

Staff Report



To	Committee of the Whole
Service Area	Infrastructure, Development and Environment
Date	Tuesday, July 8, 2025
Subject	Wyndham Street North and St. George's Square - Preparing for and mitigating construction (DTIRP Phase 1)

Recommendations

1. That the Downtown Infrastructure Renewal Program Capital Implementation Plan, 2025, as outlined in report 2025-303, dated July 8, 2025, be approved.
2. That the sequencing plan for Phase 1: Wyndham Street North Reconstruction including extended working hours, as outlined in report 2025-303, dated July 8, 2025, be approved.
3. That the recommended Concept Plan for St. George's Square, as outlined in report 2025-303, dated July 8, 2025, be approved.
4. That the construction mitigation plan for Phase 1: Wyndham Street North Reconstruction, as outlined in report 2025-303, dated July 8, 2025, be approved.
5. That the delegation of authority by-law, By-law (2024) – 20994, be amended to delegate authority to the DCAO of Infrastructure, Development and Environment, with written approval from the City Treasurer, to modify the following user fees at various times as needed for the duration of the Downtown Infrastructure Renewal Program, with lost revenue being funded through the construction mitigation budget for the Downtown Infrastructure Renewal Program:
 - Seasonal patio program parking stall rental fees
 - Downtown hourly parking fees
 - Encroachment agreement fees related to the Downtown Infrastructure Renewal Program
6. And that an amending by-law be brought forward for approval at the July 22, 2025, City Council meeting.

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on the Downtown Infrastructure Renewal Program (DTIRP), and how the City is preparing for and mitigating the impacts of Phase 1: Wyndham Street North and St. George's Square construction. Council is also being requested to approve the Capital Implementation Plan, the Phase 1 sequencing plan, the Recommended Concept Plan for St. George's

Square, and the approach to construction mitigation. These four items are critical matters related to preparing for construction.

Key Findings

Capital Implementation Plan

- After four years of planning, study, condition assessment and extensive internal and external consultation, the Project Team has prepared a nine phase Downtown Guelph reconstruction program extending from 2025 to 2038 on an expedited schedule provided in Figures 2 and 3 (below).
- A well-coordinated multi-year Plan will minimize disruptions to citizens, businesses, and visitors, and optimize City resources and expenditures.
- As part of annual budget review, and prior to beginning the design of subsequent phases, a review of the Plan will be completed internally to determine if changing development or financial pressures, site plan applications, infrastructure conditions, community priorities, etc. warrant a change in phasing.
- A foundational project for DTIRP started in spring 2025 with the four-month water and wastewater capacity improvement project along Wellington Street East and Wyndham Street South to support housing growth (Phase 0).

Construction Sequencing: Phase 1 - Wyndham St. North Reconstruction

- In September 2024, Council directed that the construction be completed on an expedited schedule, limiting construction of Wyndham Street North (Phase 1) to two construction seasons.
- Phase 1 reconstruction is planned to begin in April 2026. Recognizing that the Baker Parkade will be available for use in late 2026, the work north of St. George's Square on Wyndham Street North (known as "Upper Wyndham") is planned to begin in September 2026 to maximize conveniently available parking for the Upper Wyndham area, especially during summer season.
- Figure 4 (below) depicts the overlapping sequenced road closures and work zones.
- A range of appropriate incentive and disincentive clauses will be used with the contractor to facilitate the expeditious completion of Phase 1.
- The proposed schedule requires the flexibility to allow 24-hour operation, including associated temporary resource contracts, except from Saturday 11pm to 4am Monday and holidays with staff discretion to waive time restrictions as construction needs warrant.
- There are currently third-party utility relocations and improvements underway:
 - Natural gas ongoing
 - Electrical commencing in September 2025

St. George's Square

- After significant community engagement, the Recommended Concept Plan for St. George's Square envisions the Square as an active urban park emphasizing the creation of a space for a wide range of events and activities, including daily use and self-activation, as well as larger events and festivals.
- The reimagined St. George's Square will be a central gathering place that anchors Downtown Guelph by providing amenity, activation, and event opportunities. The renewal of this public space is important in the context of supporting an intensifying downtown and an emerging urban neighbourhood.

- The Recommended Concept Plan for St. George's Square includes opportunities for shade, plantings, seating, and a public washroom. It places emphasis on pedestrians but comfortably accommodates all modes of transportation.

Construction Mitigation

- Underground utility and road reconstruction activities by nature are disruptive for businesses, residents, and visitors, especially within a busy and compact downtown area.
- Mitigating the impacts of construction on Downtown businesses, residents and visitors has been top of mind for staff throughout this project. Construction mitigation can take many forms from staging and phasing, pace of construction, communication and more direct supports for people who live, work and own businesses Downtown.
- An extensive construction mitigation plan has been developed based on public engagement and further consultation with the Downtown Guelph Business Association (DGBA).
- Key elements of the proposed construction mitigation plan fit into four categories including: Construction pace, phasing, and staging; Communication and information sharing; Direct construction support; and a Business Support Plan.
- A construction mitigation allowance is set at \$1M within the overall project budget for initiatives not provided by the Contractor. The items included in the *construction pace, phasing and sequencing* category are generally captured within the construction contract and therefore do not utilize the construction mitigation allowance. The specific construction mitigation allowance is intended to support businesses and generally funds mitigation tactics such as a Downtown construction ambassador, a Downtown Office, complimentary parking, enhanced communication, and information sharing initiatives and the Business Support Plan.
- Additional resources to mitigate construction impacts on transit service levels resources for Guelph Transit are not currently included in the project budget. The 2026 budget update will add funding for Guelph Transit resources to mitigate the construction impacts to transit service levels.

Strategic Plan Alignment

The completion of the DTIRP Capital Implementation Plan is a milestone achievement towards Strategic Goal 12 *Make downtown a vibrant place for everyone* and supports other City strategic initiatives. Downtown Renewal will replace and improve our aging infrastructure and upgrade our utility services including modernizing and upgrading the streetscape to provide the foundation for community success over generations.

Future Guelph Theme

People and Economy

Future Guelph Objectives

People and Economy: Make downtown a vibrant place for everyone

Financial Implications

The total current available and projected budget (Feb 2025) for Phase 1 (PN0060 – Wyndham Street N Reconstruction – Farquhar to Woolwich) is \$31.48M consisting of \$24.18M in 2025 and \$7.30M in 2026.

Due to the complicated nature of the work and the current industry uncertainties, there are several potential factors that staff are monitoring that could impact on the sufficiency of this budget estimate and may result in a construction bid and other costs that are higher than the current budget allocation. While staff have taken all reasonable steps to mitigate and understand costs, the scale and interplay of key risks is unknown. Additional details on these factors are outlined in the financial implications section in the body of the report below.

Staff will propose budget adjustments to provide contingency to manage construction pressures through the 2026 budget update, which will be released through the 2025 year-end review if not required. An increase to the budget to manage additional transit costs resulting from construction will also be proposed through the 2026 budget update. These budget adjustments will require deferral of other capital projects to maintain a fully funded capital budget and forecast.

