



GuelphQuest 

GuelphQuest Workshops Results

Spring 2007

In Support of the Development of a Local Growth Management Strategy for the City of Guelph



GuelphQuest 



A. What is GuelphQuest?

GuelphQuest is a software tool that was developed for the City for use in a facilitated workshop setting whereby future growth options for the community could be examined. The software was developed based on “Metroquest”, the parent software that was developed and refined over a ten year period by Envision Sustainability Tools Inc. See <www.questforthefuture.com> for more background information.

B. Why did we hold GuelphQuest Workshops?

These workshops were a part of the public consultation process for the City’s Local Growth Management Strategy. The public workshops were held to collect input from residents about their choices and preferences for planning Guelph’s future. This consultation is intended to be part of the framework for developing more detailed potential growth strategy scenarios for the City, in conjunction with previously completed background studies and ongoing research regarding the City’s capacity to accommodate new growth. Public consultation is intended to continue in the fall of 2007, when more detailed scenario options will be available for public discussion and evaluation.

C. Workshop Methodology

GuelphQuest workshops were held in the spring of 2007 with some of these sessions directed at specific sectors of the community (economic, environment, social, cultural) as well as open public sessions. In total 21 workshops were held, with each workshop lasting approximately 2 ½ hours. There were over 250 participants.

Both quantitative and qualitative results from each workshop were gathered. The quantitative results were gathered from a 9 question checklist on the following topics:

1. How compact will new housing be?
2. Where will people be encouraged to live?
3. Where will jobs be encouraged to locate?
4. How much will alternative transportation be encouraged?
5. How will the City focus investment in new transit infrastructure?
6. How will the City focus investment in new road infrastructure?
7. How will energy conservation/air quality management measures be implemented?
8. To what level will water conservation/solid waste management programs be implemented?
9. How will the City’s water and wastewater treatment capacity concerns be addressed?

Each participant was asked to complete the checklist and submit it for tabulation of results.

Qualitative commentary was compiled by staff listening to the options and trade-offs discussions that were held by the participants during the workshop. This qualitative information was recorded on laptops and provided input to the rationale to selections being made, i.e. the values and reasons behind participants’ decisions.

Workshop Format:

Each session was held with the same three-part format:

1. Opening and Context: (1/2 hour)

- Background about the Local Growth Management Strategy with some discussion of the Places to Grow planning framework;
- Overview of the GuelphQuest software tool with an examination of ‘current trend’ maps, charts, tables and a summary scenario diagram.
- Outline of break-out session format whereby participants are to discuss the series of policy choices for Guelph’s future in terms of land use (housing, community built-form and employment), transportation, and environmental initiatives.

2. Facilitated Breakout Session (1 ½ hours):

- Lead by facilitators from Community Development in groups of 5 – 10 participants to complete the following tasks:
 1. Answer the question, “what does a successful community look like?” The answers from the participants were recorded verbatim.
 2. Using a workbook (See workbook in Appendix) examine and discuss the potential consequences of choices for the 9 questions. Planning staff available to explain choices and answer related questions. Staff also recorded groups discussion.
 3. Completed the break-out session by examining other factors or issues that are of significance when considered growth options for the community.

3. Plenary Discussion: (1/2 hour):

- Presentation to the entire workshop group on the selections made with a highlight of results from the individual assessment exercise. A ‘scenario summary’ chart was displayed illustrating whether the selection of options created a growth development pattern that was ‘better or worse’ than the current growth trend for the community. Various elements such as compactness of growth (development density), land consumption, energy use, traffic congestion and ecological footprint were examined.
- Provide participants with the results of their policy choices and allow participants to see how these choices can affect the future of the City in terms of land consumption and other key indicators relating to energy, congestion and density.
- General discussion on what are barriers/opportunities and other considerations to achieving a desired future growth structure.
- Individual Reassessment of Options and Workshop Evaluation Form completed by individuals (5 minutes at the end of session)

