

BAKER DISTRICT REDEVELOPMENT

LIBRARY ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

guelph.ca/bakerdistrict

make books! YES!! more books!

community Theatre Space

Lectures + Music Performances

No Food - in the cafe area

book reading area!

social media

community hub

architectural statement donation

A community hub - a meeting place on a street corner

larger community room for various activities

good study spaces w/ whiteboards! lots of shelf space - library pages

affordable parking

you that interaction in community members

Anything but grey! (Bright, beautiful, and full of books)

Historical

A place where everyone (ages, stages, genders, heritages) feels comfortable and welcome.

lots of DADS here now!

Light - lots of natural light accessible to all. To small library is small and dark + cold.

modern - wipeable / clean for sanitization

Community Hub!

friendly kitchen area

A separate area for VR away from main library space so it's quieter - second story! - YES!!

virtual reality

live us more

virtual reality

A separate area for VR away from main library space so it's quieter - second story! - YES!!

a few games and computers please!

Someplace with a view

Maybe have board games to tell out Expanded collection of graphic novels/comics.

Quiet rooms for small group meetings or study that one can reserve

theatre for stations

incorporate a huge SUNDIAL in building's design

parking with lot

performance



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01. City of Guelph Engagement Process

The Baker District redevelopment engagement strategy (including the new central library) is being led by the City and will follow the City's Community Engagement Framework. Windmill is providing tactical engagement support for the overall Baker District, and Invizij is providing tactical engagement support for the library and adjacent urban square.



Figure 1. Diagram of the engagement phases for the Baker District Redevelopment project.

Sustainable Decision-Making

A coordinated approach to community engagement fosters understanding between individuals. Through this approach, City employees will build on common ground and strive to develop sustainable decisions.

Financial sustainability means we can afford to implement the decision or that the decision will have a financial benefit.

Cultural and social considers how a decision may impact the culture of an individual or society as a whole.

Environmental refers to our natural environment.

Technical considerations determine if an alternative can be built or used.

Stakeholder input refers to participant's opinions about the decision to be made.



Figure 2. Relationship between the five components of sustainable decision-making.

02. Library Pop-ups

Between November 20th, 2018 and March 20th, 2019, the Baker District project team, represented by Martin Jewitt and Kate Bishop, held pop-up events at a number of Guelph libraries. The pop-up events were designed to solicit feedback on the new central library. Through informal engagement, the project team interacted with over one hundred residents of Guelph. This section outlines the feedback received during these events.

Accessible, Flexible, Community-Supportive Spaces

The public continues to reinforce the importance of spaces and services that cater to the entire community. Respondents noted a desire for a variety of spaces, including:

- Warming/cooling centre;
- A calm, quiet space;
- Learning spaces (classrooms, crafting tables, and/or 'artisanal' workspace);
- Big spaces for gathering and meeting.

In addition to community spaces, the pop-up participants suggested services to be operated out of the new central library, including:

- Short story making workshops;
- Programming aimed at all age groups, including seniors;
- Counselling (career).

A Library that Closes the Technology Gap by Reducing Barriers to Technology

Library users want access to new and emerging technologies. Participants articulated a desire for updated computer technology and software, faster internet speeds, and self-learning digital material. They are also keen to have access to diversity in the medium of materials for people with disabilities.

A Library that Preserves and Celebrates the Past

Respondents want the new library to pay homage to the past, both in form and function. The project team heard a desire for the new library to pay tribute to the Carnegie Library, and to provide access to archives that celebrate Guelph's history.

A Welcoming Design

The pop-up participants want a District predicated on social, economic, and cultural inclusivity and health, including:

- A focus on accessibility;
- Spaces for Indigenous art and culture;
- Provision of supportive and affordable housing;
- LGBTQ resources, staff, and gender-neutral washrooms;
- Natural lighting to help combat seasonal affective disorder;
- Access to therapy animals.

Parking

The provision of parking continues to be an important element. Respondents asked for accessible and free parking for the library and nearby churches.