Report

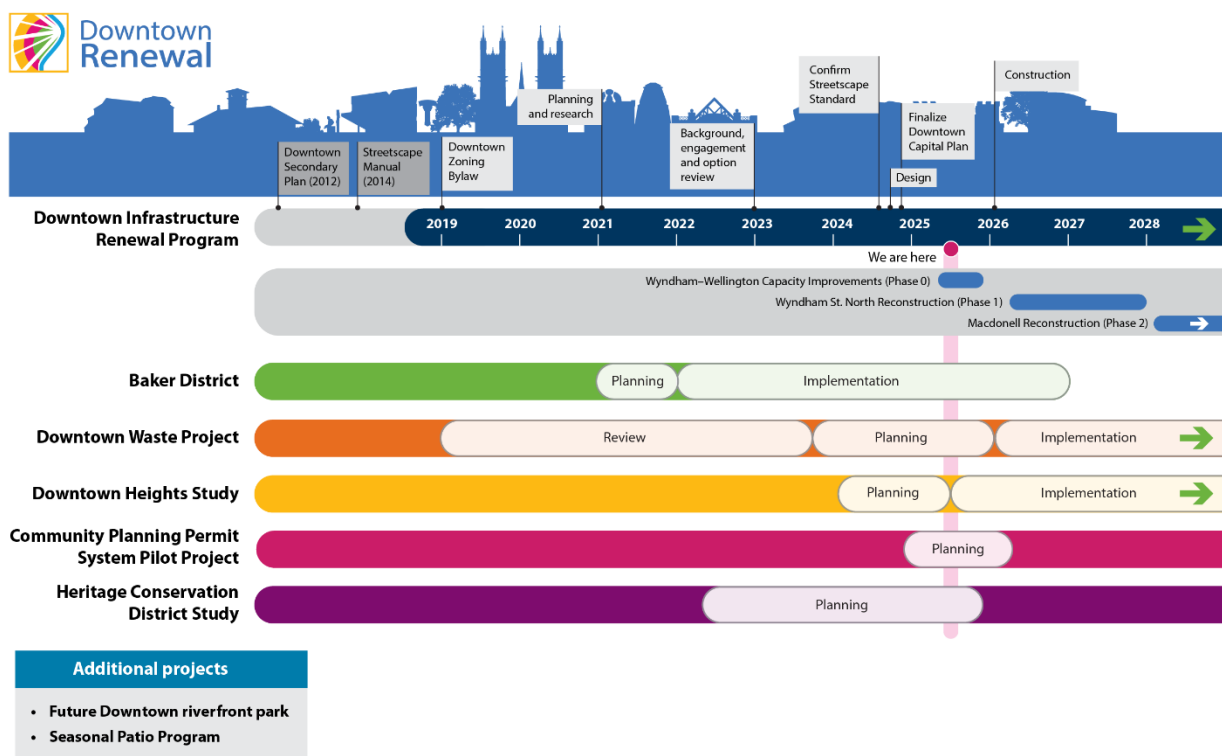
Capital Implementation Plan

Downtown Guelph has aging infrastructure such as water and sewer pipes, roads, and sidewalks. The City is improving this critical infrastructure to provide quality service and support growth through its [Downtown Infrastructure Renewal Program](#) (DTIRP).

Replacing and improving the public realm infrastructure in Downtown Guelph is a fundamental component of Guelph's overall long-term sustainable City-building vision. This significant infrastructure investment will support anticipated new growth and replace existing, aging infrastructure.

The overall goal of DTIRP is to provide the community with an expected level of service in a cost-effective manner. DTIRP will support an inclusive, accessible, and vibrant Downtown that will be a cultural and civic hub that attracts a broad mix of jobs in knowledge-based, commercial, and retail sectors. DTIRP is the cornerstone program of Guelph's overall Downtown Renewal initiatives as depicted in Figure 1.

Figure 1: DTIRP within Guelph's Downtown Renewal



The City has invested four years of planning, study, and condition assessment plus extensive internal and external consultation in the preparation of the Downtown Infrastructure Renewal Program covering 2025 to 2038. The individual project timing is planned on an expedited schedule and is provided in Figures 2 and 3.

New infrastructure will sustain municipal services that businesses need to thrive like water and sanitary, as well as encourage, create and simplify programmable spaces in the Downtown area for activities such as outdoor dining, festivals, and special events. It will also highlight the Downtown's heritage character in a way that allows citizens and visitors to safely experience amenities and attractions. It will generate and enable new investment interests in commercial and residential development opportunities and encourage diverse forms of housing through improved street and trail system connections and connectivity to surrounding neighbourhoods.

DTIRP is a Tier 1 Project under the overall governance of the Deputy Chief Administrative Officer of Infrastructure, Development, and Environment and a Steering Committee consisting of General Managers representing key stakeholder departments.

With the completion of the Capital Implementation Plan (the "Plan"), the planning phase of DTIRP is complete except the conclusion of the [Macdonell and Allan's Structure Municipal Class Environmental Assessment](#) (EA) slated for completion in late 2025. Separate documentation will be completed for that EA.

DTIRP's foundational project to install key housing enabling infrastructure for the Downtown area was recently started along Wellington Street East and Wyndham Street South and will be completed in September 2025.

DTIRP Phase 1: Wyndham Street North is scheduled to begin in spring 2026 with third-party utility relocations and improvements occurring in 2025. Subsequent phases will only begin once the current phase has been completed.

A review of the project scheduling will be completed internally on an annual basis as part of the multi-year budget review and prior to beginning the design of subsequent phases. This review will determine whether changing development or financial pressures, site plan applications, infrastructure conditions, community priorities, warrant a change in construction phasing.

The full Capital Implementation Plan is available on the [program webpage](#).

The Plan covers:

- Reconstruction scheduling,
- Preliminary cost estimates,
- Infrastructure and permitting requirements,
- Construction mitigation measures, and
- Communication and engagement strategies.

