

CITY OF GUELPH

PLANNING REVIEW THROUGH A PUBLIC HEALTH LENS



Prepared By:



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The role of public health in land use planning can be traced back to the industrial revolution. At this time, newly urbanized areas needed the infrastructure to provide healthy and sanitary conditions, which resulted in public health, land use planning and civil engineers coming together.ⁱ Over time, however, there began a separation of planning and public health. This was partially due to the emerging specialization in the planning field (e.g. environmental planning, transportation engineering and urban planning) and a concentration on individual health practices and conditions in the medical field.ⁱⁱ

Recent research in health has returned to the thinking that health is not always decided by individual health behaviours but, rather, is largely determined by the environment in which one lives. For instance, many of today's looming health concerns revolve around chronic disease, such as obesity, heart disease, stroke and some types of cancer. These conditions are often associated with lack of physical activity and unhealthy eating, and some with environmental exposure to air pollutants (e.g. certain types of cancer).ⁱⁱⁱ

In addition to specific connections with chronic diseases, the built environment and land use planning policies have the potential to impact certain populations disproportionately at the community level, thus becoming a health equity issue. For example, studies demonstrate that individuals and families living in lower socioeconomic status (SES) neighbourhoods are more likely to live close to a highway or major industrial area, hence exposing them to higher levels of air pollution and increasing their risk of suffering associated health conditions. Additionally, research has shown an association between food deserts – areas with limited access to fresh groceries – and lower SES neighbourhoods.^{iv}

As age is also an important social determinant of health, designing communities that meet the “8-80 cities” concept is critical. As a non-profit community development organization based in Toronto, 8-80 Cities has four areas of focus: Parks and Public Spaces, Sustainable and healthy mobility, People friendly public realm, and Open Streets programs.^v Each of these is linked to the concept of building a healthy community or, in this case, city. A community that is built with the 8-80 concept in mind is one that promotes and enables healthy behaviours regardless of whether you are eight (8) or 80 years old. Such a community is designed to prioritize human interaction through interconnected streets and public places where people work, learn and play.^{vi} Ultimately, “8-80 cities encourages sustainable and healthy lifestyles for people regardless of age, gender, ability and social status”.^{vi}

The Healthy Communities movement pre-dates 8-80 Cities, however. The Ontario Healthy Communities Coalition (OHCC), which was itself established in 1992, has identified that the broader healthy communities movement has roots in the 1980's in Ontario.^{vii} Arguably, the term itself became popularized after the World Health Organization's “Healthy Cities Project” was initiated in Europe in 1986.^{viii} That same year, the First International Conference on Health Promotion was held in Ottawa. The Conference resulted in the “Ottawa Charter,” which was intended “to achieve Health for All by the year 2000 and beyond.”^{ix} The Charter indicates that “Health is created and lived by people within the settings

of their everyday life; where they learn, work, play, and love.”^x Today, the importance of a given place, including its intersecting natural, built, social and cultural environments, is widely understood as being a determinant of the social, health and economic outcomes of local people.

In summary, designing and building healthy, safe and complete communities has the potential to support the health of an entire population, including that of the City of Guelph. Healthy communities promote active transportation, recreation and healthy food choices; improve access to jobs, schools and health care; create strong social networks; and ensure good air and water quality.^{xi}

1.2 Key Developments Leading to the Study

Locally, Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health’s (WDGPH) mandate is to improve the health of the population through activities that promote and protect health, and prevent disease and injury. To accomplish this mandate, it is important to work collaboratively with municipalities, school boards, health and social service agencies to create and sustain healthy communities. Municipalities can play a big role in enabling healthy decisions through their land-use design policies and practices. Nevertheless, WDGPH’s understanding and experience with land use planning policies continues to evolve.

In an attempt to inform the future direction of public health’s role in land use planning, public health staff completed a needs assessment in 2014 with municipal planners in Wellington County, Dufferin County and the City of Guelph. From the assessment, the majority of planners indicated that reviewing Official Plans would be a useful role for Public Health.

1.3 Purpose of WDG Official Plan Policy Review

Using funding from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care’s Healthy Communities Partnership, WDGPH hired a planning consultant to review municipal and county Official Plans, and other appropriate planning-related documents, in order to identify local strengths and areas of opportunity. This will help WDGPH make an effective contribution to the development of healthy communities throughout the region.

This report provides an assessment of the strengths and areas of opportunity contained within the City of Guelph’s Official Plan and related planning documents from a public health perspective. Subsequently, the report recommends considerations for future Official Plans and related policies that would help contribute to planning for a healthy community.

1.4 Anticipated Outcomes of the Review

The review and suggested considerations could encourage local municipalities to adopt Official Plan amendments, or to further study the prospect thereof, whether in the short-, medium- or long-terms. It is hoped that this work will support future collaborations in designing and supporting healthy communities in the City of Guelph. Implicit in this report is an invitation for municipal officials to collaborate with WDGPH on matters relating to land use planning and the built environment, in order to advance public health objectives locally. This report will support future collaboration between WDGPH

and the city of Guelph; between WDGPH and local planning officials; and between local municipalities. As such, an anticipated outcome of this work is fuel for capacity building in the area of healthy communities. Lastly, this work is intended to provide food for thought for both public health and planning officials who serve the public interest both within and across Wellington and Dufferin counties, and the City of Guelph.

1.5 Methodology & Assessment

The built environment requirement of the Ontario Public Health Standards (2008) suggests that public health units work to address the following risk factors: healthy eating, healthy weights, tobacco, physical activity, alcohol use and UV radiation. Nonetheless, when preparing for the Official Plan review process, WDGPH recognized that these are health outcomes of community design, but may not be the language of how planning decisions are made. As such, the internal built environment committee at WDGPH decided to select a planning-oriented framework that would guide consistency for the Official Plan review process across all 16 municipalities and 2 counties.

After reviewing several documents, the committee decided to adapt the framework outlined in *Healthy Built Environment Linkages: A Toolkit for Design, Planning and Health*, produced by British Columbia's Provincial Health Services Authority.^{xii} In this document, physical features of the built environment were separated into 5 domains:

- Healthy Neighbourhood Design;
- Healthy Transportation Networks;
- Healthy Natural Environments;
- Healthy Food Systems; and
- Healthy Housing.

These domains are each described in the following sub-sections. WDGPH worked with the planning consultant to develop a planning checklist that contained several planning policy principles within each domain. These were then used to guide the Official Plan review for strengths and areas of opportunity. Referencing back to the checklist, successful examples from other communities and additional best practice literature were referenced and subsequent recommended considerations were developed. It should be noted that many of the suggested considerations and case examples may be relevant in a more urban community, as the literature does not always provide examples within a rural context. We have noted areas where the more rural character of local communities may require further research on approaches that would be effective in enhancing the health of the community.

1.6 Five Domains

Below we describe each of the aforementioned domains in some detail.

1.6.1 Healthy Neighbourhood Design

Safe and healthy neighbourhood design can encourage active transportation and physical activity by considering mixed land use development, density, and efficient street connectivity^{xiii,xiv}. These

considerations can indirectly impact a community's physical and mental health via cycling, walking and accessible physical activity opportunities^{xv,xvi}. Convenient access to a range of amenities, such as recreation facilities, through mixed land use development has been shown to increase active transportation and overall physical activity^{xvii,xviii}. High density neighbourhoods increase proximity to work, school, amenities and recreation options, having multiple positive impacts, such as improved air quality, active transportation and physical activity^{xix,xx}. Research also suggests that compact and connected street design promotes safe use of active transportation, therefore encouraging community members to walk or cycle^{xxi}.

Community design can also moderate climate change impacts. The links between climate change and human health are numerous and diverse. For example, extreme weather events (heat waves, flooding, droughts, tornadoes), which are expected to increase in frequency and severity, may lead to increased risks of injury and illness, as well as increased risks of damage to critical infrastructure (water and sanitation systems, power grids, etc.)^{xxii}. Communities can increase their resiliency to climate change impacts by understanding local needs and vulnerabilities. Adaptation efforts may include increasing green spaces, decreasing impervious surface runoff, and designing infrastructure to withstand severe weather events^{xxiii}.

The following Healthy Neighbourhood Design planning principles were adapted from *Healthy Built Environment Linkages: A Toolkit for Design, Planning and Health*^{xxiv} as the criteria used to review municipal planning documents:

1. Enhance neighbourhood walkability
2. Create mixed land use
3. Build complete and compact neighbourhoods
4. Enhance connectivity with efficient and safe networks
5. Prioritize new developments within or beside existing communities
6. Create infrastructure resilient to climate change (addition to original toolkit referenced above)

1.6.2 Healthy Transportation Networks

The design and connectivity of transportation networks can make it either easier to get around by walking or biking or simply easier to drive^{xxv}. Communities can build healthy transportation networks by including features that improve streetscapes, including sidewalks, crosswalks, lighting and benches, which have been shown to be associated with an increase in physical activity among older adults^{xxvi}. Meanwhile, in rural settings, physical activity among adults is found to be associated with trails and parks with pleasant aesthetics^{xxvii}. There are also various design features that can help improve safety and consequently potentially encourage walking and cycling, for example, traffic calming measures^{xxviii,xxix} and cycling infrastructure (such as dedicated cycle routes, both on and off road)^{xxx,xxxi,xxxii}. Evidence suggests that biking or walking to school may not only be influenced by proximity, but also by supportive infrastructure, and that active transport to school may also increase habitual physical activity among children^{xxxiii}.

The following Healthy Transportation Networks planning principles were adapted from *Healthy Built Environment Linkages: A Toolkit for Design, Planning and Health*^{xxxiv} as criteria used to review municipal planning documents:

1. Enable mobility for all ages and abilities
2. Make active transportation convenient and safe
3. Prioritize safety
4. Encourage use of public transit
5. Enable attractive road, rail and waterway networks

1.6.3 Healthy Natural Environments

Healthy natural environments serve to enhance public health through improved air quality and cooling effects, as well as by providing opportunities for community member to engage with nature. Research indicates that urban trees have the potential to clean the air of air pollutants^{xxxv}, which in turn can help prevent the onset of cancer^{xxxvi}, cardiovascular disease and respiratory difficulties^{xxxvii}. Preliminary studies also suggest that urban trees and green spaces can have cooling effects^{xxxviii,xxxix}, mitigating the impacts of extreme heat events which are linked to increased mortality, in particular for those with pre-existing cardiovascular and respiratory conditions^{xl}. Meanwhile, studies have demonstrated that exposure to nature is not only associated with increased physical activity, but is also linked with increased general wellbeing, including improved cognitive function and reduced stress and anxiety^{xli,xlii,xliii}.