Public Realm

Participants provided feedback about all components of the public realm. Many participants favourably responded to the inclusion of the urban square, particularly as it relates to opportunities for public events and festivals. Rooftop agriculture was also earmarked as an important element for consideration. Finally, we heard that the public realm should be outfitted without hostile architecture that limits people's ability to lie down, relax, and seek refuge from the elements.

Accessible, Flexible, Community-Supportive Spaces

Library users recorded their desire for a variety of space types. Generally speaking, this feedback can be categorized under the following headings: quiet spaces, performance spaces, and flexible meeting spaces.

Quiet Spaces

- Designated quiet spaces;
- Quiet spaces with comfortable chairs and daylight;
- Spacious reading nooks.

Performance Spaces

- A venue for local authors to read their works;
- Music room;
- A rentable performance space.

Flexible Meeting Spaces

- Bookable (small) meeting rooms in a highly visible area;
- Flexible, multi-use spaces designed to be expanded in the future;
- Workspaces;
- Maker spaces.

Community Services

Several respondents described the library as a public space that should provide community services. The ideas advanced imagine the library as a community hub that stimulates learning, sharing, and equitable outcomes by way of community services, including:

- Social workers/community navigators available to connect library users with community resources, including housing support, mental health support, food banks, and crisis centres;
- Employment training and networking, including practical skills like knitting, sewing, and cooking;
- A tool library;
- A seed Library;
- Services for all age groups, including children, teenagers, adults, and seniors.

A Library that Closes the Technology Gap by Reducing Barriers to Technology

Library users want the new central library to be outfitted with advanced technology. The most common request was access to virtual reality headsets via a tech bar. Other library users suggested the inclusion of a 3D printer, more electronic devices, multi-media spaces for creativity and design, enclosed sound booths for voice recording, and access to Information Technology professionals.

Parking

The provision of parking continues to be an important issue. Library users asked for sufficient underground, accessible and free parking.

A Library that Preserves and Celebrates the Past

Comments received on the graffiti wall suggest that there is a desire to weave the past into the present and future. Library users imagined a new central library that translates 19th Century design into something modern, primarily through materiality (e.g. steel, glass, and limestone). We also heard that the definition of history should expand to include Indigenous

histories. Finally, a number of users requested inclusion of archives to celebrate local history, including newspapers and microfiche readers.

A Welcoming Design

More than any other topic, the notion of a welcoming design generated significant interest from library users. The responses can be organized into the following three categories: accessibility, inclusivity, and naturalization.

Accessibility

The topic of accessibility primarily emerged around interior design features. Library users requested large, accessible elevators; main floor washrooms that accommodate wheelchairs; and rest areas for visitors with mobility devices.

Inclusivity

Library users noted the importance of developing spaces that are inclusive of all residents, workers, and visitors, regardless of gender, sexuality, socioeconomic status, or age. Requests included gender neutral washrooms, spaces for all ages, and establishing a comfortable, welcoming sense of place.

Naturalization

The theme of naturalization garnered the greatest amount of feedback. Several respondents requested that the interior of the library provide natural light and natural elements including plants and gardens. In addition to bringing the outdoors in, users identified the mental health benefits of providing access to sufficient sunlight, and the enhanced air quality generated by plants and greenery.

A Place for Art

Library users identified the new central library as an ideal location for displaying local art work. Ideas included the provision of a community art wall and exhibition space for local artists and photographers.

Public Realm

The comments left on the graffiti wall indicate that users want a public realm that is as accessible and welcoming as the library itself, including:

- Programmable green spaces, including community gardens with related gardening workshops;

- Accessible green spaces at grade;
- Accessible green spaces on roofs and upper terraces;
- The provision of new street level connections, and the upgrade of existing ones including the walkways to Wyndham Street and the post office.

Sustainability

Library users identified sustainability as an important consideration for the design and function of the new central library. Comments ranged from general sentiments about the importance of environmental friendliness to specific interventions, including:

- Integrating design measures that reconnect us to the natural world, including greenery, natural forms and patterns, and natural light;
- Treating windows with bird-friendly glazing and fritting;
- Achieving carbon neutrality across the site;
- Supporting active transportation, including covered bike-parking;
- Installing back-up generators and emergency shelters to enhance resiliency;
- Installing green roofs.

