the results of ..the deliberate decision we make where we put our money, how we reallocate space -give it back to cars or keep it for people after the pandemic is over.

The smartest cities have already been building a level of permanency into their temporary thinking . Madrid Spain for example, in so many of their streets, are already planning on the city being better PERMANENTLY.

All cities should be doing this as part of their temporary strategy having an eye towards having the best things stay permanent."

This is sound advice!

In light of the very current very limited resources available, perhaps we should also be asking the opinion of our Director or Medical officer of Public Health and experts in Epidemiology where best to locate reallocated street space with a focus on reducing the highest probability of risk to human health from droplet or aerosols forms in public space outside.

Other areas of our city also need to be considered as we plan for an uncertain future.

Relax and expedite changes in by-laws needed around public space for patios curbside pickups deliveries etc. .

Open or Slow streets could easily and cheaply be implemented making neighbourhood areas inviting, safe and ready for much needed public space during any emergency. We should also lower the speed limit in our core downtown areas for safety and enjoyment of the public space.

But above all we need a great plan and we have talented city staff, politicians, the University of Guelph, Business , Health and expertise in the public all willing to help make our city be prepared and prosper.

Thanks, and I am willing to answer any questions you may have.

Mike Darmon

VP of GCAT

Board member of Our Energy