The following Healthy Natural Environments planning principles were adapted from *Healthy Built Environment Linkages: A Toolkit for Design, Planning and Health*^{xliv} as the criteria used to review municipal planning documents:

1. Preserve and connect open space and environmentally sensitive areas
2. Maximize opportunities to access and engage with the natural environment
3. Reduce urban air pollution
4. Mitigate urban heat island effect
5. Expand natural elements across the landscape

1.6.4 Healthy Food System

The local food system impacts a community's access to, and choice of, food options^{xlv}. Land use planning can directly influence factors within the local food system, such as production, distribution and procurement^{xlvi}. A community is more probable to reap the health benefits of nutritious foods when healthy and affordable local food options are easily accessible^{xlvii}. Individuals who do not have convenient neighbourhood access to a healthy food retail outlet, like a grocery store, may be more likely to choose costly and less nutritious options (e.g., processed food)^{xlviii}. Research also suggests that this unequal distribution of food retail outlets in residential areas occurs more in lower income neighbourhoods^{xlix}. When a local food system is adequately supported to provide development initiatives like community gardens and kitchens, healthy local food options are made accessible, while bolstering community members' food skills, social and coping skills, and overall community empowerment^l.

The following Healthy Food Systems planning principles were adapted from *Healthy Built Environment Linkages: A Toolkit for Design, Planning and Health*^{lii} as the criteria used to review municipal planning documents:

1. Enhance agricultural capacity
2. Increase access to healthy foods in all neighbourhoods
3. Improve community-scale food infrastructure

1.6.5 Healthy Housing

Housing affordability and quality impact health in numerous and diverse ways. Access to affordable housing reduces the frequency of moving and improves the chances of having disposable income available, both of which reduce stress and allow people and families to take better care of themselves and stay healthy^{1,liii,liv}. Additionally, living in quality housing may be associated with an improved sense of safety and decreased fear of crime, which in turn reduces stress and improves social connections^{lv}. And high quality housing with appropriate ventilation and moisture control leads to improved indoor air quality, which can have impacts on general and respiratory health, particularly for children with asthma^{lvi,lvii}. Moreover, providing energy efficient housing helps people to afford living in their homes, while reducing risks of illnesses aggravated by cold and damp conditions^{lviii}.

The following Healthy Housing planning principles were adapted from *Healthy Built Environment Linkages: A Toolkit for Design, Planning and Health*^{lix} as the criteria used to review municipal planning documents:

1. Increase access to affordable housing through provision of diverse housing forms and tenure types
2. Ensure adequate housing quality for all segments of society
3. Prioritize housing for the homeless, elderly, low income groups and people with disabilities
4. Site and zone housing developments to minimize exposure to environmental hazards

1.7 Layout of this Report

The next three chapters in this report provide: an overview of the roles of the public health and planning professions in supporting the development of healthy communities; description of the Provincial planning framework; and, review of relevant Provincial policy directions. The subsequent chapters include a discussion of strengths, areas of opportunity, considerations along with practical guidance and examples, and other strategies and actions for the City of Guelph. These chapters will be discussed with planners from each municipality, in order to fine-tune the considerations and guidance provided. The report concludes with a discussion of key themes that emerged through our review of policies and plans in City of Guelph, and a review of next steps for this work.

¹ Cohen R (2011). The Impacts of Affordable Housing on Health: A Research Summary. Centre for Housing Policy.

2.0 THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC HEALTH

Although planning is a responsibility of municipalities, within a Provincial policy framework, public health professionals, including those based in Ontario's 36 local public health units such as Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health, can play a key role in advancing positive population-level health outcomes by providing health-evidence, knowledge translation, input into planning decisions and collaboration at municipal planning tables.^{vi} Ultimately, municipalities and public health can work together to achieve a common health goal, while also addressing economic viability, environmental sustainability and public preferences.^{vi} To that end, both the planning and public health professions have taken initiatives in recent years to influence healthy policy and planning at the local and provincial levels. The timing is right to align these efforts and work in collaboration to make a meaningful difference in Ontario's communities, including those within the City of Guelph.

2.1 The Roles of Professional Planners

The Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI) is the province's professional association for planners. In 2006, OPPI launched its healthy communities initiative, in recognition of the fact that the Institute could play a leadership role in achieving healthy and sustainable communities. The OPPI has contributed direction and ideas to its membership and the broader public through its Calls to Action and Policy Papers. These resources have addressed topics such as active transportation, walkability, complete streets, transit planning, food systems, age-friendly community planning, and planning for the needs of children and youth, each of which is applicable to planning for healthy communities in the City of Guelph.

2.2 The Roles of Public Health Officials

The built environment has come to be recognized as such an important factor for one's health that *the promotion of healthy environments – both natural and built*, is a strategic goal of the Ontario Public Health Sector Strategic Plan, which was released in April 2013.^{ix} The Plan highlights the importance of: active transportation and public transportation to reduce care use and make communities more walkable; of well-designed roadways, sidewalks and stairways and the removal of obstacles to prevent falls and associated injuries; and, supporting air quality, safety and connectivity, which all impact individual and community health. It is noted that local public health units, including Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health, are well-placed to influence municipal policy and planning decisions through existing relationships with municipalities. The Strategic Plan encourages public health units to build capacity to advocate for the development of healthier environments to benefit all Ontarians.

The Ontario Public Health Standards (OPHS, 2008)^{ixi} set out the minimum requirements for public health programs and services to be delivered across Ontario's 36 health units. The Standards were revised in 2008 to include requirements around the built environment. This is found in two sections of the OPHS, 2008: Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Hazard Prevention and Management. The requirements include working to improve the design of the environment across a multitude of risk factors.

Chronic Disease Prevention

Requirement #6: The board of health shall work with municipalities to support healthy public policies and the creation or enhancement of supportive environments in recreational settings and the built environment regarding the following topics:

- Healthy eating;
- Healthy weights;
- Comprehensive tobacco control;
- Physical activity;
- Alcohol use; and
- Exposure to ultraviolet radiation.

Health Hazard Prevention and Management

Requirement #4: The board of health shall assist community partners to develop healthy policies related to reducing exposure to health hazards. Topics may include, but are not limited to:

- Indoor air quality;
- Outdoor air quality;
- Extreme weather; and
- Built environments

3.0 PROVINCIAL PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Land use planning for Wellington County unfolds within a Provincial policy and planning framework. Below we describe some of the most important Provincial policy and planning documents in terms of their relevancy to designing healthy communities in the City of Guelph.

3.1 Planning Act of Ontario

The Planning Act of Ontario sets out the ground rules for land use planning in Ontario and describes how, and by whom, land uses may be controlled. Vis a vis the Strong Communities (Planning Amendment) Act (2004), it ensures that Provincial interests are reflected in municipal land use planning decisions, and provides for a balance of economic growth and environmental protection. The Act requires that all municipalities and Counties in Ontario adopt Official Plans, with the approval of the appropriate Planning Authority in Ontario, and review them at least every five years to ensure their currency. In Ontario, regional municipalities and counties are considered “Upper Tier” municipalities, in accordance with the Municipal Act. Local municipalities, which make up a County or region, are considered “Lower Tier” municipalities. Until recently, the City of Guelph was not required to have an Official Plan. Regulation 101/13, which amended regulation 352/02, Mandatory Adoption of Official Plans, came into force on March 19, 2013 and required Ontario’s Upper-Tier municipalities to develop and adopt Official Plans. As such, a draft was prepared and adopted in September 2014 and was approved by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on March 25, 2015.

Upper Tier and Local Official Plans are statutory documents that establish policies to implement a municipality’s vision and expectations for the built and natural environment. They provide guidance for the physical development of the municipality over a minimum 20 year period while taking into consideration a wide range of social, economic and environmental conditions that are important in building a healthy, safe and sustainable community. The scale of policies and plans ranges from community-wide to neighbourhood level, but can also include individual developments. These policies provide the basis for public and private sector investment decisions.

3.2 Provincial Policy Statement

The Provincial Policy Statement establishes the Provincial Government’s vision for how Ontario’s landscape should be settled; how the built environment should be created; and how the province’s lands and resources should be managed over the long term, in order to achieve livable and resilient communities. The Statement identifies areas of Provincial interest in planning matters in order to provide guidance in the development of Official Plans and other related local planning documents. Section two of the Strong Communities (Planning Amendment) Act (2004) into effect alongside the Provincial Policy Statement and required municipal planning decisions to be consistent with the Statement, in order to ensure, rather than encourage, the implementation of provincial policies. In many ways, the Provincial Policy Statement promotes the principles associated with developing healthy communities.

The Planning Act requires that the Provincial Policy Statement be reviewed at least every five years. There has so far been one review of the Statement, which began in 2010 and was completed in February 2014 with the announcement of a new-and-improved Statement. The reviews involve consultation with a multitude of stakeholders, including public and ministerial health officials. Below we discuss the improvements made in several policy areas relevant to healthy communities: Healthy, Active Communities; Northern and Rural Communities; Climate Change; Natural Heritage, Wetlands and Water; and, Agriculture.

Healthy, Active Communities

Whereas, within the “Healthy, Active Communities” policy area, the *Statement* (2005) provided for efficient development and land use patterns and the promotion of accessibility; safe public spaces, streets and facilities; compact form; and, transit / alternative modes of transportation, the *Statement* (2014) goes farther to name active transportation, transit and transit-supportive development and connectivity between modes; community design and planning for all ages; and, recognizing institutional uses as important elements of communities. Moreover, while the previous version broadly encouraged coordination among stakeholders dealing with planning matters, the revised *Statement* specifically encourages coordination of emergency management and public facilities, including co-locating different forms of the latter (such as libraries, schools and recreation centres).