Figure 2: DTIRP Capital Implementation Plan 2026

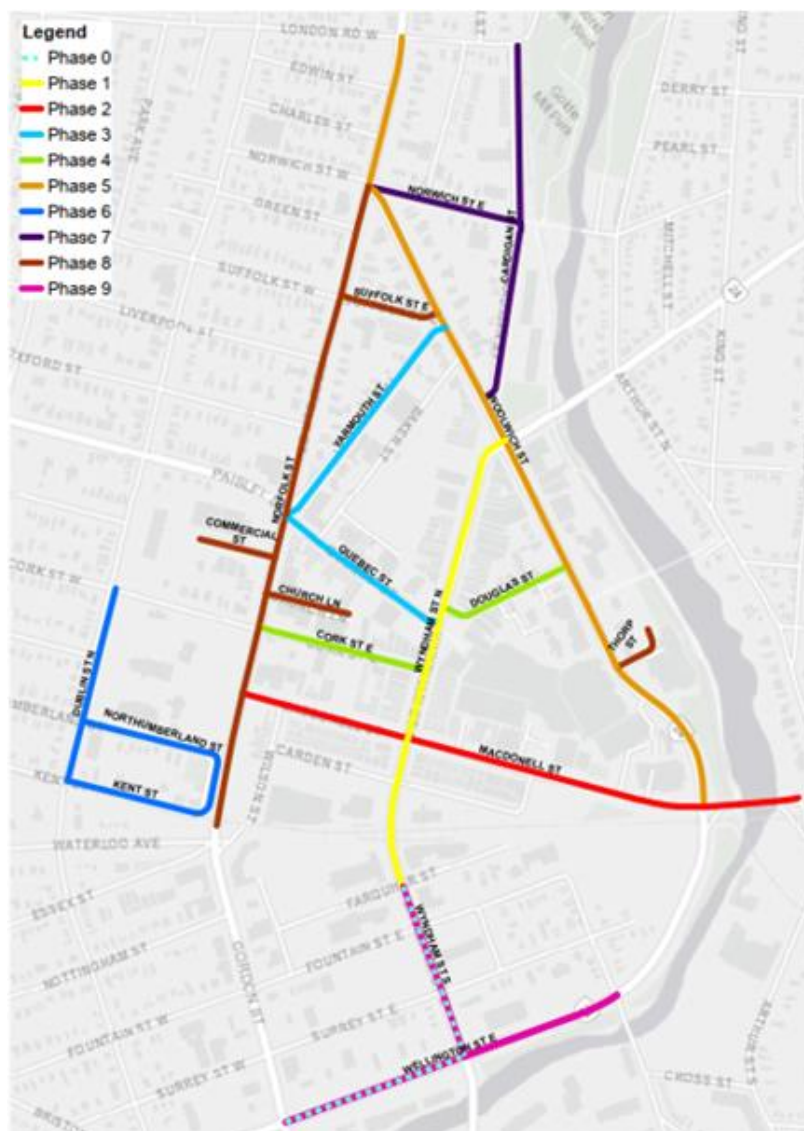


Figure 3: DTIRP Capital Implementation Plan Expedited Timeline

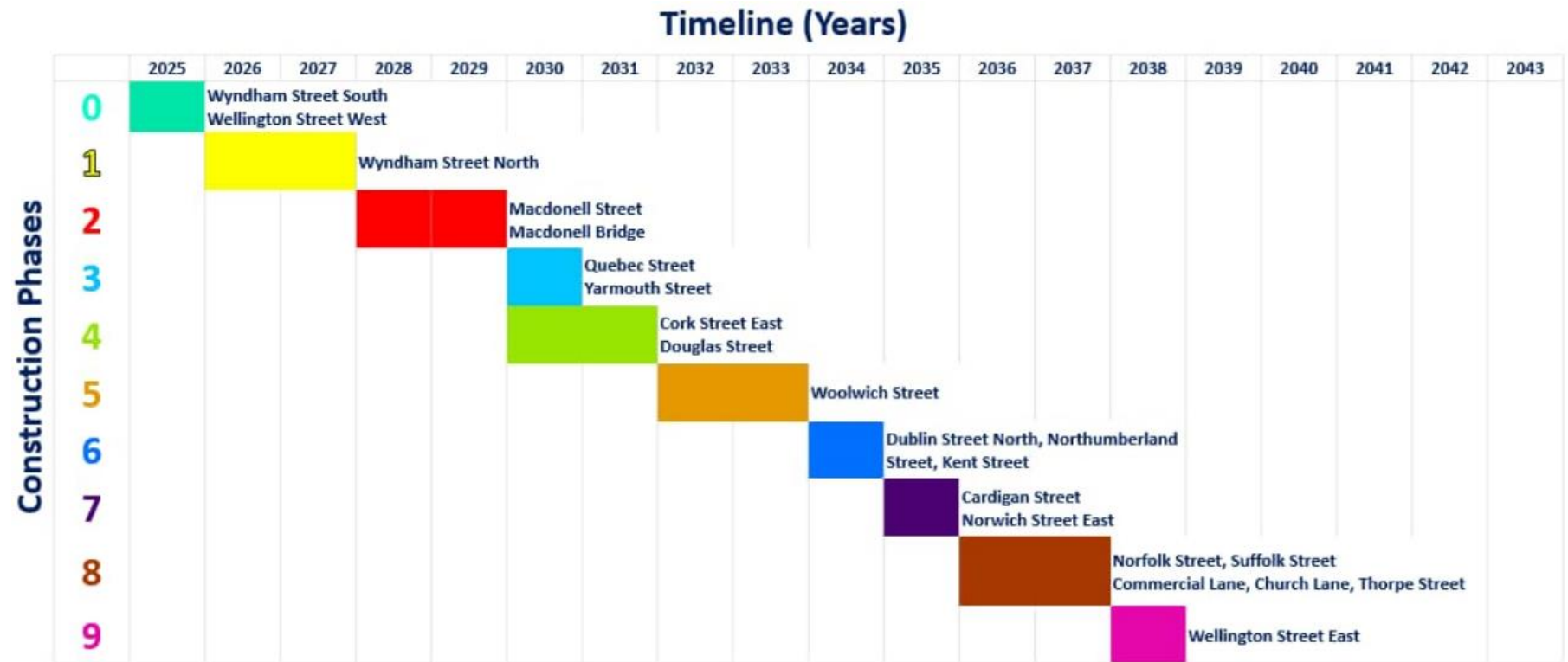


Figure 6.3 Expedited Construction Schedule

Project phasing was based on a combination of the following factors and considerations, such as:

- **Economic development and capacity for growth** – Does the street provide additional housing and room for growth? Does it support planned density increase in the Downtown area?
- **Community feedback** – see summary in the consultation section below.
- **Watermain, sanitary and stormwater needs** – What is the age and condition of the infrastructure? Are there capacity deficiencies noted? What order/sequence does the pipe network need to be constructed in?
- **Utility needs** – Are there third-party utility upgrades planned that could be coordinated with infrastructure improvements?
- **Transportation and traffic management** – How will construction impact traffic flow? How will transit routes be affected?
- **Construction costs** – How do construction costs affect the City’s capital budget?
- **Construction constraints** – Are there special needs that may affect construction (example: additional time to acquire permits)?
- **Road needs** – What is the current condition of the pavement? How urgently does traffic capacity need to be addressed?

Construction Sequencing: Phase 1: Wyndham Street North Reconstruction

While specific construction mitigation measures are outlined in detail in the following section, the pace of construction is a key mitigation strategy that has disruption and financial impact implications to the City, businesses, and residents. In September 2024, Council directed that construction of Wyndham Street North be completed on an expedited schedule, limiting construction to two construction seasons: 2026 and 2027. The expedited schedule minimizes the cumulative construction timeline, avoids construction fatigue, realizes economies of scale, and sees Wyndham Street North being enjoyed by residents, visitors, and businesses sooner.

DTIRP Phase 1: Wyndham Street North Reconstruction from Farquar Street to Woolwich Street is planned to start in April 2026. Recognizing that the Baker Parkade will be available in late 2026, the DTIRP and Baker District Redevelopment Program Teams considered different sequencing options for Phase 1 and determined that starting upper Wyndham Street, north of St. George’s Square in early September 2026, provides parking in the area through the busy summer season and still enables completion of Phase 1 by end of November 2027. This sequencing of construction within Phase 1 ensures that there will not be an extended period of time where convenient parking is not available north of St. George’s Square (upper Wyndham).

Contributing reasons for this recommendation include:

- Minimize delays until housing enabling infrastructure is completed along upper Wyndham and capacity restrictions are removed along Woolwich Street.
- Minimize financial risk due to schedule compression and inflationary factors.
- Avoid extending reconstruction requiring full road closure into 2028; and,
- Avoid changes to existing contracts and timelines that would impact Tier 1 project indicators and public reputation for project delivery.