D. GuelphQuest Workshops: Overall Results Assessment

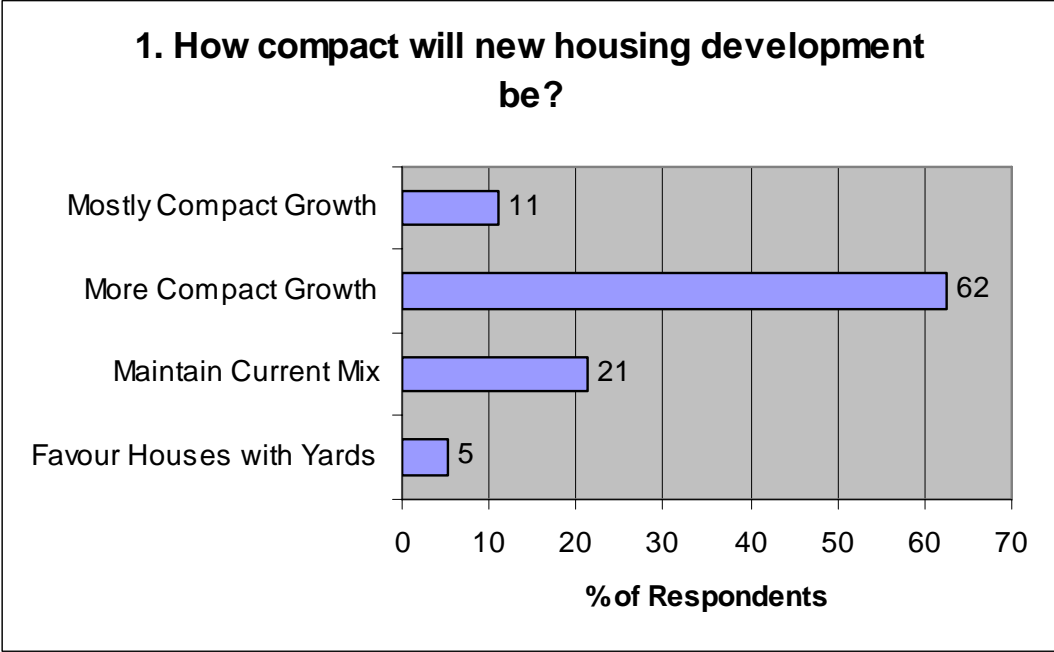
Question 1. How compact will new housing development be?

Table 1. Housing Type Options and Responses

| Options: | # of Responses |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Favour Houses with Yards | 13 |
| 2. Maintain Current Mix | 52 |
| 3. <i>More Compact Growth</i> | 153 |
| 4. <i>Mostly Compact Growth</i> | 27 |

Chosen Option Description: Changing City policies and standards to facilitate a goal of having more than 50% of new development as townhouses and mid-rise apartments. Accepting that there will be some pressure to redevelop and intensify existing areas of the City. Also means developing new ‘greenfield’ areas more densely.

Figure 1.



Summary of participants’ comments related to this question:

- Increased density needs to be associated with attractive, functional and linked green spaces. Not necessarily more, but well located and designed using the rivers and open space as a focus. Communal space to compensate for reduced private amenity space.

Creative architectural design can help provide opportunities for courtyards, roof top green areas, etc.

- More compact housing needs to have good urban design in terms of quality, architecture, landscaping, scale and it needs to be complemented by a well designed public realm (pedestrian amenities, lighting, parks and street trees). Individual developments need to be part of the broader community character and overall needs to create a sense of place.
- New development needs to reflect the City’s overall character but specific standards could apply to different areas to reflect their circumstances and heritage features.
- There is recognition that compact housing can create live-work opportunities, support transit and save energy.
- There is concern that more compact growth will change the character of portions of the City and that it will not be accepted.
- Some concerns were raised about the social costs of more compact development in terms of safety and the affordability of housing.
- Participants noted that demographic trends align with increased apartment and retirement housing use and will support compact development.
- Participants noted that compact development needs to be supported by zoning standards and processes that do not allow NIMBY issues to undermine this policy objective.
- ‘Mostly Compact Growth’ was not accepted generally because of concerns about significant character impacts on built areas of the City.