Northern and Rural Communities

Whereas, within the “Northern and Rural Communities” policy area, the *Statement* (2005) provided for focused growth in settlement areas and flexibility to reflect local characteristics, the *Statement* (2014) goes further and recognizes the diversity of settlement and rural areas; that some municipalities are experiencing no growth or population decline; a new section on rural policies to support healthy, integrated and viable rural areas; and, clarification of the types of uses that may occur on rural lands; guidance on studies needed to support settlement are expansions and employment area conversions; and, clarity that municipalities can determine areas for intensification and redevelopment, and that local targets should be based on local conditions.

Climate Change

Whereas, within the “Climate Change” policy area, the *Statement* (2005) provided for a mix of densities and use in settlement areas to minimize negative impacts on air quality and climate change, and otherwise indirectly addressed climate change, the *Statement* (2014) goes further and requires consideration of impacts on climate change to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation to climate change, and encourages green infrastructure and requires stronger stormwater management.

Natural Heritage, Wetlands and Water

Whereas, within the “Natural Heritage, Wetlands and Water” policy area, the *Statement* (2005) provided various environmental protections and the maintenance / restoration of diversity / connectivity of features and the long-term ecological function / biodiversity of natural heritage systems, the *Statement* (2014) goes further in refining protections for woodlands and valleylands in southern Ontario, requiring identification of natural heritage systems and of shoreline areas and supporting consideration of cumulative impacts of climate change, and ensures consideration of environmental lake capacity (where applicable). The *Statement* reads, in section 2.1.2: “The diversity and connectivity of

natural features in an area, and the long-term ecological function and biodiversity of natural heritage systems, should be maintained, restored or, where possible, improved, recognizing linkages between and among natural heritage features and areas, surface water features and ground water features.”

Agriculture

Whereas, within the “Agriculture” policy area, the *Statement* (2005) provided for long-term protection of prime agricultural lands and small-scale agriculture uses directly related to farm operations, the *Statement* (2014) goes further and requires the designation of agricultural areas, as well as better protection of agricultural lands from non-agricultural uses and supporting agricultural uses in rural areas. The updated *Statement* also permits on-farm diversified uses including agri-tourism, and greater flexibility for larger agriculture-related uses.

3.3 Places to Grow: Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe

The *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* delineates the areas that will experience different levels of intensification in the area of the province that extends from Niagara across the Greater Toronto Area, including the area serviced by WDGPH. It allocates population and employment forecasts to upper-tier and single-tier municipalities. The development of the *Plan* was supported by an extensive engagement process, which included consultations with public health officials.

Guelph is a designated settlement area within Places to Grow. Downtown Guelph has been designated as an “Urban Growth Centre” in the Growth Plan. The Growth Plan proposes to strengthen Guelph’s connectivity with the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) by a new inter-regional transportation and transit corridor, as well as a major future new “economic corridor” running north of the city connecting it with Waterloo Region and the northern GTA. The Places to Grow Plan and the related Greenbelt Plan set a significant development framework for the existing City of Guelph. Part of the outcome of the Guelph’s Growth Management Strategy will be Guelph’s response to the new framework as the Growth Plan is further detailed through more detailed studies.

3.4 The Greenbelt Plan

Enabled by the *Greenbelt Act* (2004), the *Greenbelt Plan* is Ontario’s plan to provide permanent protection of agricultural lands and ecological features from urban development. It builds on the policy framework established in Section 3 of the *Statement* and relates to the provisions of the *Farming and Food Production Protection Act*. The area of the Greenbelt coincides with the Greater Golden Horseshoe and, as such, the *Greenbelt Plan* is seen as a cornerstone of the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*. The *Greenbelt Plan* includes policies laid out in the *Niagara Escarpment Plan* and the *Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan*, as well as the Protected Countryside areas identified within the Greater Golden Horseshoe. The areas of land covered by the Niagara Escarpment and Oak Ridges Moraine, as well as designated Protected Countryside areas, which are aimed at enhancing the extent of the escarpment and moraine lands while connecting them to one another and the Greenbelt’s major aquatic features, collectively comprise the total protected area of Ontario’s Greenbelt.

Guelph is not part of the Greenbelt; however the boundaries of the protected area are close to the city, and encompass of nearby communities.

Below we highlight some of the key goals and elements of the *Greenbelt Plan*, as they relate to planning activities in Wellington County and the focus of this Review.

Strategic Goals²

Agricultural Lands

In terms of its goal to protect agricultural lands, the *Plan* specifically protects specialty crop and prime agricultural areas. It also offers flexibility for agriculture, agriculture-related and secondary uses of these lands, as well as greater certainty for the agricultural sector to invest and manage these lands in the long-term.

Natural Systems

In terms of its goal to protect the environment, more broadly, the *Plan* offers a number of protections for ecological features, as well as for the protection and restoration of natural and open space connections between the Moraine, Escarpment and aquatic features, as well as to natural systems outside the Greater Golden Horseshoe. There are particular goals around the protection, improvement and restoration of water and waterways, and the *Plan* offers guidance on the management of natural heritage and water resources when contemplating various decisions relating to land use planning and the built environment.

Culture, Recreation and Tourism

Broadly, the *Plan* supports conservation and promotion of natural heritage resources, as well as the provision of a “wide range of publicly accessible built and natural settings for recreation including facilities, parklands, open space areas, trails and water-based/shoreline uses that support hiking, angling and other recreational activities.” It also supports sustainable tourism development.

Settlement Areas

In terms of its goals, the *Plan* supports a range of land uses in rural areas, particularly within settlement areas. The *Plan* links mixed-use development to the development and maintenance of strong rural economies.

3.5 Municipal Act

Under the *Municipal Act*, municipalities have broad powers to pass bylaws (subject to certain limits, and except when superseded by higher level legislation) on matters such as community health, safety and well-being and the protection of persons and property. In terms of designing healthy communities, some examples of relevant types of bylaws include:

Housing

- Zoning Bylaw
- Density Bonusing Bylaw

² The Plan’s goals are summarized, beginning on page 5 (section 1.2.2) of the document.

- Rental Housing Licensing Bylaw
- Second Suites Bylaw
- Lodging House Licensing Bylaw
- Green Building Bylaw
- Energy Conservation Bylaw
- Increased Height and Density Bonusing Bylaw

Environment

- Tree Protection Bylaw
- Anti-Idling Bylaw
- Drive-Through Bylaw
- Green Roof Bylaw

Transportation

- Bicycle Lane Bylaw
- Parking Bylaw
- Streets Bylaw

Food Systems

- Street Food Vendor Bylaw
- Farmers' Market Bylaw
- Outdoor Market Bylaw
- Hobby Beekeeping Bylaw

Accessibility

- Accessible Planning Bylaw
- Accessible Public Facilities Bylaw
- Accessible Parks Bylaw
- Accessible Streets Bylaw
- Accessible Parking Bylaw
- Accessible Taxi Bylaw
- Accessible Gasoline Stations Bylaw
- Adaptable Design and Accessible Housing Bylaw

4.0 PROVINCIAL POLICY DIRECTIONS

In the 2014/15 Speech from the Throne, Premier Wynne announced, under the heading “Building a Fairer and Healthier Ontario” that:

Your government will place an added focus on community wellness. By expanding the student nutrition program, creating opportunities for all students to participate in 60 minutes of physical activity a day, supporting community hubs, implementing a cycling strategy, and reinforcing these measures with cross-ministry initiatives and a new associate minister's portfolio focused on Long-Term Care and Wellness, Ontario will become the healthiest place to live, work and grow old.^{lxii}

The former Ministry of Health Promotion and Sport (previously the Ministry of Health Promotion, which was established in 2007), now integrated within Ontario’s Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, announced its Healthy Communities Framework in 2010. Its goals included: create a culture of health and wellbeing; build healthy communities through coordinated action; create policies and programs that make it easier for Ontarians to be healthy; and, enhance the capacity of community leaders to work together on healthy living. The Framework articulated six strategies and outcomes, which included promoting active transportation and safe environments, and access to healthier food, among others.

This language was reiterated in the 2014/15 mandate letters: the Premier communicated to the Associate Minister for Long-Term Care (Long-Term Care and Wellness) that, among their priorities, would be to develop a strategy on community wellness and a culture of health, partner with community organizations and develop policy on community hubs. Indeed, the language of “community” is common in the language of government today.

The Healthy Communities Fund, which was a grant program administered by the Province, provided “non-capital funding [from the Province] to organizations for the delivery of integrated health promotion initiatives in communities across Ontario.”^{lxiii} The Partnership Stream was one of three funding streams and it was through this funding stream that WDGPH received funding for this study.

The Province has also introduced policies and plans in particular areas that support the development of healthy communities in areas such as: Accessibility and Age-Friendly Communities, Active Transportation, Affordable Housing and Food Systems.³ These are described below.

4.1 Accessibility

The *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*^{lxiv} is aimed at making Ontario accessible by 2025. The Act is being implemented in phases and is accompanied by a variety of standards and guidelines. The Accessibility Standards for the Built Environment and Policy Guidelines for the Design of Public Spaces are among the most relevant to this work. These Standards and Guidelines align well with the “Outdoor Spaces and Public Buildings” dimension of the World Health Organization’s eight dimensions that describe an age-friendly community and are among the five standards that are now law in Ontario. The

³ Note: this is not a complete or comprehensive literature review. It is meant to highlight key policy directions that are specifically relevant to this review.

other four standards include: Customer Service, Employment, Information and Communications and Transportation.

4.2 Age-Friendly Communities

In 2013, Ontario issued Guidelines on Age-Friendly Community Planning in Ontario. These are based on the World Health Organization dimensions mentioned in Section 4.1 above. The Guidelines suggests a basic process for communities to follow in developing an age-friendly community plan. The Guide emphasizes the importance of ‘person-environment fit’ in age-friendly community planning, which refers to “the relationship between a person’s physical and mental capacity and the demands of his or her environment.”^{lxv} Universal Design is highlighted as one approach to achieving person-environment fit. A number of municipalities in Ontario have developed Age-Friendly Community Plans or Seniors’ Strategies, in light of the demands and opportunities associated with the aging population. These plans and strategies can also contribute to the achievement of healthy communities, since many would say that a community designed to meet the needs of seniors would meet the needs of anyone. This, again, relates to the “8-80 Cities” concept mentioned in the Introduction, above.