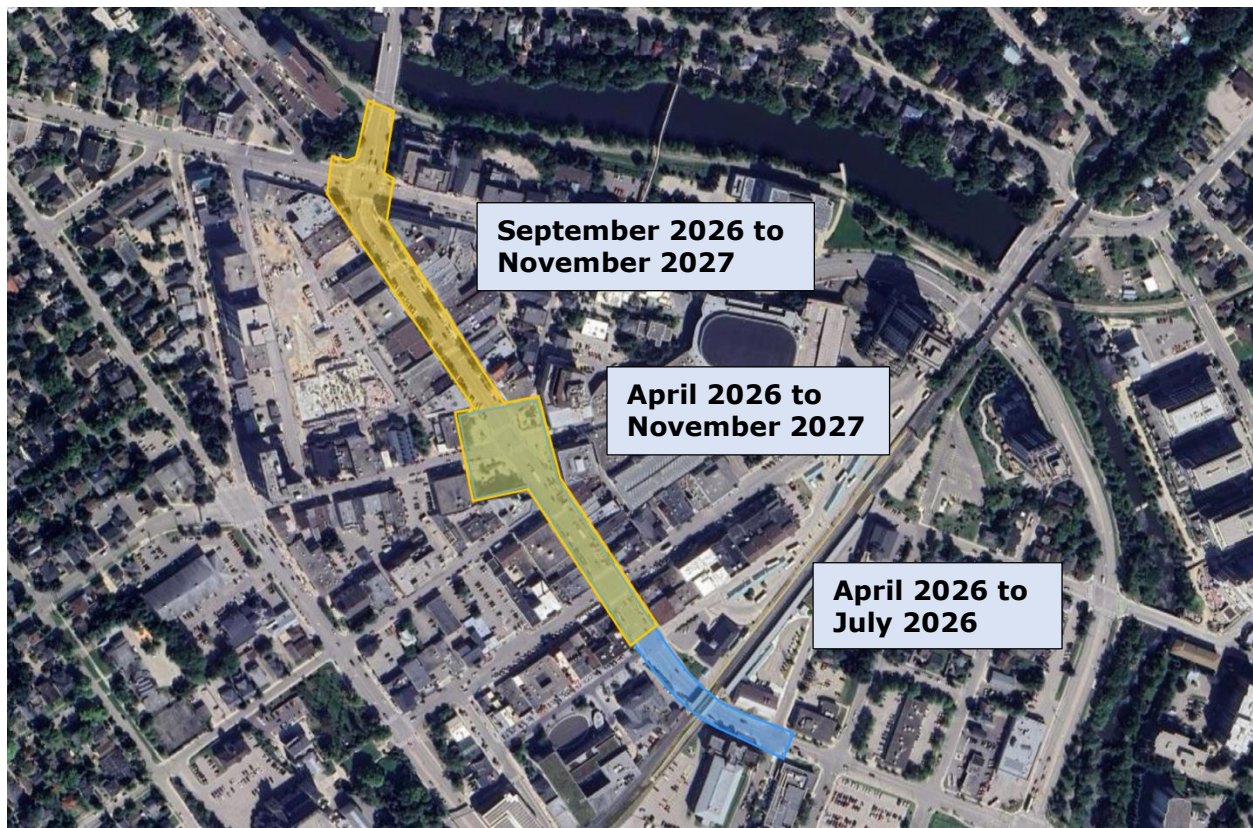
Figure 4 displays the planned overlapping Phase 1 construction. Note that one stage is not completed before another starts but instead overlaps in space and time. The planned approach to Phase 1 reconstruction and road closures are:

- Farquhar Street to Carden Street – April 2026 to July 2026 (blue)
- Carden Street to Douglas Street – April 2026 to November 2027 (green)
- Carden Street to Woolwich Street – September 2026 to November 2027 (yellow)

These sections of Wyndham Street will be closed to vehicular traffic for the duration of construction to provide maximum flexibility for the contractor to complete work quickly. The construction contract will contain wording along with incentive and disincentive clauses to minimize the time that various sections of the construction zone are closed. The Woolwich Street, Macdonell Street and Carden Street intersections will be given special attention to minimize closure to facilitate east-west traffic and transit movement.

To complete Phase 1 within two construction seasons, extended work hours and two shifts of workers will likely be required given the scope of work and available schedule. The City should provide the flexibility to permit 24-hour operation, including associated temporary resource contracts, except from Saturday 11pm to 4am Monday and holidays with staff discretion to waive as construction needs warrant.

Figure 4: DTIRP Phase 1: Wyndham Street North Sequencing Plan



The City's contract is planned to start in April 2026, however third-party utility replacements are underway and are planning work for 2025. The natural gas system is currently being replaced. The electrical system relocations and

improvements will begin in September 2025. Two-way traffic movement will be maintained during utility work subject to occasional flagged interruptions.

Staff recommend Council approve the overlapping sequencing plan for Phase 1 – Wyndham St. N. Reconstruction as:

- Farquhar Street to Carden Street – April 2026 to July 2026
- Carden Street to Douglas Street – April 2026 to November 2027
- Carden Street to Woolwich Street – September 2026 to November 2027

Staff also recommend Council approve extended work hours as:

- 24-hour operation, including associated temporary resource contracts, except from Saturday 11pm to 4am Monday and holidays with staff discretion to waive as construction needs warrant.

Staff expect some construction activities in spring 2028 related to final landscaping, deficiency correction and final paving, however Wyndham Street North is expected to remain open to two-way traffic subject to minor flagging operations and night-time paving activities.

St. George's Square

In conjunction with the Wyndham Street North right-of-way reconstruction, this provides a logical time to reimagine this important public space in the context of an intensifying downtown. The renewal of this public space is a valuable City-building opportunity to transform St. George's Square into a destination. It will anchor Downtown Guelph by providing opportunities for business activation space, the self-activation of the space through informal daily use, and for use during major events (concerts, festivals, etc.), as well as providing better connectivity and assistance with orienting visitors to Downtown.

While the Square will continue to allow access for vehicles, it will promote increased pedestrian activity and comfortably accommodate all modes of transportation.

The design should be flexible

To create a vibrant and animated destination on a year-round and daily basis, in addition to creating a desirable space for major events, flexibility has been incorporated into the redesign of St. George's Square. The design is simple and versatile, allowing for a range of activities to occur in the Square. The Square includes opportunities for shade, plantings, seating, and a public washroom.

The design should meet the intent of the Downtown Secondary Plan

The design for St. George's Square should satisfy the policies outlined in the Downtown Secondary Plan which require a master plan for the Square to be developed that considers:

- how the square can be improved to accommodate both day-to-day functions, including sitting, walking, dining, casual meeting, vehicular movement, and special events that use portions of the square or its entirety.
- programming of uses/activities within and around the square to improve economic vitality.
- appropriate materials for the square that emphasize quality, durability, and sustainability.
- and a phased implementation strategy that includes short-term improvements.

Developing the concept

In the summer and fall of 2024, staff began re-engaging with the community about St. George's Square. This built on the engagement that informed the [2014 Conceptual Design for St. George's Square](#).

