

Baker District - Project Update - 2020-148

General Correspondence

During this tough economic times which will have fall out for many years, it is NOT in the best interest of public spending to build a new library. I'm sure a less expensive option can be found. I trust my municipal council and mayor will act prudently and support the decision to cancel a new building plan for a public library.

Thank you,
Rhonda McMahan

Hello,

I reside in ward 1 and very thankful for Dan Gibson and Bob Bell for voting no to the library in 2019.

I would like to express I do not support the library and would like to see the project cancelled.

Thank you

Sandra Swietochowska Murray and Owen Murray

Hi,

I am a tax payer living in Kortright Hills and I am AGAINST the \$67 million dollar library. Not only is the price absurd, but we have a ton of libraries and the two I visit are empty always. Even pre covid they were empty. Let's use what we already have.

Rebecca Adam

To Whom this May Concern,

In regards to the most fiscally irresponsible project I have ever seen, I cannot express loudly enough that this project needs to be 100% axed.

I am a taxpayer, and absolutely disgusted that this kind of spending was ever approved by anyone on this Council, nevermind now in the recession and pandemic

mess we are in. Why would the federal or provincial government give any money towards this? Absolute waste of infrastructure and money!!! Shame on you!

I work in Community Health Care and the lack of affordable /supportive housing is appalling. How about you actually look after your constituents and put some money to that? Or fix the roads that are a disaster? Or something as simple as grey bin pickup WEEKLY ? I could go on.

Thank God I am in Ward one with a common sense Councillor. The nonsense about the fenced Dog parks and now this, you are quite the group. Seems pretty cliquely and crooked to me. I also hear someone in this group has a vested interest in this project occurring.

You should look at the petition and watch the emails come in, the City of Guelph is speaking. No 20 year tax levy for us, thanks.

Stephany Reeves

To whom it may concern,

When we moved to Guelph seven years ago, the sky high taxes were our only hesitation but we decided to work our asses off in order to make ends meet. Now, after seven years living here, we are very close to needing to move away somewhere where the taxes are reasonable. Our taxes have shot up from \$6,000 to \$8,000 in seven years, for many different reasons including an MPAC re-assessment but mostly because of YOUR irresponsible spending. Absolutely unacceptable and disrespectful of our hard earned money!!! And they will inevitably keep increasing without even considering this ridiculous over-priced library! Sure, libraries are somewhat necessary in this day and age for a very small fraction of people but our libraries are already functioning as is. Seven of them! We have taken the time to check them out to see for ourselves what the problem is and why we desperately need this new library. It makes no sense because they seem to be functioning just fine...and they are mainly empty. For the majority, I cannot imagine why anyone would need to even step foot in a library. Our library is now the Internet, which the vast majority have access to and it is basically FREE information. I cannot even remember the last time that myself, my family, or any other friend or family that I know has needed to step into a library. You better believe that this ridiculously over-priced, unnecessary library will go way over budget because 100% of the time these projects ALWAYS do. You would be naive to hope otherwise. And the taxpayer is the one that pays for it every time.

Let me tell you, if we weren't following the politics of the city of Guelph before, we are certainly following very closely now and we are very much aware of the out-of-touch, irresponsible counselors that voted for the library and all of the other over-the-top spending at the city as well. The Covid pandemic should have caused a complete 180 but the irresponsible ones continue to push to spend our tax dollars and we will not let this go unnoticed.

Good luck at election time! Time to turf the old and get some responsible representatives voted in.

Dean and Ramune Beattie

For starters, I would love to know what pros and cons were evaluated by my Ward 4 Councillors in the initial decision for you both to vote in favor of a \$67M budget for a new city library. Also, how much community engagement did you do **within our Ward 4 for you both to vote in favor** of this project and its expensive price tag? Other area municipalities have upgraded their libraries with a much less budget (e.g., City of Kitchener's \$40M library improvement project).

I am not arguing against the idea of upgrading our city library system, but I suspect that the city could have evaluated other options that would improve on what we have, and consider the economics of the project higher up on the evaluation criteria list, keeping in mind that tax payers are already getting stretched as it is.

And now with the current economic impacts due to COVID-19, increased pressure on city budgets and the taxpayer will be felt for years to come. With this in mind, the library project and its \$67M budget should be at least postponed indefinitely, until the city finances are better understood in the next 1-2 years. In addition, you should be considering alternative approaches for library upgrades, which can find a happy medium between better library infrastructure and the cost burden on the tax payers. \$67M is not what I would call a community "need", but rather a budget that way beyond "need" and into the "nice to have" category. Money can be better allocated to ensure that all "must-have/need" projects are considered when using \$67M. One example - the city still needs a new South end rec centre, and I don't even live in that Ward yet I see and realize the need for one.