4.3 Active Transportation

The Ontario Cycling Strategy recognizes and supports the growing number of cyclists in Ontario. It aims to create a cycling-friendly province to protect the safety of cyclists and promote cycling as a form of active transportation. The Strategy’s Action Plan prioritizes the implementation of policies outlined in the *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe* and policy directions contained within the *Provincial Policy Statement* (2014). The Action Plan indicates opportunities for the Province to work closely with municipalities on various areas of implementation. The Plan also indicates that the Province will look for and consider opportunities to support cycling as part of the review of the *Greenbelt Plan* and *Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe*.

4.4 Climate Change

The Ontario government recently completed a consultation process to inform the development of a provincial strategy on climate change.^{lxvi} The strategy – a new cap and trade system – was announced on April 13, 2015 and aims to reduce greenhouse gas pollution.^{lxvii} Other actions taken by the Provincial government to advance environmental sustainability include closing down coal-fired electricity plants, protection of land and eliminating the use of cosmetic pesticides.^{lxviii} Ontario is set to host a Climate Summit of the Americas this July.^{lxix} Numerous pieces of legislation govern Ontario’s management and use of the natural environment and its renewable and non-renewable resources.

4.5 Affordable Housing

Volumes of research exist to demonstrate that, as a social determinant of health, an adequate supply of affordable housing is essential to the development of healthy communities. In Ontario, the policy framework in place to support the provision of affordable housing is extensive and the role of

municipalities, particularly Upper Tier municipalities as Housing Service Managers, is important. Below we describe several of the key policies and strategies that impact community planning at the local level.

4.5.1 Ontario Housing Policy Statement

The *Ontario Housing Policy Statement* was issued by the Province to set out policy guidance for the *Housing Services Act*. In that regard, the *Housing Policy Statement* is specifically intended to provide additional policy context and direction to Service Managers to support the development of the local housing and homelessness plans.

The *Policy Statement* identifies seven policy directions that correspond to provincial interests:

- Accountability and outcomes
- Goal of ending homelessness
- Non-profit housing corporations and non-profit housing cooperatives
- The private market
- Coordination with other community services
- A broad range of community needs
- Environmental sustainability and energy conservation

Under the *Ontario Housing Policy Statement*, the needs of various populations must also be considered as part of the housing and homelessness planning process, including people with disabilities, participants in the Special Priority program and Aboriginal people, as well as other specific local groups such as seniors, youth, women, immigrants, Franco-Ontarians, persons released from custody or under community supervision and Crown Wards.

4.5.2 Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy

In 2010, the Province launched Ontario's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy (LTAHS). The vision of the LTAHS is: "To improve Ontarians' access to adequate, suitable and affordable housing, and provide a solid foundation on which to secure employment, raise families and build strong communities". The strategy was developed within the context of other policy tools to help provide general guidance and expectations in terms of the Province's interest in affordable housing. As a result, the strategy speaks to issues beyond the land use planning dimensions of the *Planning Act* and more to the housing responsibilities that municipalities have assumed under the *Housing Services Act*.

The long-term strategy is intended to provide municipalities with a clear sense of the Province's vision and objectives for affordable housing. As such, the strategy speaks to enhanced flexibility for municipalities in using existing resources to meet the diverse housing needs of their communities. The strategy references amendments to the *Planning Act* that include requiring municipalities to establish policies allowing second units in new and existing developments, and adding affordable housing as a matter of provincial interest. The strategy also frames the broad elements of the housing and homelessness planning requirements established under the *Housing Services Act*.

The components of the Strategy include:

- Consolidating housing and homelessness programs
- Simplifying rent-geared-to-income calculations
- Local housing and homelessness plans
- More accountability, better reporting
- Asset creation
- Improving the tenant selection system
- Helping victims of domestic violence
- Protecting non-profit and coop housing
- Fair process for housing providers

4.5.3 Housing Services Act

As per the *Housing Services Act* (2011), Wellington County is a Housing Service Manager. The *Act* came into effect on January 1, 2012 and effectively replaced the *Social Housing Reform Act* (2000), the original legislation devolving social housing responsibilities to municipalities. It also amended sections of the *Municipal Act*, *Planning Act*, *Residential Tenancies Act*, and the *City of Toronto Act*, providing necessary adjustments in housing authorities. The HSA provides a new legislative framework for the delivery of housing and homelessness programs in Ontario. The purpose of the HSA is to provide for community-based planning and delivery of housing and homelessness services in the context of general Provincial oversight and policy direction. It is also intended to provide flexibility for service managers and housing providers in meeting their obligations, while retaining requirements with respect to social housing programs that predate the Act.

The HSA outlines ten Provincial interests that must be addressed in local housing and homelessness plans. These provincial interests signal the province's continued role in the housing and homelessness service system, despite its devolution to the municipal level.

The main changes in the HSA include:

- Service Managers are required to develop a ten-year local housing and homelessness plan that will be reviewed periodically
- Areas of provincial interest must be included in the local housing and homelessness plan
- Some forms of ministerial consents have been eliminated in favour of Service Manager consents
- Waiting list systems now permit Service Managers to design their own local systems and permit waiting applicants to cross over from one Service Manager wait list to another
- The change in name of the Social Housing Services Corporation (SHSC) to the Housing Services Corporation and providing them with more flexibility to offer new optional services and supports.

The HSA continues to prescribe operational rules and obligations with regards to the funding and administration of social housing programs at the municipal level. However, the *Housing Services Act* also recognizes the goal of Ontario's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy (LTAHS) in consolidating

Ontario's housing and homelessness programs, thereby giving municipalities more flexibility in addressing their local needs.

4.6 Food Systems

Ontario's policies on food systems are limited. That said, there is an extensive range of federal and provincial policies in place to govern and regulate farming^{lxx}, food production and farmers' markets. The Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has prepared fact sheets on these topics.^{lxxi} From a farming perspective, the only piece of legislation that seems to directly impact land use planning in Ontario is the *Farming and Food Protection Act* (1998), which exists to protect farmers from nuisance complaints and from restrictive municipal bylaws that might constrain normal farm practices^{lxxii}. What constitutes a 'normal farm practice' is decided by the Normal Farm Practices Protection Board, which was established by the *Act*.

A variety of studies have been done on the regulation of local food systems. Stakeholders in Cambridge, Waterloo and Halton Region have been especially engaged in this work. Various research papers have been prepared to outline policies and practices in place in municipalities across Ontario and Canada. Some of these are referenced as practical guidance and examples to support suggested considerations noted below.

5.0 HEALTHY COMMUNITIES IN CITY OF GUELPH

5.1 Socio-demographic and Health Profile of Guelph

The chart below provides statistical information that helps illustrate the socio-demographic profile of Guelph, compared to the rest of the Province.

Table 1: Profile for City of Guelph compared with Ontario

Indicator	City of Guelph	Ontario
<i>Population (Census, 2011)</i>	121,688	12,851,820
<i>Population Growth (from 2006-2011) (Census, 2011)</i>	5.9% increase	5.7% increase
<i>Median 2010 Family Income After Tax (NHS, 2011)</i>	\$74,662	\$71,128
<i>Unemployment Rate (NHS, 2011)</i>	6.9%	8.3%
<i>Percentage of Children <6 years of age Living in Low-income Households (NHS, 2011, Statistics Canada)</i>	14%	14.8%
<i>Transportation to Work (NHS, 2011)</i>		
<i>Total Employed Population aged >15 years</i>	60,455	5,841,815
<i>Percentage of Employed Population >15 years of age Driving to Work</i>	77.7%	72.5%
<i>Percentage of Employed Population >15 years of age Commuting to Work as a Passenger in a Vehicle</i>	7.3%	6.1%
<i>Percentage of Employed Population >15 years of age Taking Public Transit to Work</i>	6.8%	14.0%
<i>Percentage of Employed Population >15 years of age Walking to Work</i>	5.5%	5.1%
<i>Percentage of Employed Population >15 years of age Biking to Work</i>	1.8%	1.2%
<i>Median commuting duration from home to work in minutes (for employed population >15 years of age)</i>	15.7	20.8
<i>Shelter Costs: Owner (NHS, 2011)</i>		
<i>% of owner households spending 30% or more of household income on shelter costs</i>	19.9%	20.9%
<i>Shelter Cost: Renter (NHS, 2011)</i>		
<i>% tenant households in subsidized housing</i>	17.6%	16.3%
<i>% of tenant households spending 30% or more of household income on shelter costs</i>	41.2%	42.3%

Table 2: Local Health Conditions and Behaviours (2009-2013)¹

Indicator	City of Guelph	Ontario
Health Conditions		
Asthma	9.0%	8.0%
COPD	3.5%	4.1%
Diabetes	5.6%	6.7%
Heart Disease	4.3%	4.9%
Overweight or Obese ²	47.6%	50.2%
Health Behaviours		
Leisure and transportation activity, moderate active or active	60.3%	53.4%
Walk to and from work or school	19.9%	16.7%
Bicycle to and from work or school	4.9%	3.3%

Data Source: Canadian Community Health Survey, 2009-2013

¹ All reported values are estimates derived from samples and are subject to sampling variation.

² Variable calculated population aged 18 years or older (excludes those aged 12-17 years)

** Numbers are too small to be reported for this region

Table 3: Local Youth Health Conditions and Behaviours, 2012

Indicator	City of Guelph		Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph	
	Grade 7	Grade 10	Grade 7	Grade 10
Overweight or obese ¹	19%	19%	19%	21%
Meet physical activity guidelines ²	62%	42%	62%	43%
Walk, cycle, or rollerblade to/from school everyday	40%	20%	33%	23%

Source: Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Youth Survey, 2012

¹ Approximately 24% if grade 10 respondents had missing or incomplete responses to the question required to make BMI calculations.

² Physical activity guidelines at the time of the survey were 90 minutes per day. These have since been modified to 60 minute, 5 or more days per week.

5.2 City Policies & Plans

The City of Guelph is a single-tier municipality, meaning it is not part of a particular upper-tier municipality. It is part of the Wellington census division and is geographically contained within Wellington County, but is separated from County, meaning it has its own Council, policies and regulations.