04. Focus Group A: Downtown Businesses

On March 7, 2019, members of the project team met with representatives from nine downtown businesses. The focus of the meeting was to engage with a sample of business that will be most impacted by the development. The agenda included a section in which the participants were given background information on the project (summary of previously completed work and outcomes and current status of project). Participants were asked to define their specific hopes and concerns for the Baker District redevelopment. Participants were asked to write their hopes and concerns on Post-it-Notes and share their priority hopes and concerns with the group. Afterwards, the group shared their additional 'secondary' concerns.

Priority Hopes

The priority hopes delineated by the participants can be organized into four categories: the public realm; accessible, flexible, community supportive spaces; connectivity; and a welcoming design.

A Welcoming Design

Participants noted the following priority hope related to a welcoming design:

- A development that has something for all, including seniors, children, and adults.

Public Realm

Participants noted the following priority hopes related to the public realm:

- Upper Wyndham revitalization in the context of the existing downtown fabric;
- Delivery of an urban square that is green, active and vibrant;
- Provision of beautiful and functional public space for community use;
- Maintain permeability of pedestrian realm.

Accessible, Flexible, Community Supportive Spaces

Participants noted the following priority hopes related to accessible, flexible, community supportive spaces:

- The library should satisfy the needs of the community;
- Great coffee shop and lunch options;
- Spaces for community events;
- The library should provide community-oriented gathering spaces;
- Establish a diversity of uses and programming.

Connectivity

Participants noted the following priority hopes related to connectivity:

- The Baker District should provide and maintain a strong draw to the Downtown for the entire City;
- The library should connect to all other aspects of the community, including the other branch libraries;
- The project needs to fulfill the first stated purpose of 'increasing downtown visitation';
- The project should contribute to creating a more vibrant and viable downtown, making it a destination for the whole City;
- Enhance the downtown's viability by established a mix of uses;

- The development will help reduce 'South Enders' fear of Downtown;
- An increase in daytime foot traffic and positive nighttime activity;
- That the project seamlessly integrates into the existing and evolving downtown;
- Spur future redevelopment in the rest of downtown.

Secondary Hopes

Similar to their priority concerns, the participants secondary concerns can be organized into four categories: the public realm; accessible, flexible, community supportive spaces; connectivity; and a welcoming design.

Public Realm

Participants noted that the permeability of pedestrian realm should be maintained.

Accessible, Flexible, Community Supportive Spaces

Participants noted the following secondary hopes related to accessible, flexible, community supportive spaces:

- Library as gathering space, active, community oriented and vibrant;
- Keep diversity of uses/programming (i.e. Library, YMCA, Educational and Residential).

Connectivity

Participants noted the following secondary hopes related to connectivity:

- That the project seamlessly integrates into the existing and evolving like of Downtown Guelph;
- Spur future redevelopment in the rest of Downtown; rising tide raises all ships;
- That it will offer an attraction for participation from 'outside' Downtown community members (West end, South end, etc.).

A Welcoming Design

Participants noted the following secondary hope related to a welcoming design:

- Indigenous presence recognition.

Priority Concerns

The business representatives articulated a series of priority concerns related to the Baker District Project. These concerns can be organized into the following categories: parking, the public realm, connectivity, synergies, and construction impacts.

Parking

Participants noted the following priority concerns related to parking:

- Long-term function of parking if not designed with the possibility of adaptive re-use;
- Access to parking needs to be sufficient so congestion is manageable at peak times;
- That the development will grid lock parking until 2030;
- Parking, both during the development and after.

Public Realm

Participants noted the following priority concern related to the public realm:

- That the district be porous and flexible for future changes (new uses, transportation access, etc.)

Secondary Concerns

Connectivity

Participants noted the following primary concern related to connectivity:

- Important to integrate Baker to the Centre of town; perhaps St George's Square becomes a main access point.

Synergies

Participants noted the following primary concerns related to synergies:

- Library programs and partnerships: accessibility and usability of library by the entire community with integrated social services;
- Connectivity between anchor tenants in order to have interactive space for all.