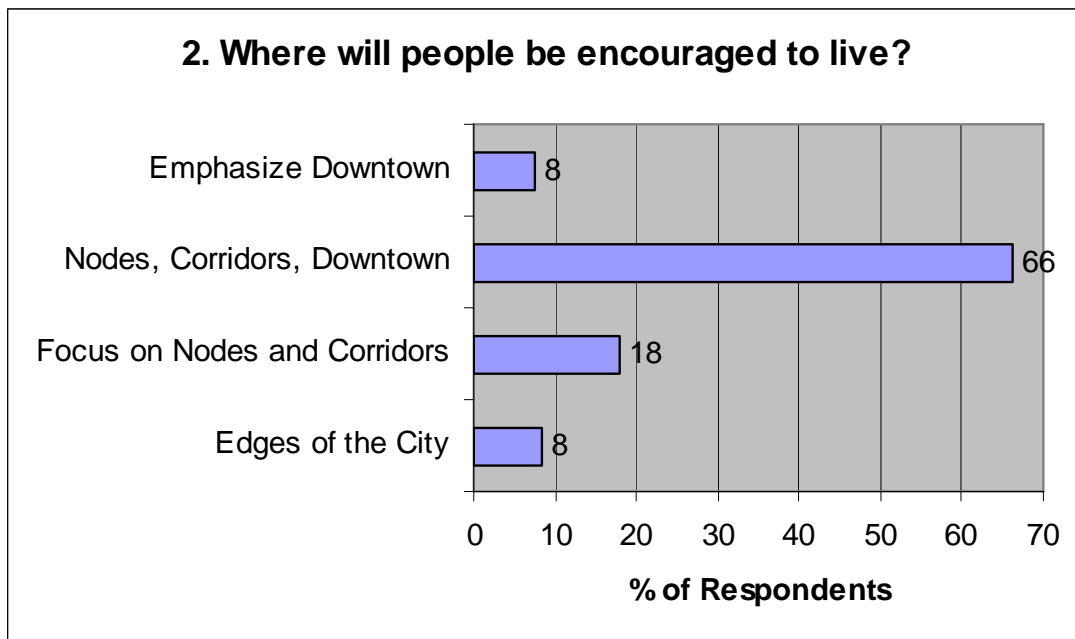
Question 2. Where will people be encouraged to live?

Table 2. Housing Location Options and Responses

| Options: | # of Responses |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Edges of the City | 20 |
| 2. Focus on Nodes and Corridors | 43 |
| 3. Nodes, Corridors, Downtown | 158 |
| 4. Emphasize Downtown | 18 |

Chosen Option Description: In order to reduce land consumption at the City edge, new development will be strongly encouraged in defined nodes, corridors, the downtown and in older neighbourhoods. This means that portions of the downtown will be built more densely with higher buildings and that the edges of existing neighbourhoods will be redeveloped to a higher density. Greenfield development will still occur but will be denser.

Table 2.



Summary of participants' comments related to this question:

- There is support for increasing the residential population of the downtown area and recognition that redevelopment and infill for apartment buildings in portions of the downtown are necessary to achieve this in addition to filling in under-utilized space in the downtown in existing buildings. However, there is a strong desire to retain the overall heritage value of downtown. New residential development in the downtown area is seen as an opportunity for servicing, infrastructure and character improvements. There is recognition that City standards and incentives may need to be put in place to promote downtown development.
- Concerns about the impact of new development on existing inner-city neighbourhoods need to be balanced with directing growth to these areas.
- Nodes and corridors need to have a mixed use focus and have better connectivity to one another and need to be supported by transit.
- Focusing more development in nodes, corridors and downtown will help facilitate local agricultural production by reducing/preventing boundary expansion contributing to a 'greenbelt' around the City and keeping it separate.