In sum, the City's policy framework is very strong in terms of supporting healthy communities. The most recent Official Plan amendment (APA 48 – described below) has very few gaps when looked at from the perspective of neighbourhood design, transportation, the natural environment, food or housing. As a result, many of our considerations and recommendations focus on implementation and measurement of healthy community policies and objectives.

Official Plan Amendment 48 – Official Plan Update (Currently under appeal)

The Official Plan is updated every five years as required by the Planning Act. Official Plan Amendment 48 ensures that the Official Plan is consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement and is currently under appeal to the OMB. The Official Plan under amendment contains policies to direct the planning for complete and healthy communities, and address topics including natural heritage protection, energy sustainability and transportation. Community Infrastructure, including trails, affordable housing and open space are to connect and direct the creation of healthy, supported communities.

Official Plan Amendment 42 – Natural Heritage System (2010)

Adopted in July 2010, the Natural Heritage System policies in Guelph’s Official Plan are consistent with the Provincial Policy Statement, conform to the Growth Plan and have regard for matters of provincial interest. The new Natural Heritage System recognizes and identifies Significant Natural Areas for long term permanent protection and also identifies where development may be permitted without negative impact on natural heritage features or their functions. Policies also address the issue of invasive species and wildlife crossings are also identified to respect the Natural Heritage in Guelph.

Official Plan Amendment 39 (2010)

The purpose of OPA 39 was to ensure that the Guelph Official Plan was in conformity with the 2005 Provincial Policy Statement. To do so, OPA 39 introduced several smart growth policies into the Official Plan that significantly impact how Guelph will grow into the future. For example, identifying a settlement boundary limits the physical expansion of development to defined borders, requiring Guelph to intensify and further smart growth policies. Additionally, mandating that by 2015, 40% of development must occur within built up areas encourages the creation of walkable, healthy mixed use communities. Further, the amendment extended the timeframe of the plan from 2021 to 2031, offering more time and planning ability to municipalities.

Corporate Strategic Plan (2012-2016)

The Corporate Strategic Plan seeks to outline strategic directions to building a healthy social, political and physical environment for the City. With its mission to provide outstanding service to its community, it outlines 3 strategic focus areas: Organizational Excellence, Innovation in Local Government and City Building. Regarding the latter focus, the Plan emphasizes the City’s commitment towards building a well-designed sustainable city.

Downtown Secondary Plan (Official Plan Amendment 43) (2013)

Recognizing that Downtown Guelph will have developed beyond its historic patterns by 2031, the Downtown Secondary Plan guides redevelopment in Guelph’s historic downtown core. The Plan replaced the previous Business District policies and has been incorporated into the Downtown policies since 2013. The Plan is guided by seven principles balancing cultural preservation with high-density, sustainable design. Principles to foster healthy communities include reconnection with the Speed River, ensuring safe, multi-modal transportation options and encouraging green design to promote sustainability.

Development Priorities Plan (2014)

The purpose of the annual Development Priorities Plan is to manage development in the City of Guelph. Measuring anticipated development, the goal of the Plan is to manage sustainable growth keeping in line with the Strategic Plan. The plan reflects on development in the previous year and makes recommendations for development in the next year.

Urban Design Action Plan (2009)

The Urban Design Action Plan sets out to establish consistent, sustainable urban design to improve communities. Recognising the challenges of current urban design patterns outside the downtown core, the Plan was published in 2009 and sets urban design guidelines to manage change and growth in Guelph over the next decades. The Plan seeks to balance mobility options and connect communities through urban design. It also supports mixed use design to promote active, accessible lifestyles and the efficient use of natural resources.

Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2013-2017)

The Multi-Year Accessibility Plan puts to action the Corporate Accessibility Policy and Procedures to make programs at the city more accessible. To create accessible and welcoming environments, this Plan lays out how the City will ensure compliance to the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act. It adheres to the accessibility principles of dignity, independence, integration and equal opportunity and aims to connect and create attractive communities

Wellington and Guelph Affordable Housing Strategy (2005)

The Wellington and Guelph Affordable Housing Strategy is built around five strategic principles to address the needs and gaps of affordable housing.

Urban Forest Management Plan (2012)

The Urban Forest Management Plan recognizes the importance of urban forests for the benefit of people as well as the natural environment. This 20 year plan provides a policy framework to encourage all community stakeholders to increase the size and health of Guelph's urban tree canopy. The Plan has been developed to best suit the requirements of Guelph and its residents and promotes best practices for tree protection and maintenance which will benefit the diverse array of residents, plants and animal species in Guelph.

Guelph Trail Master Plan (2005)

The Guelph Trail Master Plan provides the vision for a city-wide trail system to connect people and places through a network of primarily off-road trails in Guelph. Recognizing changing demographics as well as a growing interest in recreational trail use, the Plan is an overarching vision to develop Guelph's network of trails over time. This document seeks to integrate the trail network into the community, connecting people with natural environments.

Recreation, Parks & Culture Strategic Master Plan (2009)

This Plan was designed to assist and inform decision makers and the general public about the needs and priorities of recreation, parks and cultural facilities in Guelph. As a crucial component of healthy and vibrant communities, planning for changing recreation demands is important. The Plan was designed in

response to the decline in infrastructure quality and the changing demographics and sociocultural needs of citizens. The Plan is further seen as a way to strengthen the relationships within and between different user groups.

Guelph Community Energy Plan (2007)

The Guelph Community Energy Plan is an important component of working towards a healthy community and region. This document notes the value of diversifying energy sources not only for health reasons, but to be economically competitive. The goal of the strategy is to ensure consistent and long term implementation of the new strategy to improve quality of life in Guelph. One of the tangible goals in the report is to accommodate approximately 20,000 new homes with no net increase in energy consumption in the region.

5.3 Recent and Ongoing Initiatives

In addition to the aforementioned plans and policies, the City of Guelph has a number of recent and ongoing initiatives that also contribute to it being a healthy community, including:

City of Guelph Housing Strategy Background Report (2014)

This report offers a review and update of Guelph's housing strategy, and how it contributes to creating healthy and vibrant communities. It recognizes the fundamental importance that a range of housing options has on meeting the needs of citizens. To that end, the report refines the responsibilities of the municipality in provision of housing, when compared to those of higher levels of government. It updates and incorporates broader provincial policy into the strategy, and sets the course for Guelph's housing strategy.

Guelph Transit Growth Strategy (2010)

The Guelph Transit Growth Strategy calls for a broader vision for transit in Guelph, supported by goals and objectives, and performance standards. The vision is that transit will become the preferred choice of transportation for Guelph residents, over the personal automobile. One such way that the vision is implemented will be through the identification, protection and implementation of higher order transit corridors in Guelph.

Guelph Community Wellbeing Initiative (2011)

Guelph's Community Wellbeing Initiative was initiated in 2011 with anticipated outcomes that included a Community Wellbeing Plan, as well as

- United and engaged the community around a shared vision of wellbeing
- Stronger relationship between the City and the community through a new model of civic engagement
- Increased the effectiveness of service delivery
- A platform for proactive advocacy with other levels of government
- Innovative partnerships committed to community-wide wellbeing

The Guelph Community Wellbeing Report was created as a community-based plan to complement the municipality's Official Plan. It works towards building healthier communities by creating stronger

relationships between the City and residents. It further clarifies and identifies the role that each partner has in their interactions. The goal of the Plan is to achieve new collaborative partnerships that achieve positive results through innovation.

6.0 REVIEW OF CITY OF GUELPH OFFICIAL PLAN AND RELATED POLICIES

Below we provide a summary of the strengths and areas of opportunity identified through a review of key planning documents for the City of Guelph. Documents have been summarized according to areas of public health interest, denoted by the 5 identified domains: **Neighbourhood Design, Transportation Networks, Natural Environments, Food System, and Healthy Housing**. Please refer to sections 1.5 & 1.6 in the Introduction of this report for more details regarding the impact these five planning policy domains have on a public health. Suggestions are offered for Official Plan policy considerations and a list of other suggested strategies and actions to advance each of the five domains is also provided.

Documents reviewed include the City of Guelph Official Plan (City of Guelph Draft Official Plan (Working Consolidation, June 5, 2012), Official Plan Amendment (OPA) 42 Natural Heritage System (2014), the City of Guelph Zoning By-Law (1995) as well as a number of plans and strategies related to the built and natural environment, housing, and transportation.

6.1 Healthy Neighbourhood Design

The following Healthy Neighbourhood Design planning principles were adapted from *Healthy Built Environment Linkages: A Toolkit for Design, Planning and Health*^{lxiii} and used as the criteria for reviewing municipal planning documents:

1. Enhance neighbourhood walkability
2. Create mixed land use
3. Build complete and compact neighbourhoods
4. Enhance connectivity with efficient and safe networks
5. Prioritize new developments within or beside existing communities
6. Create infrastructure resilient to climate change (addition to original toolkit referenced above)

6.1.1 STRENGTHS

The City of Guelph is located in Wellington County. The City is approximately 28 kilometers east of the City of Waterloo and 100 kilometers west of Downtown Toronto. It has won numerous awards with regards to being one of the best places in Canada to live. The Growth Plan (2006) has designated the City of Guelph as an Urban Growth Centre and as such, is required to accommodate future increases in population and achieve certain intensification and density targets.

The City of Guelph's Official Plan Amendment 48 was clearly designed to support healthy neighbourhoods. There are a range of policies that support mixed-use and intensification in appropriate locations throughout the city, particularly in the downtown. For example, a minimum of 40% of the annual residential development must be directed to the city's built-up area (2.4.5.1.a).⁴

⁴ As required by the Growth Plan.

The Official Plan also designates mixed-use nodes as a way to increase population and employment density. Higher density mixed-use, including residential and employment uses, as well as a wide range of retail, service, entertainment, recreational and commercial uses are encouraged in these areas (3.8-3.11). There are policies in the Official Plan that support grid-based street networks as a means to connect all these proposed compact mixed-use nodes (2.4.2.f) as well as support public transit and various forms of active transportation.