Principles - In 2014, six core principles provided the foundation for the conceptual redesign of St. George's Square. After checking in with the community it was determined that the core principles continue to be relevant and appropriate and have guided the current design for the Square. These principles are:

- Support local business and daily activities
- Unify the square
- Less is more
- Make it beautiful
- Make it comfortable
- Improve connections to other Downtown anchors

In addition to confirming that the 2014 principles were still appropriate, the community provided feedback about what they would like to see in the future St. George's Square. Highlights include:

- Increase pedestrian flow and accessibility.
- Increase trees and green elements to provide shade.
- Include park-like elements such as play opportunities and lawn areas.
- Highlight and give prominence to the shape of the Square.
- Increase flexibility of use of space with the reduction of steps and level more areas to accommodate more events within the Square.
- Design for pedestrians first and give them more importance over vehicles by using decorative paving materials and curb-less streets within the Square, while still allowing for vehicular/transit movement through the space.

History of the Family Fountain

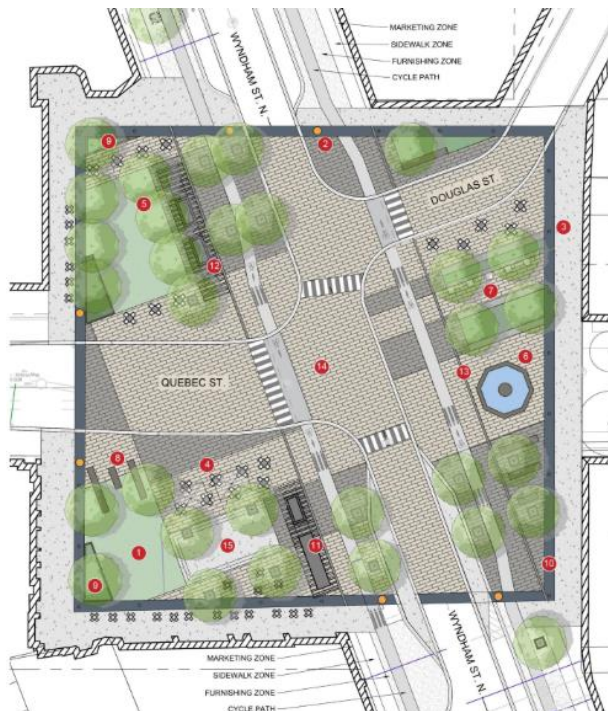
The Family Fountain and Sculpture was commissioned by a group of citizens, largely from the Italian community, who formed the St. George's Square Fountain Committee, chaired by Louis Ferraro. Their proposal to create a sculpture and fountain for St. George's Square was accepted by City Council at the Council meeting held September 15, 1980. The design and installation of the fountain was done in concert with the City's architectural development of St. George's Square and Wyndham Street. The fountain was unveiled July 4, 1985, and has been part of the City's Public Art Collection since then. Upon accepting the fountain, the City assumed responsibility for the ongoing operations and maintenance of it.

Through the St. George's Square design and engagement process, city staff sought feedback and input from members of the original St. George's Square Fountain Committee on how the fountain should fit into the new design for the square.

Developing Two Concepts

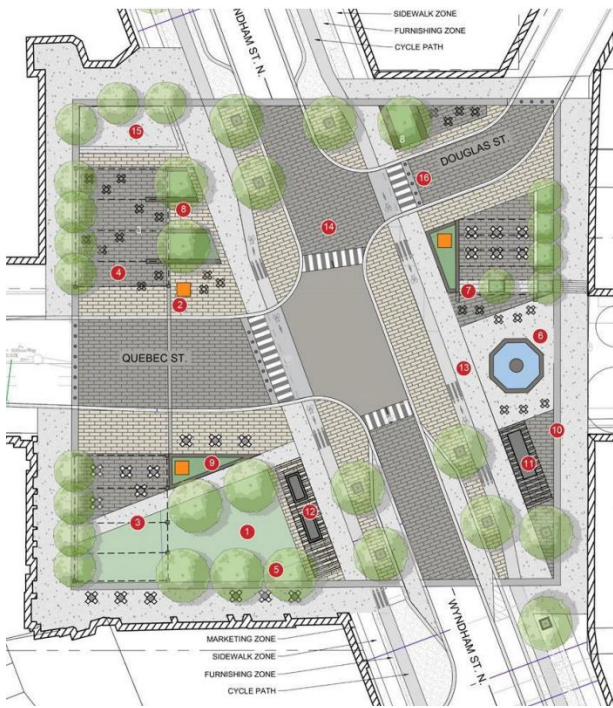
Based on the early public feedback, two concepts were developed for St. George's Square – Design Concept A and Design Concept B. The project team then engaged the community on these two concepts at an in-person Open House, a virtual Open House, and Construction Café in early 2025.

Figure 5: Design Concept A



Design Concept A envisioned a public open space designed as a passive park, emphasizing tranquility, accessibility, and natural beauty. This design is intended to encourage people to stop and enjoy their surroundings and relax. The design also prioritized everyday use, offering a welcoming environment for individuals and families to engage in relaxing activities. Additionally, it aimed to offer flexibility for events throughout the year.

Figure 6: Design Concept B



Design Concept B envisioned the Square as a public open space designed as an active park with a stronger emphasis on hard surfaces and lasting materials, creating the perfect environment for a wide range of events and programming. The layout featured expansive paved areas, flexible seating, and open spaces that can be easily transformed to accommodate festivals, performances, markets, and community gatherings.

Draft Preferred Concept

Based on the feedback received from the community, as well as a cross-departmental group of technical experts, a draft Preferred Concept for the Square was developed which includes aspects from both Design Concept A and Design Concept B.

Figure 7: Draft Preferred Concept for St. George's Square

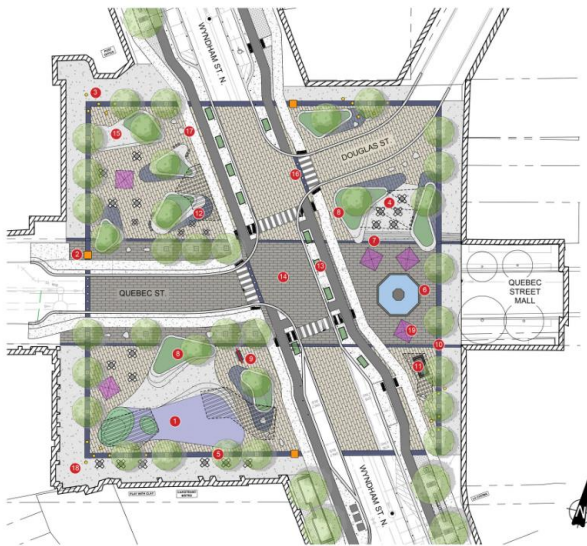
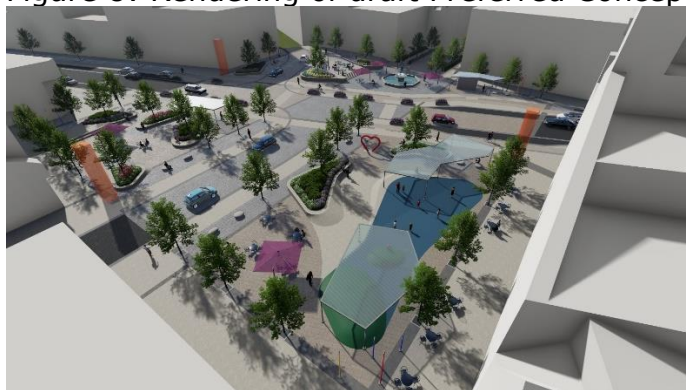


Figure 8: Rendering of draft Preferred Concept for St. George's Square



The draft Preferred Concept concept envisions the Square as a public open space designed as an active park with an emphasis towards creating a community space for a wide range of events and activities.