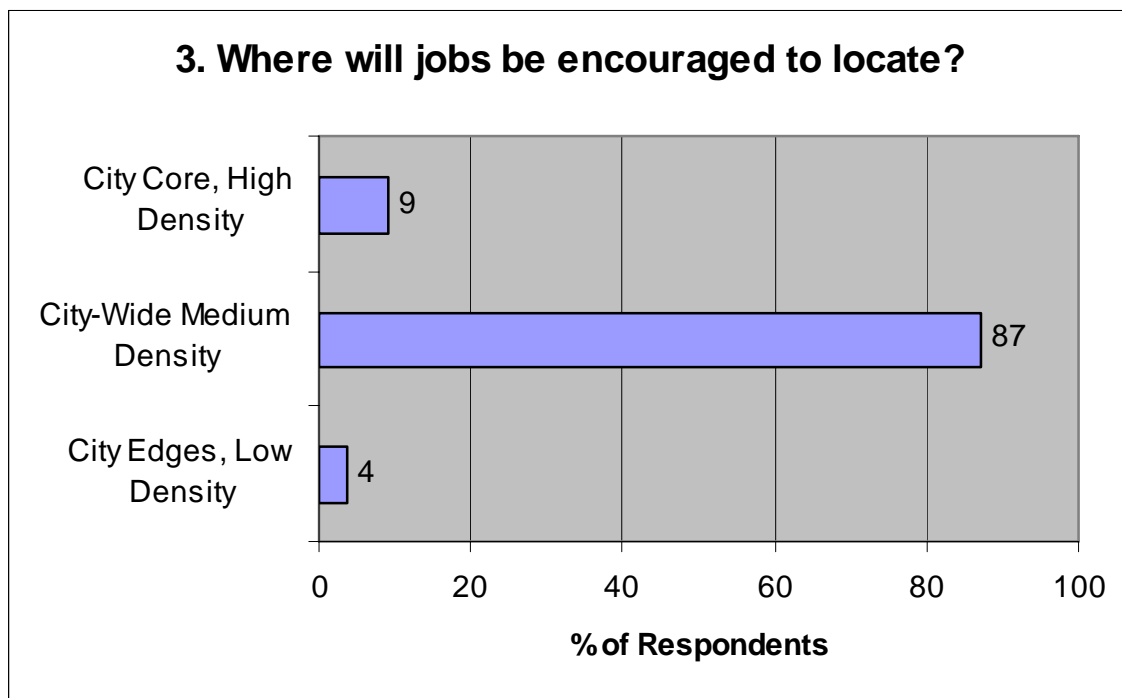
Question 3. Where will jobs be encouraged to locate?

Table 3. Job Density and Location Options and Responses

| Options: | # of Responses |
|-----------------------------|----------------|
| 1. City Edges, Low Density | 9 |
| 2. City-Wide Medium Density | 203 |
| 3. City Core, High Density | 21 |

Chosen Option Description: Encourage new job development in all areas of the City, including further development in existing business parks, the Downtown, inner-city and the University Stone Road area. While manufacturing / industrial jobs will continue to be important there will be more focus on office, research and service type jobs that can be housed in multi-storey buildings.

Figure 3.



Summary of participants' comments related to this question:

- There is a desire to distribute employment choice throughout the City to provide opportunity to go to work by alternative transportation means.
- Participants also noted the need to maintain a diverse mix of employment opportunity to be able to ride out economic cycles.

- A significant number of participants indicated that manufacturing will continue to be an important part of economic opportunity that should be accommodated to ensure the City does not become a bedroom community and to better balance residential / employment assessment.
- High technology jobs can support mixed use development.

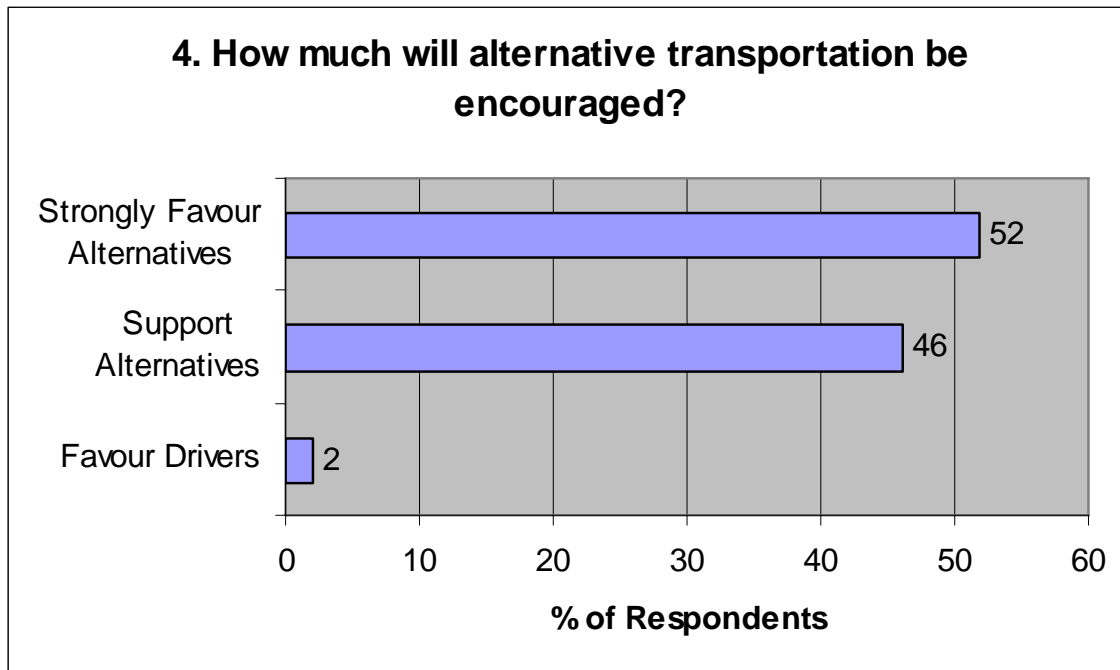
Question 4. How much will alternative transportation be encouraged?