You should take a look at the amount and content of the recent social media postings on this matter. My view on this is well supported by many taxpayers of our city.

Regards,
Jason Rice
Ward 4 Resident

Dear Mayor and Members of Council,

Please respect the plight of tax payers for years to come and revise the proposed library project. The scale is massive. Libraries are important and indeed the current library is old, but the scope of the proposed library is far beyond our financial limits.

We would be ignorant to not assume cost overruns will occur, this will be bigger than \$67 million. This is a lofty expectation to put on the shoulders of the tax payer in today's economic environment. Do not jeopardize our credit rating for a project larger than what we need. All levels of government will struggle with reduced revenues related to coronavirus, the money is drying up. Now is clearly not the time to proceed with this project. Use this time for planners to revise the size of this project.

Thank you, Judy MacEachern

To Whom this May Concern,

I am writing to express my serious concern with the proposed \$67 million dollar library new build that was passed by Council.

As a Guelph citizen, homeowner and Guelph-based business employee, I spend the vast majority of my time in Guelph, supporting local businesses and services, and paying my property taxes. Our family is proud to be doing their part to be good upstanding citizens. We are excited to begin our family, in the City of Guelph.

Growing up in Milton, Ontario, my family would often visit the (now old) Milton Public Library, which was the lone library at that time. It was small and cozy, jammed packed with books, magazines, movies and other resources such as programs, experienced associates to assist with research and quiet areas for reading. My family would spend the day participating in reading and children programs, renting VHS movies and CDs, and as I got older, participating in resume building courses and utilizing the space for school work since we didn't have a family computer for a few years. I have many wonderful memories from our years in Milton. I share this to note that I am not blind to how vital libraries and their many services are to a community.

All our social services, like our libraries require adequate funding to provide their services and a safe space for all who need it - children programs, senior citizen support services, addictions and homelessness services, etc. What we need to remember is that those who contribute to paying for these services are already at their breaking point, and have been pushed even further due to COVID-19.

COVID-19 has thrown us all for a loop, to put it bluntly. Jobs and wages have been cut or lost all together. Businesses have closed or are operating at the bare minimum resulting in severe layoffs. Everyday expenses have increased with zero assistance from service providers, and most importantly, our property taxes and rent/mortgages are still to be paid, in full.

People are at risk of losing their homes and businesses, and this risk will be with us all for some time. Not to mention how already financially stressed our citizens are with the current cost of housing (both rentals and home ownership) with such limited supply, and how high property taxes are already.

Hard decisions have been made by Council during this pandemic; services cut or minimized, projects placed on the back burner, and moving quickly to implement new programs or initiatives to support our local businesses and services to get them through the pandemic. Your leadership does not go unnoticed. What seems to go unnoticed is how this decision is going to affect every single tax payer in Guelph.

Living in Guelph is a luxury. We have local businesses and services that welcome you like family, beautiful architecture and a rich history that we are proud of, organizations that support each other, and we believe we have a local government that cares about its People.

This is not the time for us to change. I urge you to review your decision in a new light, and take into account what we have all gone through and will continue to go through. Remember that what makes Guelph so great are the citizens of this city, who are from all walks of life. This is not the time to take on more debt. If we continue to increase property taxes in the City of Guelph and stay on this trajectory of making living in Guelph unobtainable and impossible, we are going to lose what Guelph is all about; its People.

Cancel this new build, or postpone for the time being. Focus on ensuring your citizens, local business owners and social services are managing. Let's get our City back on financial track.

Because frankly, we can't afford it.

Thank you for your consideration,

Chelsea Woolley

To city clerks and council

To Mayor Guthrie (there are changes from original email)

I am writing about the library controversy. I moved to Guelph in 2004, from Timmins Ontario. In Timmins we had a severely unfit library and the city built a new one. However, in that case it was much less expensive even if adjusted for inflation. I donated \$100 to the construction effort. In Guelph, there seems to be an effort to build a monumental building. I have been told that you don't support the construction at this time. I agree that this is not the time to spend our way into massive debt. Does anyone really know when the COVID crisis will end? When the world health and safety situation is clear and the economy is on track, possibly with a city surplus, it would be advisable to build a modest working library. In my opinion, you are on the right side of the debate.

Thank you,

Peter Landriault

Please reconsider this massive expense in light of Covid-19's impact on the global and local financial environment, the lack of matched government funding, and the absolutely immense and long term financial impact on the city of Guelph and it's taxpayers.

Smaller deployment of focused projects would be better use of library budget such as improved IT department, additional emergency shelter for our large homeless population, or a smaller renovation with an eye towards a future use of the facility when we have the ability to upgrade appropriately. Guelph's citizens can't afford this, and neither can our coffers.

A vote in favour of this build at this time is one out of touch with its already financially strapped taxpayers.

Sincerely, Colleen Sorensen