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Coming at 10 am, a council workshop about economic development and tourism.



**City Council Preview – What's on the Agenda for the March 22 Meeting?**

How do we strengthen Guelph's economy and bring back some of those sweet tourism dollars? This is a question that's preoccupied the economic development offices at City Hall lately, and...

<https://guelphpolitico.ca/2023/03/10/city-council-preview-whats-on-the-agenda-for-the-...>

Why 10 am? Well, all council start times are being set at 10 am for the next month due to the observance of Ramadan. Staff suggested the move last year as a way to encourage participation by observant Muslims who fast all day during the month and break it at sundown.

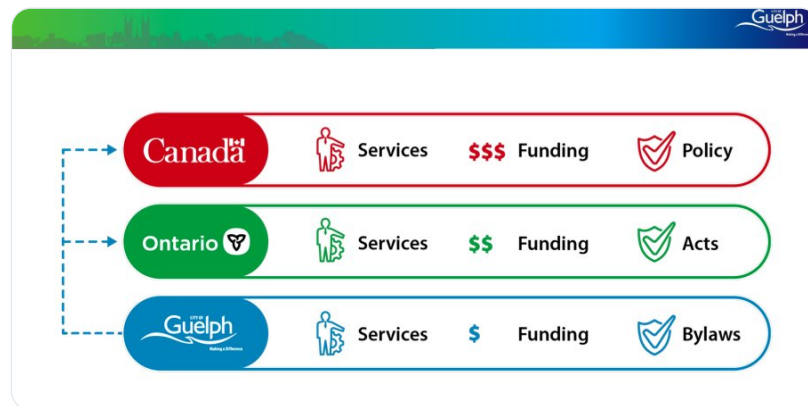
Mayor Guthrie calls the meeting to order. He's here in-person, and so are Cllrs Klassen, O'Rourke and Chew, and members of city staff. All other councillors are appearing virtually.

No Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and General Nature Thereof.

One item today: "Economic Development and Tourism Unpacked - A Council Workshop". Guthrie says that he thinks this is going to be "really important" for new and old councillors alike.

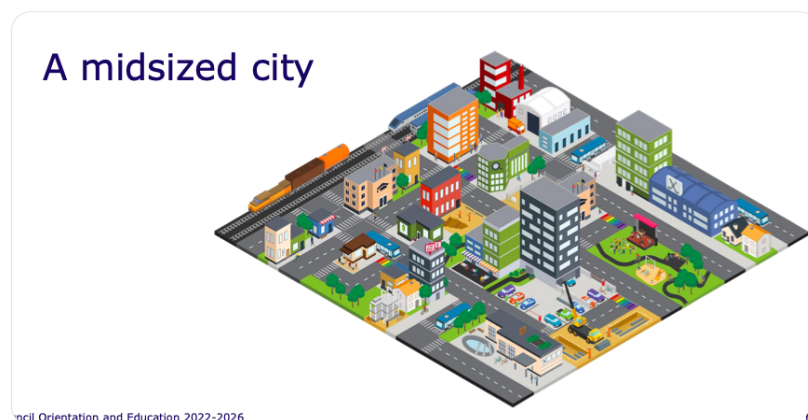
DCAO Jayne Holmes begins by saying that council will be taken on a tour today of the economic ecosystem of a mid-sized city. Need to recognise how local biz adds value to the community and recognise the challenges of the changing workforce.

John Regan, General Manager of Economic Development and Tourism, takes over and starts by looking at the intergovernmental relationship.



It's worth noting that the City can't supply business incentive measures unless approved by the Province first. Something like community improvement plans like the old Downtown facade improvement grants.

Behold! The mid-size city!!! It's got a good econ mix, it's well-connected, it's got institutional gravitas, a strong downtown core and surrounding neighbourhoods, and it's primed to grow.



We start with employment areas, and attracting and growing employment opportunities. A diverse mix of building and industry types is important to promote growth and attract investments.

We're going to focus on three industrial types: manufacturing, warehousing and industrial condominium. On that first one, Guelph has been lucky to weather the massive changes to this sector, we still have a strong manufacturing sector.

Manufacturing has changed in the last several decades in terms of products developed and the methods by which they're manufactured.

Industrial land use though has focused on the other two areas: warehousing and industrial condominium. Warehousing isn't as "sexy" as manufacturing but warehousing has become more important through the pandemic and as people were order things from home.

Warehousing also a part of the supply chain, and we know that shocks to that system, anywhere in the system, can have immediate consequences across the system.

We will likely see an increase in warehousing in the future given Guelph's place in the supply chain. Some of these might be as big as a million square feet.