Table 4. Alternative Transportation Options and Responses

| Options: | # of Responses |
|---------------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Favour Drivers | 5 |
| 2. Support Alternatives | 112 |
| 3. Strongly Favour Alternatives | 126 |

Chosen Option Description: In addition to implementing the City’s Transportation Plans and policies to shift transportation use away from automobiles by providing choice in terms of improved transit, cycling lanes and more walkable communities, develop stronger mechanisms to influence behaviour and lifestyle (i.e. toll roads, free transit, carbon tax, restricted parking).

Figure 4.



Summary of participants' comments related to this question:

- Participants are not sure initiatives to strongly favour alternatives will be successful in changing automobile use, however, participants feel such investments are worth trying and that facilities necessary for alternatives need to be put in place first if there is to be success.
- Participants noted that demographic trends towards an aging population align with increased transit use and that increases in fuel costs may also promote alternative transportation choice.
- Some participants raised concerns that the densities and/or behavioural changes required to support effective alternative transportation would be difficult to achieve in Guelph.

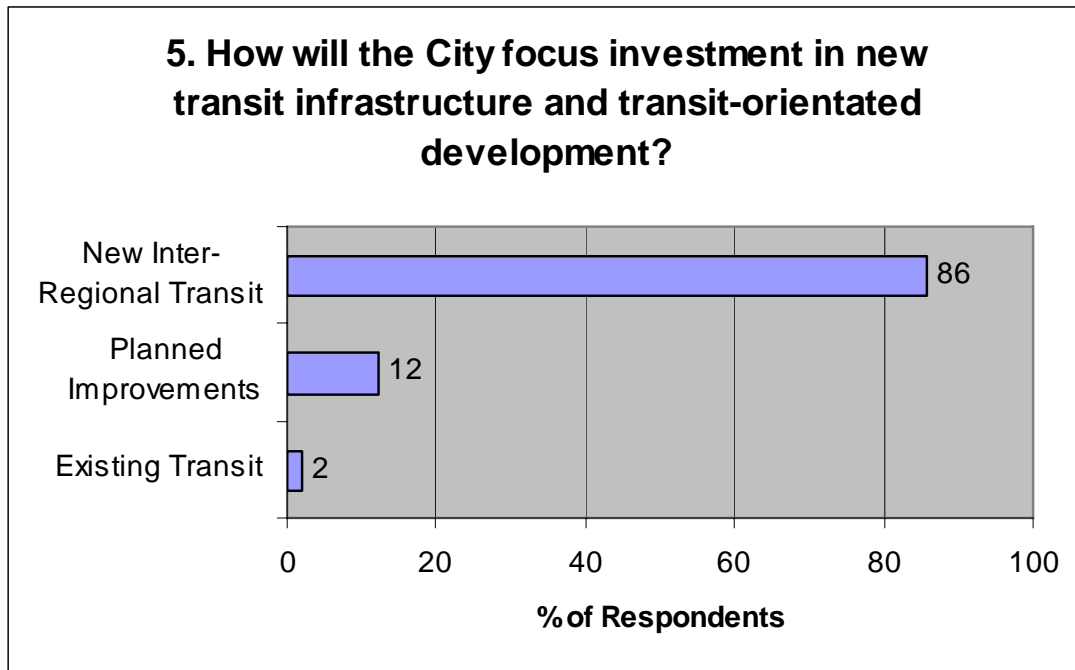
Question 5. How will the City focus investment in new transit infrastructure and transit-oriented development?

Table 5. Transit Options and Responses

| Options: | # of Responses |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Existing Transit | 5 |
| 2. Planned Improvements | 30 |
| 3. New Inter-Regional Transit | 211 |

Chosen Option Description: Expand transit as is planned by adding a ring route system, additional transfer hubs, service into new areas and other operational improvements and also support additions to bus and rail service (GO) going to Kitchener-Waterloo and the GTA.

