

Guelph City Council, July 22, 2025

RE: **Item 7.5 - Wyndham Street North and St. George's Square - Preparing for and mitigating construction (DTIRP Phase 1) - 2025-303**

St. George's Square recommendation:

3. *That the recommended Concept Plan for St. George's Square, as outlined in report 2025-303, dated July 8, 2025, be approved.*

Mr. Mayor, Members of City Council

We are writing collectively as former 'Rink Rats' who played a key role in the promotion and fundraising for Market Square, which has become a beloved asset within the community and a benchmark for the quality of public space design within Downtown Guelph.

The Downtown Secondary Plan speaks to **Design Excellence** as a fundamental goal for projects or urban spaces within the plan area. The concept for St. George's Square as presented needs to meet this level of ambition, and we respectfully submit that though well-intentioned, the concept does not yet meet an acceptable level of coherent design quality. While the current design advances many ideas, it lacks a cohesive narrative and could benefit from the perspectives offered through a comprehensive peer-review process.

We note that Council's motion for the project has already been amended at Committee of the Whole with additional instructions and the requirement for reporting-back on the progress of the design. We support that direction – especially the identified need to plan for flexibility, test fit for various programmes (as well as studying day and evening versions we'd add) and acknowledge more deeply the historical context, but we would go further.

Given the significance of the commission as a 'once-in-a-lifetime' opportunity to renovate this most iconic element of the Galt Plan, and indeed Council's budget support for an enhanced project, we strongly encourage Council to have the project team engage in a Peer Review process. The project doesn't need more community engagement as much as it needs the good counsel of a design reviewer.

Design Peer Review is an established practice that staff are familiar with and is often a requirement on significant private sector development applications. It is also identified in the Downtown Secondary Plan as appropriate for public commissions where warranted. The 'Peer' in this case should be a Landscape or Urban Design group who has completed recognized urban space projects within Ontario and Canada and who can provide a high-quality sounding board for the project team to refine and sharpen the project.

We encourage the City to take the project through a Peer Review process and have the process reported back to Council through future design updates.

We only have this opportunity once to make the project as good as it can be!

Thank you for your consideration.

The [former] Rink Rats

And [former] Honorary Rink Rats



Audrey Jamal



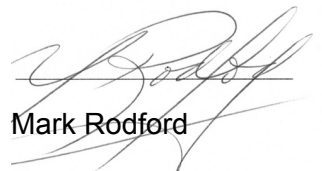
Julia Grady



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