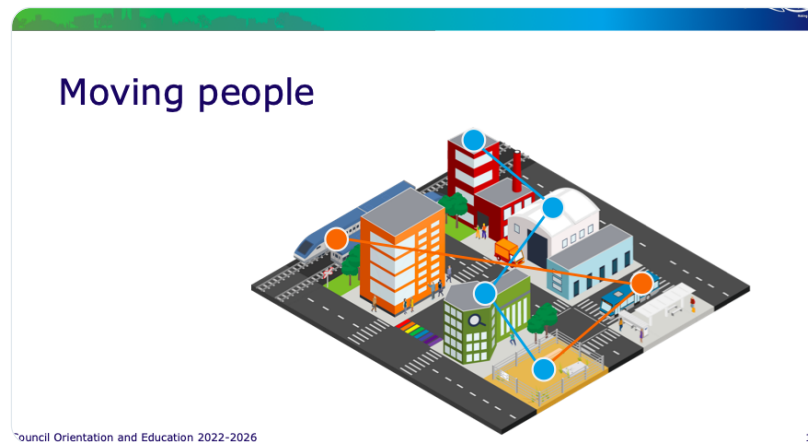
Finally, industrial condos, essentially the building of business space like an industrial park. They need to be able to accommodate new business and growing business. At issue in Guelph is that a lot of the available business land is privately held, so may not be made to order.

This slide has "cluster investment" but the one on screen now says "targeted investment." In Guelph, phase three of the Hanlon Creek Business Park is being prepped.



Christine Chapman, Manager of Economic Development, notes that Guelph is welcoming to all types of potential businesses, and not just the ones listed here.

Next topic:



The majority of people working in Guelph have a commute of 30 minutes or less, but the goal is to not just ensure the safe movement of people in vehicles, but pedestrian and cyclists too.

Guelph is unique because we're with a 30 minute drive of a number of other urban centres. 2WADGO will likely make this area even more mobile, and there's a role for the City in encouraging that inter-regional transportation.

Adoption and behavioural change will take time though, and it's not just employees that need to be considered, we need to think about the business traveller too.

Apparently, Guelph is seeing a boom in business event and conference bookings in 2023, which brings us to tourism:



When staff talk about a "target market" of tourism or visitor, there's an actual definition for that. It's someone who comes from over 40 km away for any reason that's outside the routine.

A midsize city does not attract who we typically think of as a tourist, so the #1 reason why someone comes is usually to visit friends and family. That means people who live here aren't just residents, they're tour guides!



Every midsize city is going to have different offerings depending on what's there, and what the community chooses to focus on. Destination development is not just creating the attraction, but making it easy to get around and find a place to stay.

Why Guelph? Local foodie culture, municipally managed spaces like trails and parks, or attractions like the Museum.

Look out for a volunteer networking event at the end of April that will hopefully recruit some much-needed volunteers for various festivals in the area in the spring, summer and fall.

Guelph also has a role in supporting tourism in surrounding areas in Wellington County; people may be visiting a locale in Wellington County, but are choosing to stay in Guelph accommodation. The twice-yearly Home Hardware convention in Elmira is a good example of that.

Spin-off of tourism:



A good example of this is when prospective students and parents visit the University of Guelph, people come to see the campus and it also gives them an idea about living in the city and its various offerings.

Small to medium sized businesses make up about 9 out of every 10 business in the city, and over 70 per cent have 10 employees or less. It's important to remember that business concerns in Guelph are not especially about \*big\* businesses.

The City can often be seen as a regulatory barrier to business, but it can also be an asset in terms of helping businesses navigate the red tape and lead them thru complex processes like permitting to make it easier to open.

How about Guelph as a good's movement hub? It's a function we've served in the past when Guelph was a the centre of bringing farm goods to market. We also literally own our own railroad (Guelph Junction Railroad) which makes Guelph attractive for moving large amount of goods.

Increase in rail traffic also has an environmental impact: One rail car takes four long-haul trucks off the road.

Look for more info on GJR on June 14 when the annual report comes to council.

Also, look for more on good movements strategy and an update about the Transportation Master Plan for the April 26 council meeting.

Moving downtown, the "heart" of the midsize city, and you can't create vibrancy without people.

Since the completion of the community improvement plan, the downtown has seen a steady increase in assessment since a largely stagnate period in the 90s and early 2000s. The City is looking to take an active role downtown as disruptions from major infrastructure projects begins.



Cost and availability of parking is going to a short-term issue downtown until people's behaviours catch up with the modal shift. This is going to be discussed more at the workshop next Wednesday:



**City Council Preview – What's on the Agenda for the March 29 Meeting?**

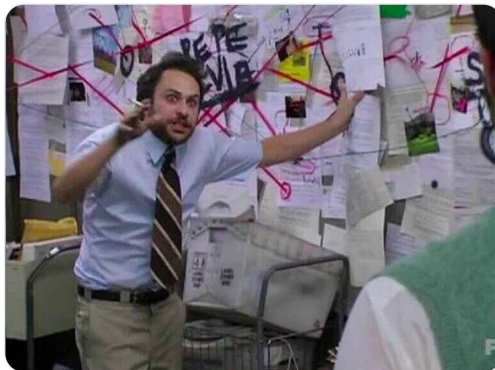
Parking. We love and we hate and we have to deal it, and in downtown Guelph there are a lot of complications if you want to increase parking, or even if you don't. In this latest council work...