The concept plays off the various landforms and changes in topography that are experienced throughout Guelph.

The layout prioritizes durability and functionality, featuring paved areas, flexible seating, and open spaces that can be easily transformed to accommodate festivals, performances, markets, and community gatherings.

This urban space is an inviting hub for outdoor activities, with ample room for gathering and play, making it a dynamic, year-round destination for people of all ages.

Feedback on the draft Preferred Concept

The project team asked for feedback from the community on the draft Preferred Concept at an Open House and through Have Your Say online and we heard:

- Generally, people liked the draft preferred concept, with the majority of respondents (58 per cent) indicating they like or strongly like the draft preferred concept.
- Respondents like having the fountain in St. George's Square, with many indicating it should stay in its location for historical reasons.
- Comments in favour of a play area with some concerns expressed about it being too large, accessibility and proximity to street traffic.
- Comments in favour of a public washroom, with some comments about maintenance and cleanliness, proximity to stores and the play area.
- Comments in favour of more green space including shade trees and less concrete. As well as comments that the proposed planters may be too large in the square and should be shifted or reduced in size to allow for more open space.
- Concern that existing patios may not fit with the new design.

Recommended Design Concept for St. George's Square

Based on feedback from the community, changes were made to draft Preferred Concept:

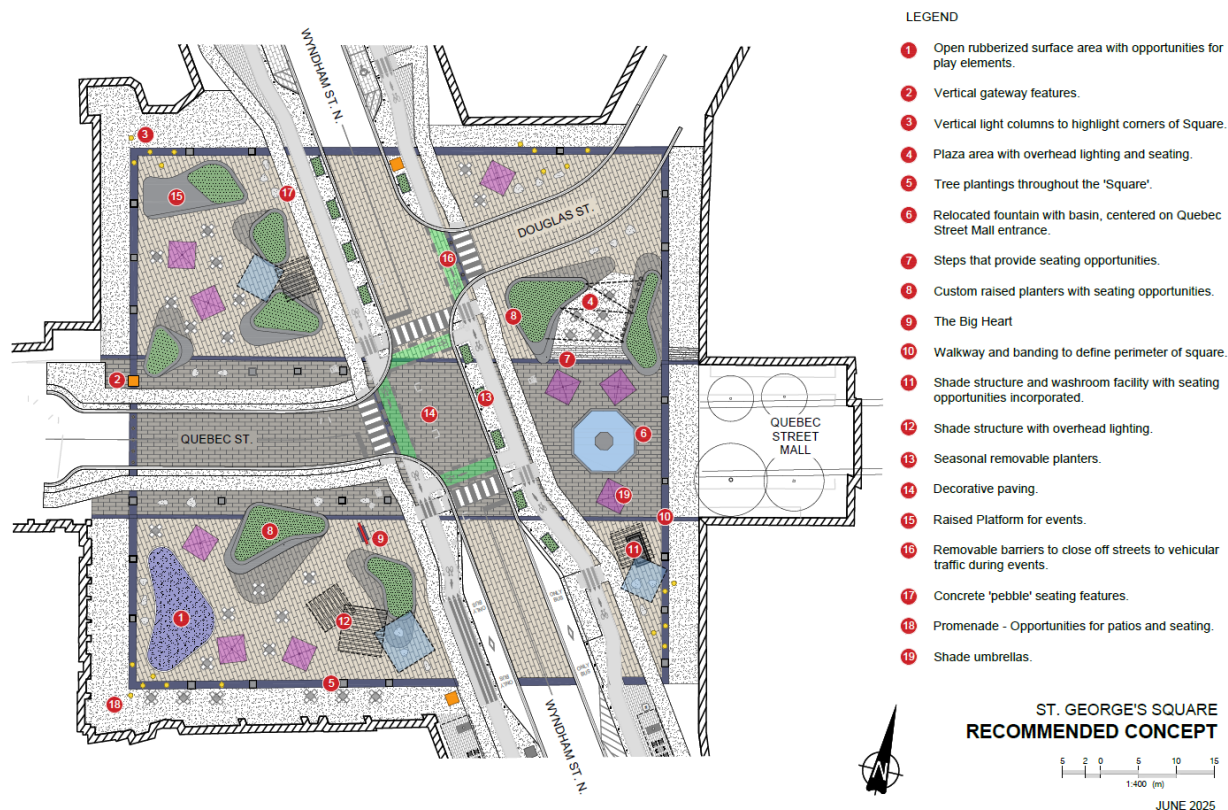
- The play area was reduced in size and moved toward the corner of the square. Throughout public engagement, particularly the pop-up engagement that was undertaken at various events in the summer of 2024, we have heard that the public wanted an active play area within St. George's Square to assist in attracting visitors and customers of all ages to the area.
- The public washroom location remains unchanged as it utilizes an area of the square that is not highly active; can house the mechanical components of the Family Fountain in a combined building; and is visible for visitors as well as for natural surveillance and access for cleaning and maintenance.
- The Family Fountain will remain in the location proposed in the draft Preferred Concept. Throughout public engagement we overwhelmingly heard that Family Fountain is an important part of St. George's Square. The proposed location, at the end of Quebec Street on the easterly side of Wyndham Street, highlights its importance while also facilitating events of all sizes to be hosted on the westerly side of the square.
- Through the detailed design process, the size and configuration of the planters will be reviewed to streamline the size to allow for open space and events, while still providing opportunities for trees and green space.
- Areas where existing patios are located were reviewed to ensure that patios could be accommodate in the future.

Figure 9: Rendering of the Recommended Concept for St. George's Square



The Recommended Concept Plan for St. George's Square continues to envision the Square as an active urban park emphasizing the creation of a space for a wide range of events and activities, including daily use as well as larger events and festivals.

Figure 10: Recommended Concept for St. George's Square



Staff recommend that Council approve the Recommended Concept Plan for St. George's Square as presented with discretion provided to staff to make

modifications as warranted during final design and construction. The Recommended Concept achieves the vision set out in the Downtown Secondary Plan to create a central gathering place, a more socially and economically vibrant hub, and to reinforce Downtown's role as a major destination and an emerging urban neighbourhood.

Construction Mitigation

Infrastructure reconstruction in a busy downtown creates challenging circumstances for businesses, residents, and visitors due to disruptions to normal business activities, noise, dust, traffic management, and other factors beyond what is experienced on typical reconstruction projects. This is not to minimize the experiences of businesses and residents on other projects, but the challenges are compounded in a dense and active downtown.

The City has recognized the importance of construction mitigation from the beginning, and it has continued to remain top of mind throughout the project. Mitigating the impacts of construction can take many forms including the pace of construction, construction sequencing and phasing, and appropriate communication. There are also more direct physical supports such as a Downtown Construction Office, a Downtown construction ambassador, complimentary parking, and appropriate wayfinding.