The Greenfield Areas (areas not yet developed, surrounding the built up area) must also be planned to achieve a minimum of 50 residents and jobs combined per hectare (3.12.2) – meaning that a certain level of density will be achieved outside the built-up area as well. Other requirements for the Greenfield Areas that promote healthy neighbourhoods include:

- street configurations, densities, and an urban form that support walking, cycling, and the early integration and sustained viability of transit services;
- diverse mix of land uses, including residential and employment uses, to support vibrant neighbourhoods;
- high quality public open spaces with site design and urban design standards that support opportunities for transit, walking and cycling;
- development of identifiable, pedestrian-oriented neighbourhood scale ‘urban villages’ through the use of medium and high density, street-related built form.

The Official Plan includes Urban Design policies that apply to all land uses and public infrastructure. The overall objectives of the Urban Design Guidelines align well with the WDG Healthy Community Guidelines: (8)

- Create neighbourhoods with diverse opportunities for living, working, learning and playing;
- Build compact neighbourhoods that use land, energy, water and infrastructure efficiently and encourage walking;
- Create a diversity of inviting and accessible gathering places that promote a full range of social, cultural and economic interaction;
- Establish a pattern of interconnected streets and pedestrian networks in which buildings frame and address public spaces;
- Design space that is accessible to all, regardless of abilities;
- Design for a choice of mobility including walking, cycling, transit and driving;
- Improve conditions for greater personal security within publicly accessible spaces by designing them to be attractive and comfortable to the public, increasing the potential for informal surveillance and reducing opportunities for crime.

Specific design policies are included for: Sustainability, Public Realm; Landmarks, Public Views, and Public Vistas; Gateways; Built Form: Transition of Land Use; Parking; Access, Circulation, Loading and Storage Areas; Signage; Display Areas; Lighting; Landscaping and Development; Safety; Accessible Design; Urban Squares; Public Art; Development Adjacent to River Corridors – all of which help to promote healthy neighbourhoods.

The 'Community Infrastructure' section of the City's Official Plan sets out a policy framework for the efficient and adequate provision of physical and social infrastructure. The Plan's objectives with respect to Community Infrastructure are (2.2.5):

- Ensure an accessible, connected open space, park and trail system and sustainable network of recreational facilities;
- Provide an appropriate supply and distribution of community facilities to meet the needs of existing and future residents;
- Ensure an adequate supply, range and geographic distribution of housing types.

Other important policies with respect to parks and recreational spaces are:

- The City will work to reduce identified parkland deficiencies, where feasible (7.3.2);
- The City will work closely with the local School Boards, the Conservation Authority, the Province, public utilities and institutions, private organizations and individual property owners to enhance the City's open space, parks and trails systems (7.3.6)

Public realm policies promote the availability of space for social interaction in the downtown as well as in new developments. For example it states that a clearly identifiable public realm should be established in all residential areas consisting of an interconnected network of streets, parks, school sites, community trails and open spaces (8.2.1). There are also policies that pertain to the placement of community facilities in new developments which helps foster social interaction.

The City has a CIP for its downtown which supports the implementation of the Downtown Secondary Plan and is focused on implementing the City's economic development strategy. It contains several grants, such as the tax increment-based grants, the minor downtown activation grant and the façade improvement and feasibility study grants. Similarly, the Brownfield Redevelopment Community Improvement Plan consists of a number of financial incentive programs that are intended to stimulate private sector investment in the reuse and redevelopment of brownfield sites and partially offset the costs associated with the site assessment and remediation.

6.1.2 AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

The City of Guelph's newly updated Official Plan is well-aligned with the neighbourhood design objectives in the Healthy Community Guidelines - very few gaps exist. Official Plan Amendment 48 should be acknowledged for its strong healthy community framework.

There are, however, a number of planning issues that have the ability impede the City's abilities to achieve its objectives for healthy, walkable complete communities and downtowns. Demand for housing in the downtown has traditionally been low, however several new projects, including an affordable ownership project, have recently been completed. Higher density commercial development can be difficult to achieve.

There is no mention in the Official Plan of providing access to all-season recreational opportunities, suggesting that new policies could be developed to encourage the design and improvement of the City's parks to allow for all-season recreation. The Recreation, Parks and Culture Plan was developed in 2009

and is currently being used as a background document. There is an opportunity to update this Plan and encourage Council to adopt it as an official city document.

6.1.3 CONSIDERATIONS

The City could consider adopting Official Plan amendments that reflect the following policy directions and best practices:

Suggested Official Plan Policy Considerations	Practical Guidance and Examples
<p>1. Continue to provide financial incentives to promote residential and commercial density in downtown.</p>	<p>City of Ottawa Official Plan 2.5.2 – Affordable Housing 3. The City will encourage and promote the achievement of the targets by providing a toolkit of planning incentives and direct supports, including but not limited to: density bonusing; density transfer; deferral or waiving of fees and charges; alternative development standards; land; and more flexible zoning. Where the support includes municipal investment, it will be associated with mechanisms to ensure the long-term affordability of the units. [Amendment 10, August 25, 2004]</p>
<p>2. Introduce policies under section 7.3 Open Space System: Trails and Parks that promote all-season recreation opportunities.</p>	<p>City of Waterloo (ON) Official Plan -- Neighbourhoods Section 3.9.2 - Providing easily accessible and interconnected parks, trails and public gathering spaces that feature a high standard of design, and provide for four-season accessible recreational opportunities, balanced with conservation of environmental attributes.</p>

6.1.4 OTHER SUGGESTED STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

- Develop a framework to assist planners in reviewing development proposals against criteria such as walkability, connectivity and mixed use. See example: City of Mississauga Healthy Development Index.
- Update the City’s Recreation, Parks and Culture Plan and encourage Council to officially approve/adopt the Plan.

6.2 Healthy Transportation Networks

The following Healthy Transportation Networks planning principles were adapted from *Healthy Built Environment Linkages: A Toolkit for Design, Planning and Health*^{lxxiv} and used as the criteria for reviewing municipal planning documents:

1. Enable mobility for all ages and abilities
2. Make active transportation convenient and safe
3. Prioritize safety
4. Encourage use of public transit
5. Enable attractive road, rail and waterway networks

6.2.1 STRENGTHS

According to the City's Official Plan, Guelph's transportation system is to be planned and managed to enhance neighbourhood walkability, offer a balanced modal choice, and encourage cycling, walking, and transit (3.15.1.ii and v). Public transit is the first priority for vehicular transportation planning (3.15.4). Integration of pedestrian and bicycle networks into transportation planning with safety and linkages is also emphasized. (3.15.5). The Plan recommends planning to increase non-auto mode shares to 15% for transit, 15% for walking, and 3% for cycling (5.1.1.i).

Downtown Guelph is designated as an Urban Growth Centre by Provincial Policy and in the Official Plan. The Official Plan states that this area should be planned to enhance connectivity with efficient and safe street networks by accommodating for major transit station areas and multi modal transportation facilities (3.8.4.vi). Major transit station areas are designated within the Official Plan. Policies for these areas encourage people to use various transportation modes to get to the transit facility (3.9.2.iii).

Active transportation is promoted throughout the Official Plan. Biking and walking infrastructure that maximizes safety and convenience for pedestrians and cyclists is encouraged (5.4.3). Bikeways and pedestrian trails are to be integrated into roads and other transport infrastructure and include comfortable pedestrian environments with traffic controls, street furniture, lighting, signage, ramps (8.16.3).

A number of operational plans have been developed by the City in order to support active transportation and connectivity. These include:

- Transportation Master Plan
- Transit Growth Strategy
- Urban Design Action Plan
- Guelph Trail Master Plan
- Multi-Year Accessibility Plan
- Cycling Master Plan – Bicycle-Friendly Guelph.

These plans inform and are informed by the City's Official Plan. For example, the Guelph Trail Master Plan provides the vision for a comprehensive network of off-road trails and on-road links that connect people and places throughout Guelph. The Master Plan defines the City's Trail Network, which forms the basis of several strategies in the City's Official Plan that work to create a publicly accessible, linked Trail Network. The City also notes that its role is to improve and expand on the Trail Network (7.3.1).

The importance of road and pedestrian safety is also reflected in the City's planning policy. The Official Plan requires that road design in new development areas must ensure continuity of sidewalks, bicycle facilities, and bus routes (5.8.3). Road right-of-ways will be planned to enable safe and comfortable use

by all ages and abilities including pedestrians, cyclists and transit riders (5.6.1). Traffic calming measures will be implemented where applicable to provide a reasonable level of service (5.6.5).

Accessibility is also prioritized. The transportation system is inclusive of the needs of persons with disabilities, seniors, and children, enabling the mobility of all ages and abilities (5.2). New transit facilities, transit stops and vehicles must be accessible and use barrier free design principles in accordance with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (5.2.1.ii). Urban design polices also require that new development includes adequate pedestrian-scaled lighting and other features to enhance the mobility for all ages and abilities. (8.16.3)

6.2.2 AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

The Official Plan - as well as the numerous operational plans developed by the City of Guelph - provide a comprehensive policy framework for a healthy transportation network. A key opportunity is to better understand the level of walkability and bike-ability throughout the City. For examples, community walkability and bike-ability audits could be conducted with resident groups to identify issues and priorities to improve the active transportation system.

Despite its strong transportation planning policies and progress in terms of developing an active transportation networks, Guelph is still primarily a car-oriented city. There are a variety of programming opportunities that could be developed to reduce reliance on automobiles and promote walking and biking in the City. For example, carpooling, bike-to-work, or walk to school programs/campaigns could be developed.

There are opportunities to encourage active-transportation amenities, pedestrian safety and connectivity between neighbourhoods and districts throughout the community (e.g. requiring active linkages through subdivisions to improve connectivity) through the development process. Continuing to improve and connect trails, bike paths and sidewalks to make a more comfortable experience and ensuring there is adequate capital budget for this will be essential.