<https://guelphpolitico.ca/2023/03/17/city-council-preview-whats-on-the-agenda-for-the-...>

Note for Later: A new "Guelph" sign that is bigger and illuminated will be installed soon in Market Squared. This follows after the success of that temp "Guelph" sign that was in the Square during the pandemic.

Staff note that the housing situation is creating issues. If people can find somewhere else that's affordable and then commute to Guelph they will do that. It also hurts the university talent pipeline because if young people can't find an affordable place to live, they won't stay

In summation: It's all connected.



That's the end of the presentation, on to council questions.

Cllr Caton asks about including accessibility information in business promotion info.

Chapman says its been discussed and the point's been made that making a building more accessible is only going to help business.

Caton says she would like to for people to have an easier time learning where accessibility isn't an issue. Regan says that they're in the process of collecting detailed business information and can't see why they wouldn't explore that end of it too.

Cllr Klassen suggests that the Accessibility Advisory Committee might be a good resource is finding out where the accessible businesses are. She asks staff about regional transit alternatives.

Chapman says they've heard a lot of comments from the business community about accessing more regional transit options and Holmes there's regular meetings with partners how it can be enhanced and advocacy through AMO.

Cllr O'Rourke asks about co-ordinate transit with shift work or workers who use U routes to get to work but can't in the summer. Chapman says there's an econ. development officer who works on these issues, and transit does too.

Cllr Caron asks about integrating tourism branding with the City's branding. Alex Jaworwisky, Manager of Tourism and Destination Development says they will creating a marketing strategy that looks at tourism and economic marketing, not sure what the end result will be right now.

Caron concerned about the timing as we count down to Guelph's 200th birthday in 2027, that's going to be a big "homecoming." Clack-Bush says that this is a consideration for the new signage for the new gateway signage, which were intended to be temporary.

Cllr Busuttill asks about community economic development, and opportunity for neighbourhoods to get involved. Regan says that happens everyday in collaborating with groups like 10C. The City can do better, they focus a lot on DT, but also want to focus on other areas.

Cllr Allt asks about what kind of economic multiplier we can expect from tourism. Regan says it depends on the sector or the cluster, we know there are impacts and they go by project like putting KPIs on the new management of the Guelph Farmers' Market, for example.

Allt says Guelph might benefit from tourism as part of 401 and QEW corridors, and right now all roads on transit lead to Toronto. Jaworwisky says transit and transportation staff can comment on that better.

Guthrie says every single ribbon cutting he does, he asks the business owner what it's like dealing with the City, and he hears more good stories than bad ones. Asks staff if they do follow-up interviews as process with new businesses. (Or why a biz left town.)

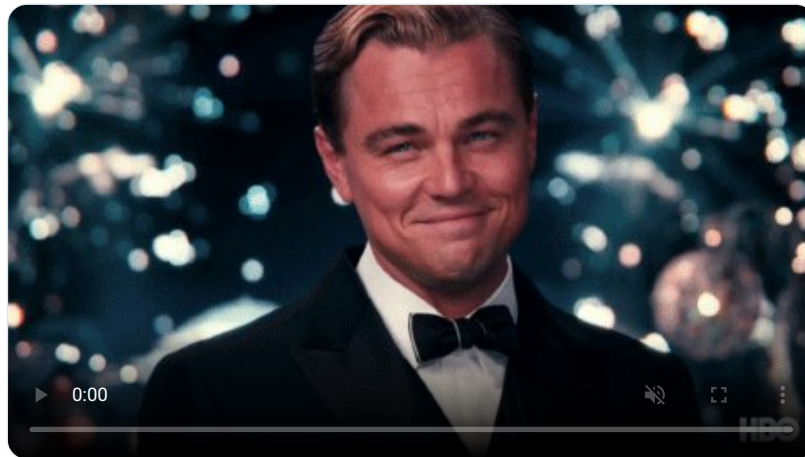
Regan says they spoke to 3,200 of the city's 4,400 bricks-and-mortar businesses this year as part of survey, and when possible they reach out to new businesses as they're moving in to town. They also try and reach out if they hear a business is closing.

Guthrie asks if there's enough employment land coming online to support the attraction of business. Chapman says that's a good question. Attracting biz to a community doesn't mean a large footprint, and we should have enough employment land out to 2051.

Guthrie asks about relationship with the provincial economic development offices. Regan says the relationship is excellent with prov. and fed. colleagues as well as elected reps. Chapman adds that OMAFRA is important too.

Guthrie thanks staff for their work because while politicians get their picture taken at the ribbon cutting, there was a lot of work staff was doing behind the scenes.

That's the end of this workshop!



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