Construction Impacts

Participants noted the following primary concerns related to construction impacts:

- Immediate/short term impact of construction (access/congestion);
- Disruption to existing business during construction.

The business representatives also articulated a series of secondary concerns related to the Baker District Project. These concerns can be organized into the following categories: parking, the public realm, connectivity, viability of retail and commercial services, and construction impacts.

Parking

Participants noted the following secondary concern related to parking:

- That the parking situation will get worse.

Public Realm

Participants noted the following secondary concern related to the public realm:

- Concerned that the green space component is not large enough and is removed from rest of Downtown.

Construction Impacts

Participants noted the following secondary concern related to construction impacts:

- That it becomes an endless boondoggle of construction delays.

Connectivity

Participants noted the following secondary concerns related to connectivity:

- That it will be another eyesore that fractures rather than creates a community;
- That it is seen as a library project versus a broad-spectrum project.

Viability of Retail and Commercial Services

Participants noted the following secondary concerns related to the viability of retail and commercial services:

- How will the mix of uses affect vacancy rates that already exist?
- Viability of long-term anchor partner - is there one?
- Vacancy in existing properties (relating to private partners/tenants).

04. Focus Group B: Residents

On March 7, 2019, members of the project team met with seven local residents and representatives from nearby churches/service organizations. The focus of the meeting was to engage with a sample of those residents and surrounding churches/service organizations that will be most impacted by the development. The agenda included a section in which the participants were given background information on the project (summary of previously completed work and outcomes and current status of project). Participants were asked to define their specific hopes and concerns for the Baker District redevelopment. Participants were asked to write their hopes and concerns on Post-it-Notes and share their priority hope and concern with the group. Afterwards, the group shared their additional 'secondary' concerns.

Priority Hopes

The residents' priority hopes can be organized into four categories: the public realm, heritage, downtown viability, and parking.

Public Realm

Residents noted the following priority hopes related to the public realm:

- Vegetation returns to Downtown;
- Maximized outdoor public space;
- The area becomes a gathering place of the community and provides community gardening and meeting places.

Heritage

Residents noted the following priority hopes related to heritage:

- That 'style' will not detract from functionality or from the 'charm' that Guelph has built into its heritage;
- Inclusion of a small memorial for those people buried under the parking lot.

Secondary Hopes

Downtown Viability

Residents noted the following priority hopes related to downtown viability:

- Increased 'hustle and bustle' in downtown core;
- The Baker District will include commercial areas that satisfy some of Downtown's core needs (e.g. grocery store).

The residents in the focus group provided secondary hopes that speak to Baker District's role in the broader community, including:

- Attracting people to come downtown again;
- Providing community-supportive, unique commercial shops;
- Development captures and enhances Guelph's sense of place.

Parking

Residents noted the following priority hopes related to parking:

- Sufficient supply of parking spots;
- Convenient and accessible parking for Chapel Lane.

Priority Concerns

Participating residents articulated a series of priority concerns related to the Baker District Project. These concerns can be organized into the following categories: parking, community service provision, building design, and construction impacts.

Parking

Residents noted the following priority concerns related to parking:

- Knox Church parking;
- Too much emphasis is on cars and parking;
- Paid parking means people make other choices.

Community Service Provision

Residents noted the following priority concern related to community service provision:

- Gentrification may result in pushing out of specific and vulnerable populations.

Building Design

Residents noted the following priority concerns related to building design:

- Existing view from the Yarmouth buildings will be blocked;

- Buildings will dominate and detract from the elegant character of the downtown;
- The design of the development feels generic and sterile.

Construction Impacts

Residents noted the following priority concerns related to construction impacts:

- Access to Knox Church from Chapel Lane during construction;
- Disruption of neighbourhood during building (i.e. noise, traffic congestions, limited parking);
- Loss of housing for vulnerable folks during construction;
- Access to parking on Chapel Lane during the construction process.

Secondary Concerns

The residents' secondary concerns were minimal, relating solely to the public realm:

- Deep shade west of the buildings;
- The creation of alleyways on Chapel Lane and Baker Street by new residential towers.