6.2.3 CONSIDERATIONS

The City of Guelph could consider adopting Official Plan amendments that reflect the following policy directions and best practices:

Suggested Official Plan Policy Considerations	Practical Guidance and Examples
<p>1. Use site plan control to require active-transportation amenities in new neighbourhoods, such as bicycle racks and street furniture.</p>	<p>City of Vaughan, 4.1.1.6 To support the development of a comprehensive network of on-street and off-street pedestrian and bicycle routes, through the implementation of the City’s Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan and York Region’s Pedestrian and Cycling Master Plan, to facilitate walking and cycling and to promote convenience and connectivity. Opportunities to improve the connectivity of the City’s street</p>

	system shall be identified through the development process
2. Encourage pedestrian safety and connectivity within and between neighbourhoods (e.g. requiring linkages in new subdivisions) using plans of subdivision.	<p>Collingwood’s Urban Design Manual integrates active transportation requirements for both subdivision and site plan approvals that are required by law.</p> <p>Note: Section 51 (25) of the Planning Act says that plans of subdivision approvals can allow for pedestrian and bicycle pathways and public transit rights-of-way though land dedications as the approval authority considers necessary.</p>
3. Introduce language that supports, encourages and facilitates children and youth to walk or cycle to school by providing for continuous access to schools through trails, pathways, and sidewalks from surrounding land uses. For example, consider adding policies to Community Infrastructure (s.7) that encourage schools to be located on a connected roadway and/or be accessible by trails and sidewalks from all directions. Policies in this section could also provide guidance with respect to prioritizing the clearing of pedestrian routes to schools during winter months.	<p>York Region Official Plan Package (2013) 7.2 Moving People and Goods Active Transportation</p> <p>It is the policy of Council: 12. That mobility plans shall be completed to ensure that: e. all schools and community centres shall be integrated into the community mobility system and provide the ability to walk, cycle, transit and carpool to these locations;</p> <p>It is the policy of Council: 16. To partner with the York Region District and Catholic School Boards to implement the Active and Safe Routes to School program, and to design and locate school campuses to promote walking, cycling and transit as a primary means of transportation.</p>

6.2.4 OTHER SUGGESTED STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

- Advocate for adequate capital budget to be allocated to the continued improvement of trails, bike paths and sidewalks.
- Conduct walkability and bike-ability audits with resident groups to identify issues and priorities for improving the active transportation system.
- Develop programs and partnerships to reduce reliance on automobiles and promote walking and biking in the City.

- Partner with other organizations such as post-secondary institutions or neighbouring municipalities to develop and implement a GIS-based tool for assessing walkability of new developments.
- Encourage the City's operations staff to prioritize ploughing of walkway blocks that connect schools, neighbourhoods and other community facilities.

6.3 Healthy Natural Environments

The following Healthy Natural Environments planning principles were adapted from *Healthy Built Environment Linkages: A Toolkit for Design, Planning and Health*^{xxv} and used as the criteria for reviewing municipal planning documents:

1. Preserve and connect open space and environmentally sensitive areas
2. Maximize opportunities to access and engage with the natural environment
3. Reduce urban air pollution
4. Mitigate urban heat island effect
5. Expand natural elements across the landscape

6.3.1 STRENGTHS

Preserving and connecting natural areas is a key principle of Guelph's Official Plan; it states that the City takes an 'environment first' approach and is committed to protecting, maintaining, enhancing and restoring the diversity, function, linkages, and connectivity between and among natural heritage features and areas over the long term. (2.4.14). As per Official Plan Amendment 42, the city's Natural Heritage System (NHS) is made up of a combination of natural heritage features and areas, such as wetlands, woodlands, restoration areas, and wildlife crossings. The policies associated with the NHS work to protect these areas and acknowledge that the natural heritage system is one of the city's most valuable assets.

The Official Plan contains a number of general and specific policies for improving the open space system with the objective of developing a connected, city-wide system of passive and active trails and parks. The Official Plan also contains direction for ensuring parks are accessible and distributed across the city. For example, Neighbourhood Parks are required to be within a 5-10 minute walk from the residential area served, unobstructed by major barriers, and located next to schools and, if possible, the trail network (7.3.2.4). The Official Plan also recognizes that some neighbourhoods lack proximity to parks, open space, and trails and suggests ways to correct this with measures such as building new small parks and working with other agencies who provide open space (7.3.6). The City has developed a Recreation, Parks and Culture Strategic Master Plan with the goal of assisting decision makers, stakeholders, and the general public in understanding the needs and priorities related to recreation, parks and cultural services, programs, and facilities within the City of Guelph. The Plan attempts to ensure appropriate integration and consistency with other municipal projects and priorities (e.g. Official Plan Review in progress.).

Guelph's planning framework aims to reduce the use of motorized vehicles and encourage use of transit, cycling and walking, which helps to minimize air pollution in the City. Urban Forest objectives and policies promote a reduction in air pollution. For example, the City's goal is to increase tree canopy cover within the City to 40% by 2031. (Official Plan Amendment 42, 6A.5). The City also has its own anti-idling by-law.

Official Plan Amendment 42, which includes the City's natural heritage policies, works to protect and enhance tree canopy cover, as well as provide for meadow habitat at appropriate locations to support biodiversity. The importance of individual trees (which are not necessarily part of the natural heritage strategy) is also recognized through policies that protect them during the development process. The planning framework recognizes that new development may provide opportunities for enhancement and restoration of the proposed development. The City also has a tree by-law and an Urban Forest Management Plan which provides a 20 year plan for the City to shift to proactively and adaptively managing the urban forest on both public and private land.

In 2007 the City developed the Community Energy Plan (CEP), which outlines the City's path to climate change mitigation through reductions in energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions. The actions set-out in this Plan encourage energy-efficiency and green building design – which can help to improve air quality and improve the community's resiliency to climate change.

The Official Plan includes a number of policies that ensure a healthy supply of water. For example, the City requires all development proposals to be considered in relation to their potential impacts on quantity and quality of the City's water supply (4.3.2). The City and its partners have also developed the following plans which work to support the implementation of its Official Plan Policies related to water:

- Wastewater Treatment Master Plan
- Water and Wastewater Servicing Master Plan
- Water Conservation and Efficiency Strategy
- Water Supply Master Plan
- Grand River Source Protection Plan (Conservation Authorities).

The Guelph Stormwater Management (SWM) Master Plan is a long-term plan for the safe and effective management of stormwater runoff from existing urban areas. It works to improve ecosystem health and ecological sustainability of the Eramosa and Speed Rivers and their tributaries.

6.3.2 AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

The City's planning framework aligns very well with the Healthy Community Guidelines in terms of supporting a healthy natural environment. Opportunities exist with regards to supporting the implementation of these policies. For example:

- Engaging communities in the restoration and protection of the natural heritage system
- Supporting the City and its partners in achieving its tree canopy target
- Working with local partners to promote and enhance the City's trail, park and open space system

- Educating residents on the health effects of climate change and what they can do to help mitigate its effects
- Educating residents about key by-laws such as anti-idling by-law, the tree by-law.

Certainly there are always opportunities for working more closely with environmental organizations and Conversation Authorities to promote and protect the natural environment.

Working to ensure the implementation of the park deficiencies policy to ensure that parks are equally distributed across the City is another opportunity.

6.3.3 CONSIDERATIONS

The City of Guelph could consider adopting Official Plan amendments that reflect the following policy directions and best practices:

Suggested Official Plan Policy Considerations	Practical Guidance and Examples
<p>1. Include a broad policy statement, under section 7 Community Infrastructure, that encourages separation between children and youth oriented land uses (i.e. schools and child care centers) and land uses that may have a negative impact on children’s mental or physical health.</p>	<p>York Region Official Plan It is the policy of the Council:</p> <p>6. That sensitive uses such as schools, daycares and seniors’ facilities not be located near significant known air emissions sources such as controlled access provincial 400- series highways.</p>

6.3.4 OTHER SUGGESTED STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

- Support the implementation of the Plan’s natural environment policies, by for example:
 - Engaging communities in the restoration and protection of the natural heritage system
 - Supporting the City and its partners in achieving its tree canopy target
 - Working with local partners to promote and enhance the City’s trail, park and open space system
 - Educating residents on the health effects of climate change and what they can do to help mitigate its effects
 - Educating residents about key by-laws such as anti-idling by-law, the tree by-law.
- Partner with and support environmental agencies, such as Conversation Authorities, to promote and protect the natural environment.
- Conduct a study to better understand park and greenspace distribution across the city and opportunities to address deficiencies.

6.4 Healthy Food Systems

The following Healthy Food Systems planning principles were adapted from *Healthy Built Environment Linkages: A Toolkit for Design, Planning and Health*^{lxvii} and used as the criteria for reviewing municipal planning documents:

1. Enhance agricultural capacity
2. Increase access to healthy foods in all neighbourhoods
3. Improve community-scale food infrastructure

6.4.1 STRENGTHS

One of the City's objectives is to "support urban agriculture in appropriate locations throughout the City as a means of encouraging local food production and distribution, reducing transportation needs and fostering community spirit." (3.n)

The City's Official Plan includes a number of general and specific policies which support this objective. For one, all Land Use Designations (excluding Natural Heritage System), permit urban agriculture (9.1.1). Other relevant policies include:

- The City is supportive of a local food system that includes access to healthy foods at a neighbourhood level, the Guelph Farmers' Market, temporary farmers' markets and community gardens. (9.1.3.5)
- The City promotes the use of underutilized sites and long-term development parcels for urban agriculture where appropriate and feasible, without limiting the potential for future development. (9.1.3.6)
- Locations for community gardens may be identified as part of the development approvals process. The City encourages the provision of space for community gardens, including roof top gardens, in addition to community amenity area requirements for new multiple residential development sites. (9.1.3.7)
- The City will encourage community gardens by facilitating the use of parks and underutilized public lands for community gardens according to the City's "Principals and Guidelines for the Location of Community Gardens" as may be prepared and amended. The City may support community gardens by providing water, wood mulch or other forms of in-kind support. (9.1.3.8)
- The City may partner with community stakeholders to develop mechanisms to promote urban agriculture and to mitigate or remove barriers to urban agriculture. (9.1.3.9)
- The City may collaborate with appropriate stakeholders and local partners to develop strategies that advance a healthy, sustainable, secure, resilient, accessible, economically vibrant and equitable food system (9.1.3.10).

There is no remaining farmland in Guelph; however the City recognizes that agricultural activity in the surrounding areas is very valuable to the health of the city's residents.

In terms of access to healthy food, the Official Plan states that the City may collaborate with appropriate stakeholders and local partners to develop strategies that advance a healthy, sustainable food system. Such strategies may include: (9.1.3)

- planning for locations for food production, processing, distribution, storage and waste management;

- planning for food security; and
- pursuing opportunities for education and community building around local food.