The project team has engaged with the community, as well as other municipalities with recent downtown re-construction experience, and developed a long list of proposed strategies that were discussed at a [Council Workshop](#) in May 2024. A summary of results was presented to Council in [September 2024](#).

Based on engaging with the public, the DGBA, business owners and Council, an extensive construction mitigation plan has been developed. Staff further consulted with the DGBA and Downtown business owners on a draft version of the construction mitigation plan in April and May of 2025.

Construction mitigation measures provided by the contractor and funded through the construction contract include:

- Expedited construction to limit extensive construction to 2026 and 2027
- Construction sequencing to reopen Wyndham Street from Farquhar Street to Carden Street within a few months of starting work, and sequencing construction to begin upper Wyndham, north of St. George's Square, in September 2026
- Ensure pedestrian access to businesses by providing a clear pedestrian space between the buildings and the construction zone
- Providing resources, both equipment and labour to allow for timely movement of goods and deliveries
- Wayfinding signage internal and external to the construction area directing customers and visitors to parking and businesses
- Dust control on a regular basis as needed, and
- Regular window cleaning of businesses along Wyndham Street North and potentially peripheral streets affected.

A construction mitigation allowance is set at \$1M within the overall project budget for initiatives not provided by the Contractor. The items outlined above, such as

pace of construction and services provided by the contractor, are captured within the construction contract. This specific construction mitigation allowance is intended to support businesses and reflects the importance placed on construction mitigation and that it has been thoughtfully considered throughout all aspects of the construction planning. An increase to the budget to manage additional transit costs resulting from construction will also be proposed through the 2026 budget update.

Key elements of the staff recommended construction mitigation plan include the following which are discussed in more detail below.

1. Construction pace, phasing, and staging
2. Communication and information sharing
3. Direct construction support
4. Business support plan

Construction Pace, Phasing and Staging

These aspects of the construction mitigation plan are discussed in detail above but generally include expedited construction including extended construction work hours, incentive, and disincentive clauses for the construction to finish on-time or early, facilitating third party utilities to begin ahead of time, and the staging/sequencing of Phase 1 construction to reduce impacts.

Communication and Information Sharing

- **Extensive Communication Plan:** a plan to provide frequent and continuous construction updates so that residents, business owners and visitors to Downtown know what to expect in the short and long term. Using tools such as the Downtown Update Newsletter which continues to build the list of contacts, social media, physical signage throughout and surrounding the construction area, sharing information through the DGBA, and a *Diggable Downlow* webpage which includes all construction resources.
- **Construction Liaison Group / Street Captains:** A group of people that represent Downtown businesses on a block-by-block basis in order to share information between businesses and the project team and contractor. This is intended to provide opportunities for two-way communication to disperse information and gather concerns so that issues can be addressed quickly and in a satisfactory manner. A fulsome terms of reference for this group will be developed and the group will be established in early 2026.
- **Ongoing communication with the DGBA:** City staff will continue to attend DGBA Board meetings in order to maintain ongoing and continuous communication.

Direct Construction Supports

- **Downtown Construction Office:** a location easily accessed by business owners and the public to get information, coordinate upcoming events or connect with staff to address issues that come up.
- **Downtown Ambassador:** a City staff member dedicated to assisting businesses and the public with issues that arise during construction who is generally located in the Downtown Office and on-site. This staff member has the authority to take actionable steps to address issues.

- **Complimentary Alternative Parking:** at various times throughout construction, the Macdonell Street Parking Lot will allow for two hours of complimentary parking to offset the on-street parking. If budget permits, complimentary parking in alternative locations will be explored.
- **Wayfinding:** a strategy is being developed and will be finalized before Phase 1 of construction begins which includes wayfinding in and around the construction area, directions to parking, to businesses, and to transit for pedestrians, cyclists, and drivers.
- **Access to businesses:** the contractor will be responsible for ensuring that businesses remain accessible and that the pedestrian areas can be navigated relatively easily throughout construction.
- **Business Delivery Access plans:** In consultation with business owners, develop individual business access plans that may require dedicated members of the contractor's team to assist with reasonable moving of goods and supplies in and out of the businesses.
- **Facilitating quick-stops and accessible parking:** designing the end of each side street where they "dead-end" at Wyndham Street (during construction) to accommodate accessible parking, short-term parking for quick-stops, as well as pick-ups and drop-offs, and solid waste pick-up and storage.
- **Enhanced construction safety measures:** upgrading required safety measures, such as lighting pedestrian pathways and required hoarding or screening, to provide a fun and inviting atmosphere.
- **Exploring a parking shuttle:** staff are continuing to explore opportunities to provide a Downtown parking shuttle to assist people in getting from parking structures to other locations Downtown, particularly those businesses that are not located close to parking structures. Through community engagement we have heard that this is not a high priority mitigation tactic. Staff are exploring opportunities to leverage advertising space on the shuttle to offset costs, with modest reductions in operating expenditure possible, similar to advertising on Guelph Transit buses. Operating costs are anticipated to be an order of magnitude greater than the potential revenue.

Business Support Plan

- **Marketing strategy:** Retain a consultant to develop marketing strategies and campaigns for Downtown that can also be shared with businesses and key interest holders in Downtown reconstruction.
- **Training and business consulting services:** Provide complimentary, bookable direct support services at the Downtown Office for business owners with topics such as managing cashflow, managing inventory reductions, e-commerce, and online sales support.
- **Downtown event grant:** providing funding to the DGBA to enhance or add to the current event portfolio with the goal that enhancing or adding events will help attract people (customers/clients) Downtown during construction. This may also include funding to run contests or create other incentives for customers/clients to patronize Downtown businesses.
- **Construction information package and checklists:** A website and electronic (pdf) package that is regularly updated with current construction information and resources.
- **Enhanced cleaning services:** Ongoing window cleaning, façade cleaning, and sidewalk maintenance.

- **Construction Tours:** Additional 'events' during construction, coordinated with the contractor, to attract people to Downtown.
- **Guelph Transit:** To effectively meet customer expectations and address employee needs during the Downtown construction efforts, additional transit resources will be necessary. These resources will support weekday and Saturday service on routes with ongoing schedule challenges – specifically those where delays affect 30 per cent or more of trips. These additional resources will help mitigate impacts and improve service reliability, reduce missed connections, and prevent longer waiting times for customers. These resources will also support transit operators and daily operations by aligning most with standard recovery times, timely breaks, and smoother trip scheduling.
- **Seasonal Patio Program Fee reduction:** The Seasonal Patio Program (SPP) was approved as a permanent offering for businesses to animate Downtown city streets in 2023 after a successful pilot initiative between 2021-2023. In the first two years of the permanent program, 15 businesses have set up on-street patios.

Staff recommend reducing the on-street rental fee by 50 per cent to \$5 per square meter per month + HST for all current active and future applications to the SPP during Downtown Infrastructure Revitalization. For reference, the permanent program fees in 2025 are:

- One-time encroachment application fee: \$177.00 + HST
- One-time encroachment agreement fee: \$238.00 + HST
- Annual seasonal patio inspection fee: \$260.00 + HST
- Annual on-street rental fee: \$10 per square meter per month + HST

Reducing the fees will encourage current and new operators who are able to install on city streets not impacted by construction to participate in the program. Incentivizing program participation will maintain patios in the Downtown core that encourage residents and visitors to patronize businesses during peak construction months when the patio program is active between the beginning of May and the end of September.