05. Library Comment Boxes

Comment boxes were stationed at a number of Guelph's libraries, including Westminster, Bullfrog, the West End, and the Main Branch as another means of feedback capture. Respondents were asked to provide feedback to the question, "What do you want the new central library to be?" This section summarizes the feedback received, organized by library.

Westminster Library

The comment box at Westminster Library was stationed from December 2018 to March 2019. 18 comments were submitted during this time period.

Accessible, Flexible, Community Supportive Spaces

Commenters at Westminster Library focused their responses on child-oriented spaces and services, including:

- Programs for kids that get them more involved with the library;
- A large kid's section that is easy to navigate.

A Library that Closes the Technology Gap by Reducing Barriers to Technology

Westminster Library users requested that the new central library include access to printers, copiers, fax machines, and more advanced computers.

A Place for Art

The comments received at Westminster indicate a desire for the inclusion of opportunities for making and showcasing art. One respondent advocated for workshops and studio space that cater to local artists and "makers," including gallery space and opportunities for art to be displayed throughout the library.

Bullfrog Library

The comment box at Bullfrog Library was stationed from December 2018 to January 2019. 13 comments were submitted during this time period.

Accessible, Flexible, Community Supportive Spaces

At a macro scale, we heard that the new central library should serve and meet the public's needs. Noted examples of community-centric spaces include a community kitchen, an entertainment centre, and a multi-purpose space to accommodate events of varying scales.

Sustainability

We received comments from library users asking for pedestrian and bike friendly design elements, and infrastructure to support electronic vehicles.

Parking

Insufficient parking was highlighted as a critical issue. Library users noted that adequate parking will be paramount for residents, workers, and visitors of Baker District and the downtown more broadly.

Public Realm

We heard that connecting the library to the adjacent public realm in a meaningful way is important to Guelph residents. Bullfrog Library users showed a keen interest in all-weather public outdoor space that caters to all ages and allows for passive and active programming.

West End Library

The comment box at the West End Library was stationed from December 2018 to March 2019. 12 comments were submitted during this time period.

Accessible, Flexible, Community Supportive Spaces

Comments received at the West End Library included requests for a meeting room, a café, quiet spaces for studying, dedicated space for children's programming, and space for nursing moms.

Sustainability

Users of the West End Library indicated a desire for the new central library to showcase Guelph's progressive environmental practices and values. Specifically, we heard that the development should have a low carbon footprint.

Main Library

The comment box at the Main Library was stationed from January 2019 to March 2019. 55 comments were submitted during this time period.

Accessible, Flexible, Community Supportive Spaces

The comments received at the Main Library demonstrated a desire for a variety of spaces, including:

- Quiet study zones and study rooms;
- Gaming areas separated from quiet spaces;
- Areas to work in, including private desks throughout the library;
- A boardroom and multi-purpose room that can be booked for meetings and events.

In addition, a number of comments advanced the idea of the new central library as a community hub. The hub would allow people to meet, visit, attend community events, and access community services including:

- Community cooking classes;
- Community gardening classes;
- Youth engagement and volunteer opportunities;
- Skill training.

A Welcoming Design

The Main Library comments suggest that library users want a District predicated on social, economic, and cultural inclusivity and health, including:

- Design to support independent use by folks with physical, visual or cognitive impairments;
- Bathrooms on the main level;
- Designed for all ages and abilities;
- Provision of affordable housing;
- Inclusion of plants in the library;
- Seasonal Affective Disorder lights.

Sustainability

We received a number of comments asking for the library to be environmentally sustainable, green, and modern. More specifically, commenters requested bike share infrastructure, living gardens, and pollinator-friendly species on the roof.

A Place for Art

Focusing on opportunities for art emerged as a key takeaway from the comments received at the Main Library. Commenters requested a number of art-oriented spaces, including:

- An artists-only area;
- A maker space;
- A designated art gallery space;
- Spaces that cater to children and teenagers.

Public Realm

The feedback received indicated enthusiasm for public spaces that can be used by the entire community. Specific ideas include green spaces with trees and a farmer's market.