6.4.2 AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

The City's Official Plan is highly supportive of a healthy food system. Urban agriculture is permitted in all areas and promoted throughout the City. In the long-term, the City could consider setting aside land for urban agriculture within the built-up areas or creating a food belt near the urban boundary to ensure food security in the City. Promoting urban agriculture and educating residents about the opportunities and benefits could help to ensure a healthy food system. The City identified a range of partnership opportunities for urban agriculture in its Official Plan.

Another opportunity is to support programs focused on education and community building around local/healthy food. For example, the Seed Community Food Hub Project is a new local food initiative aiming to provide a place where people can access and connect with each other around local food.

Another opportunity is to assess which areas in the City have limited access to healthy food and subsequently develop a plan to increase healthy food options in these neighbourhoods. Mapping of food sources, food programs, community gardens, and local organizations could help identify gaps and opportunities.

6.4.3 CONSIDERATIONS

We have no policy considerations related to healthy food systems at this time.

6.4.4 OTHER SUGGESTED STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

- Promote urban agriculture and educate residents about the opportunities and benefits.
- Support and conduct education and community building activities around local/healthy food.
- Assess which areas in the city have limited access to healthy food and subsequently develop a plan to increase healthy food options in these neighbourhoods.
- Make it easier for local farmers/entrepreneurs to start and host temporary farmers markets in appropriate locations by, for example, streamlining the application process, lowering application fees, and/or providing specific criteria for appropriate locations.

6.5 Healthy Housing

The following Healthy Housing planning principles were adapted from *Healthy Built Environment Linkages: A Toolkit for Design, Planning and Health*^{lxxvii} and used as the criteria for reviewing municipal planning documents:

1. Increase access to affordable housing through provision of diverse housing forms and tenure types
2. Ensure adequate housing quality for all segments of society
3. Prioritize housing for the homeless, elderly, low income groups and people with disabilities

4. Site and zone housing developments to minimize exposure to environmental hazards

6.5.1 STRENGTHS

One of the City's objectives is to ensure an appropriate range and mix of housing including affordable housing to meet current and projected needs to the year 2031 (2.2.1.b). Another objective related to housing, listed under the Community Infrastructure section, is to 'ensure an adequate supply, range and geographic distribution of housing types including affordable housing, special needs housing and supporting amenities are provided to satisfy the needs of the community' (2.2.1).

There are 4 types of housing designations in Guelph: Low Density Residential, Low Density Greenfield Residential, Medium Density Residential, and High Density Residential. These areas and their associated policies work to ensure that a full range of housing types, affordability, densities and tenure are developed and that residential development can be adequately served by local convenience and neighbourhood shopping facilities, schools, trails, parks, recreation facilities, and public transit (9.3).

Urban Design policies also apply to new residential developments, helping to ensure buildings meet sustainability and health criteria, such as using sustainable materials and design considerations (8).

The latest affordable housing study was conducted in 2009. Of interest to the WDGPH Healthy Communities evaluation, the study established the ground work for affordable housing policy in Guelph.

The Official Plan also includes specific policies that encourage an adequate range of housing types and affordability options, such as: (3.13)

- establishing and implementing minimum housing targets for the provision of housing that is affordable to low and moderate income households, in consultation with the County of Wellington;
- permitting and facilitating all forms of housing required to meet social, health and well-being requirements, including special needs requirements of current and future residents.

The annual affordable housing target requires that an average of 30% of new residential development constitute affordable housing. This includes an annual target of 27% affordable ownership units and 3% affordable rental housing units (7.2.1). The target is to be measured city-wide. The Official Plan states that the affordable housing target will be implemented through new development applications using various planning tools (e.g., planning policy, development approvals, financial incentives, partnerships, community education and monitoring) (7.2.1.1)

A range of other policies that support healthy housing are also included in the Official Plan, such as:

- Affordable housing is encouraged to locate where served by transit, and other services such as, shopping, parks and other community facilities (7.2.2.10).
- Special Needs Housing and Lodging Houses such as group homes are permitted wherever residential uses are permitted and are required to be near adequate amenities and services (9.2.2 and 9.2.4).

- All new development shall achieve the energy performance criteria of the OBC. Section also lists other standards/studies e.g. the Sustainability Checklist. City will also investigate tools and incentives to retrofit existing buildings for same objective (4.7.4.4).

The Housing and Homelessness Plan for Guelph Wellington (2013) also has goals related to increasing the supply of affordable housing and providing housing for vulnerable populations:

- Goal 1 – To help low-income households close the gap between their incomes and housing expenses
- Goal 2 – To provide a range of supports to assist people at risk of homelessness to remain housed
- Goal 3 – To offer a comprehensive range of supportive housing options for residents with complex needs due to aging, disabilities, mental health issues and addictions
- Goal 4 – To increase the supply and mix of affordable housing options for low- to moderate-income households
- Goal 7 – To preserve the existing social and affordable rental housing stock

In 2014, the City released a Housing Strategy: Background Report, which precludes a full Housing Strategy. The report concludes that the Guelph Housing Strategy work should be scoped to focus on affordable housing and on the market end of the housing continuum, building on the work already completed through the Official Plan Update and recognizes differences between the City of Guelph and the County of Wellington in regards to policy drivers, roles, responsibilities and tools. The report suggests that the City's focus should be on private market rental and ownership housing while still working with other levels of government in supporting the development and retention of housing on the non-market end of the continuum, i.e. special needs housing (emergency shelter, transitional housing and supportive housing). The City is currently developing a Housing Strategy, which will build on this work.

6.5.2 AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY

The City's Older Adult Strategy (2012) identifies that there is a need for more affordable housing in Guelph; especially housing that is suitable for older adults. The existing wait list for social housing according to this report is around 6 – 8 years.

The 2014 Housing Background Report notes that the forthcoming Housing Strategy will need to advance the City's Official Plan policies by recommending implementation strategies related to the 30% affordable housing target along with a mechanism to monitor achievement of the target to address the requirements under the Provincial Growth Plan and Provincial Policy Statement. Thus the key opportunities for the City of Guelph when it comes to housing are to develop key implementation strategies for increasing the number of affordable housing units and to monitor on-going progress towards achieving the 30% target.

A report on housing, developed by the City as part of the Wellbeing Initiative identified 3 potential strategies for increasing affordable housing in Guelph:

- Explore alternative financing models such as Social Impact Bonds (SIB's)

- Support advocacy efforts, such as the Ontario Housing Benefit or a National Housing Strategy to ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing.
- Explore and pilot housing programs, such as Home sharing which is a housing option that enhances affordability by reducing day-to-day household expenses such as maintenance, repair, laundry and childcare.

Further exploration of these and other implementation strategies is needed. There are also opportunities for further implementation such as regulations to prevent the conversion/demolition of rental housing, establishing a formal incentive policy and/or program, and looking more closely at targets for affordable housing for local municipalities.

6.5.3 CONSIDERATIONS

The City of Guelph could consider adopting Official Plan amendments that reflect the following policy directions and best practices:

Suggested Official Plan Policy Considerations	Practical Guidance and Examples
1. Maintain or expand the financial incentive program that supports the development of affordable housing.	City of Ottawa (ON) Action Ottawa Initiative The City of Ottawa’s Action Ottawa initiative for affordable housing waives development charges, planning fees, and parkland levies for affordable units.

6.5.4 OTHER SUGGESTED STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS

- Continue to monitor achievement of the City’s housing target.
- Facilitate partnerships with private, public and non-profit sectors to provide affordable housing,
- Support advocacy efforts, such as the Ontario Housing Benefit or a National Housing Strategy to ensure secure, adequate, accessible and affordable housing.
- Support housing programs, such as Home sharing.

7.0 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

Guelph's planning framework strongly supports the development of healthy communities. Almost all of the design features and objectives in the *Healthy Built Environment Linkages: A Toolkit for Design, Planning, Health*^{lxviii} framework are addressed by the City's Official Plan. It contains policies that support walkability, the creation of mixed-use communities, alternative and integrated modes of transportation, and protection of the natural environment. It includes progressive policies related to urban agriculture and promotes this as a way to maintain a sustainable food system in Guelph. The City also has a strong housing policy framework and is currently working on housing strategy which will identify strategies and actions to support implementation of its housing policies.

A number of long range planning studies which support healthy community planning have also been completed by the City over the last five years. This includes the Transportation Strategy Update (2001), Guelph-Wellington Transportation Study (2005), City-wide Trail Master Plan (2005), Strategic Plan (2007), Community Energy Initiative (2007), Local Growth Management Strategy (2008), Urban Design Action Plan (2009), and the Natural Heritage Strategy (2009).

This review has identified a number of opportunities for the City of Guelph to consider in order to improve its planning policy from a public health perspective. A key area of opportunity is active transportation. Specifically, the review identified opportunities for encouraging the inclusion of active transportation features in new developments, by using tools such as site plan control and plans of subdivision. The review also identified a number of other strategies and actions that could be undertaken to support implementation of these policies, such as developing partnerships, conducting monitoring or promotion related to the 5 domains.

8.0 NEXT STEPS

Below we articulate some next steps both for this study, in the immediate term, and for public health and planning stakeholders within the City of Guelph going forward.

8.1 Establishing a Role for WDGPH in Collaborating on Health Community Planning Policies in the City of Guelph

The first Proposed Action articulated under the 'Built Environment' Collective Area of Focus in the Ontario Public Health Sector Strategic Plan (2013) is for public health units to "Define the scope and role for the public health sector in addressing and mitigating the health impact of the built environment." Currently, WDGPH enjoys positive working relationships with municipal planning officials at the City of Guelph, and with several local planning officials in area municipalities. WDGPH should focus on strengthening these relationships and, subsequently, on advocating for a public health lens to be used in making municipal policy and planning decisions, particularly in terms of land use planning and the built environment.

This review provides an excellent jumping off point for further conversation about how the City of Guelph can best support the development and maintenance of healthy communities in Guelph. In that space, it will be possible for local planning and public health officials to share knowledge and expertise, thereby increasing the overall capacity for making healthy policy and planning decisions and fostering powerful synergies between disciplines and communities within Guelph for many years to come.

APPENDIX A: NOTES

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