Any program costs not covered by the fees will be paid by the Downtown Construction Mitigation Budget.

CFIB Construction Mitigation Research

In a recent publication titled "[Hard Hats and Hard Times: Public construction impacts on small businesses](#)", the Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses examined the impact that municipal infrastructure projects have on small to medium sized businesses. The work concluded that almost 7 in 10 Canadian small businesses have experienced disruptions due to local construction in the past five years. Of the businesses that have experienced construction, 40 per cent reported a decline in sales. This research also evaluated construction mitigation efforts, identified gaps in support between provincial and municipal governments and recommended construction mitigation plans for government consideration which include the following tactics:

- Communicating about the project ahead of time.
- Adopting a comprehensive planning approach involving a *dig once* principle and the phasing/timing of projects.

- Improve contracting processes including incentive and disincentive clauses for early/late completion of project.
- Designate a Business Liaison Officer to address concerns and issues efficiently.

While many small business owners believe they should be directly compensated by the government when a construction project has a major impact on their operations, the research did recognize that in some provinces provincial legislation prevents municipalities from providing this type of construction mitigation relief. The research did highlight where financial compensation programs have been developed, including Calgary and Montreal. While provincial legislation in Ontario prevents compensation directly to businesses, it is also noted that even if this were not the case, adding direct business compensation would set a very expensive precedent that could significantly increase project budgets by promoting an expectation that all businesses should be compensated by the government when road work is undertaken.

The construction mitigation plan staff have developed through consultation with business owners, and the community addresses the items outlined by the CFIB in addition to providing additional construction mitigation support.

Staff also recognize that the needs of businesses may change as we continue to plan for construction, and even after construction commences. Accordingly, the construction mitigation plan will continue to be refined over 2025 and may also evolve after construction begins in order to respond to the changing needs of Downtown businesses.

Staff recommend that Council approve the construction mitigation plan for Wyndham Street North construction as presented.

Financial Implications

The total current available and projected budget (Feb 2025) for phase 1 (PN0060 – Wyndham Street N Reconstruction – Farquhar to Woolwich) is \$31.48M consisting of \$24.18M in 2025 and \$7.30M in 2026.

Due to the complicated nature of the work and the current industry uncertainties, there are several potential factors that staff are monitoring that could impact the sufficiency of this budget estimate and may result in a construction bid and other costs that are higher than the current budget allocation. While staff have taken all reasonable steps to mitigate and understand costs, the scale and interplay of key risks is unknown. These cost risks and pressures are listed below.

Construction:

- Tariff implications unknown due to potential reciprocal tariffs and increased supply friction due to efficiency losses.
- Due to limited availability of skilled workforce and settlements, labour cost expected to be 5 per cent - 7 per cent higher according to local contractor input. Due to limited availability of skilled workforce and settlements, labour cost expected to be 5 per cent - 7 per cent higher than previously estimated according to local contractor input.
- New and significant provincial and federal funding programs will trigger many projects competing for limited contracting resources; and,

- While private sector development is currently slow, changing market conditions over time could increase competition for limited construction resources.
- The City has received favourable bids this year since the contracting market is depressed due to the lack of tenders being issued in the private market. Should tendering remain tight, favourable pricing may also be received for the Phase 1 work.

Third-party Utilities:

- Final cost sharing figures are not yet available, however initial estimates are ~20 per cent higher than the initial \$5M allocated for all utilities relocation costs.
- Expedited construction schedule demands winter work.

Operational Impacts:

- Guelph Transit Services - additional resources to ensure service meets expectations is currently estimated to require an additional \$2M to be added to the construction mitigation budget for Phase 1. Guelph Transit Services - additional resources to ensure service meets expectations is currently estimated to require an additional \$2M to be added to the budget for Phase 1.

The project will be tendered in fall 2025 with the assumption that the 2025 capital budget approved for this work will be sufficient, and with the caveat that if it is not, tender award will be contingent upon additional resources added through the 2026 budget confirmation, with award in early 2026 once the capital budget update is confirmed.

Staff will propose budget adjustments to provide contingency to manage the above construction pressures through the 2026 budget update, which will be released through the 2025 year-end review if not required. An increase to the budget to manage additional transit costs will also be proposed through the 2026 budget update. These budget adjustments will require deferral of other capital projects to maintain a fully funded capital budget and forecast.

Consultations and Engagement

Extensive internal and external consultation has taken place to determine the infrastructure required, construction planning and public realm design to support current and future needs. To date the project team has:

- Had 16 pop-up activities in public spaces and special event booths
- hosted eight public open houses, representing different engagement phases across the program.
- Had online engagement opportunities available almost continuously beginning in 2022. There have been 12 surveys or similar activities that give opportunities to leave comments, share ideas, and ask questions online.
- Made four formal presentations to the DGBA in addition to updates made regularly at Board meetings. In addition, presented and received questions and feedback at the 2024 and 2025 annual general meetings.
- Engaged with special interest focus groups, site tours and workshops with event presenters, heritage advocates and other interest holders.

- Engaged with 55 businesses on and near Wyndham Street North with door-to-door conversations and/or online surveys in 2024, based on their preference. Ongoing business visits and consultations are continuing in 2025.
- Engaged with businesses in the Phase 0: Wyndham-Wellington Water and Wastewater Capacity Improvement catchment with door-to-door conversations, and/or online surveys based on their preference.
- Held monthly Construction Café since August 2024 at various Downtown establishments. Over 39 businesses, residents and visitors have used the opportunity to connect with project staff to discuss their needs and interests in the DTRP program.
- Plus, countless written correspondence.

In total, there have been over 3,450 engagement interactions with residents, business, agencies, and other external interest holders. The information and feedback provided during these interactions have been recorded and used to inform project decisions to date. In addition, we have shared information and engaged with Indigenous Nations and partners throughout the process.

Engagement activities were generally presented on focused topics to help appeal to different interest holders and inform the project findings as we worked through different stages of the planning process. The engagement activity timeline can be seen below:

- [Engagement prior to the EA process](#) (2021-2022)
- [Wyndham and Macdonell EA process](#): Review existing conditions and develop problems and opportunities (2022)
- [Wyndham Street EA: Road option conditions and intersections](#) (2023)
- [Wyndham Street EA: Form and function alternatives](#) (2023)
- [Wyndham Street EA: Preliminary preferred alternatives](#) (2023)
- [Capital Implementation Plan: Construction pace options \(2024\)](#)
- [Capital Implementation Plan: Preferred options](#) (2024)
- [Macdonell Bridge and Allan's Dam structures EA: Preliminary preferred options](#) (2024)
- [St. George's Square Design Open House](#) (2025)
- [St. George's Square preliminary design concept options](#) (2024-2025)
- [St. George's Square and Wyndham Street North preliminary preferred design](#) (2025)

Attachments

Attachment-1 Wyndham Street North and St. George's Square - Preparing for and mitigating construction Staff Presentation

Departmental Approval

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Nectar Tampacopoulos, General Manager, Environmental Services

Krista Walkey, General Manager, Planning and Building Services

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Doug Godfrey, General Manager, Operations

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