Figure 5.



Summary of participants' comments related to this question:

- Participants recognized that Guelph is part of a broader region and that investment in inter-regional connections would improve the opportunity for non-automobile use.
- Regional delivery of higher order health services will require good inter-regional transit to serve an aging population.
- While concerns were raised about the expense and which order of government would pay there was an understanding that some level of City investment would be required (i.e. inter-modal transfer facility).
- Land use density needs to support the transit routing system.

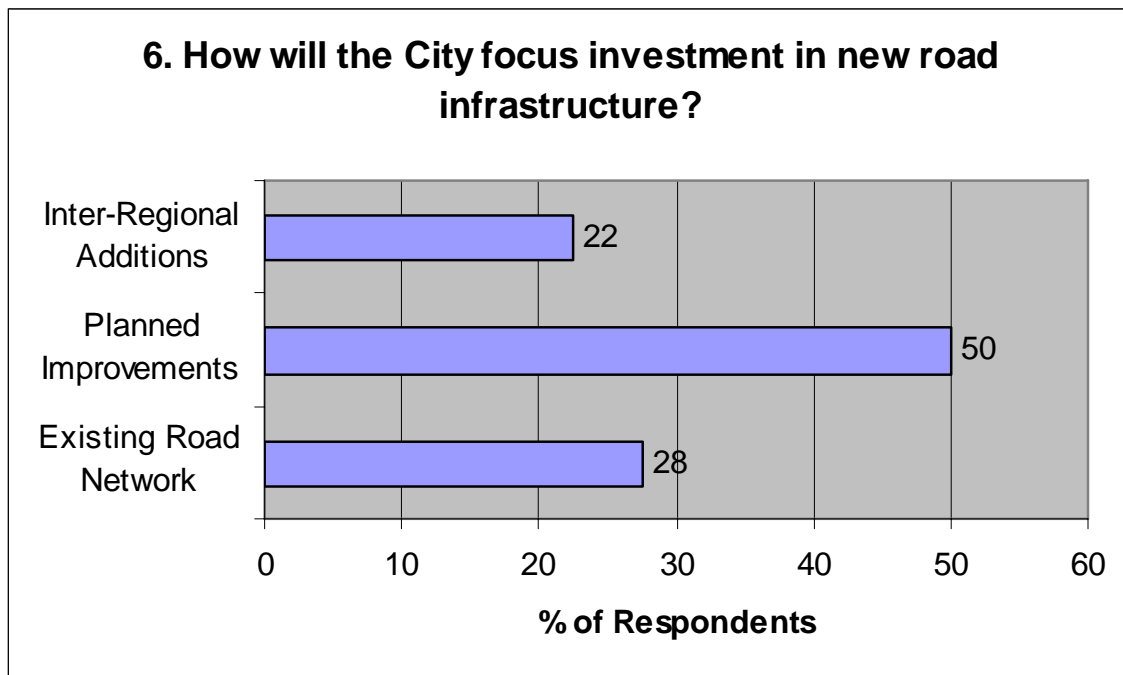
Question 6. How will the City focus investment in new road infrastructure?

Table 6. Road Infrastructure Options and Responses

| Options: | # of Responses |
|-----------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Existing Road Network | 64 |
| 2. Planned Improvements | 116 |
| 3. Inter-Regional Additions | 52 |

Chosen Option Description: Make local improvements such as repairing, replacing and upgrading City roads as well as planned upgrades, including improvements to the Hanlon, a new Highway 7 to Kitchener and a new Highway 24 to Cambridge.

Figure 6.



Summary of participants' comments related to this question:

- The policy area with the greatest amount of diversity in perspective:
 - One perspective is that if one invests in road infrastructure it will simply result in more traffic, congestion, and reduced air quality and will remove funds required for transit. Participants with this view feel that transit and other transportation alternatives will become more attractive if the road network is congested.
 - An alternative perspective is there is a need to continue to invest in road infrastructure in order to facilitate goods movement and support economic development objectives, in recognition that bus transit requires efficient roads and that increased congestion is in conflict with air quality objectives. It was also noted that inter-regional road connections are identified in the Provincial Growth Plan.
- In general most people support improvements to local highway networks in recognition of the local regional context and commuting patterns between Kitchener, Waterloo, Cambridge and Guelph but are not in favour of potential new '400 series' roads to the GTA.

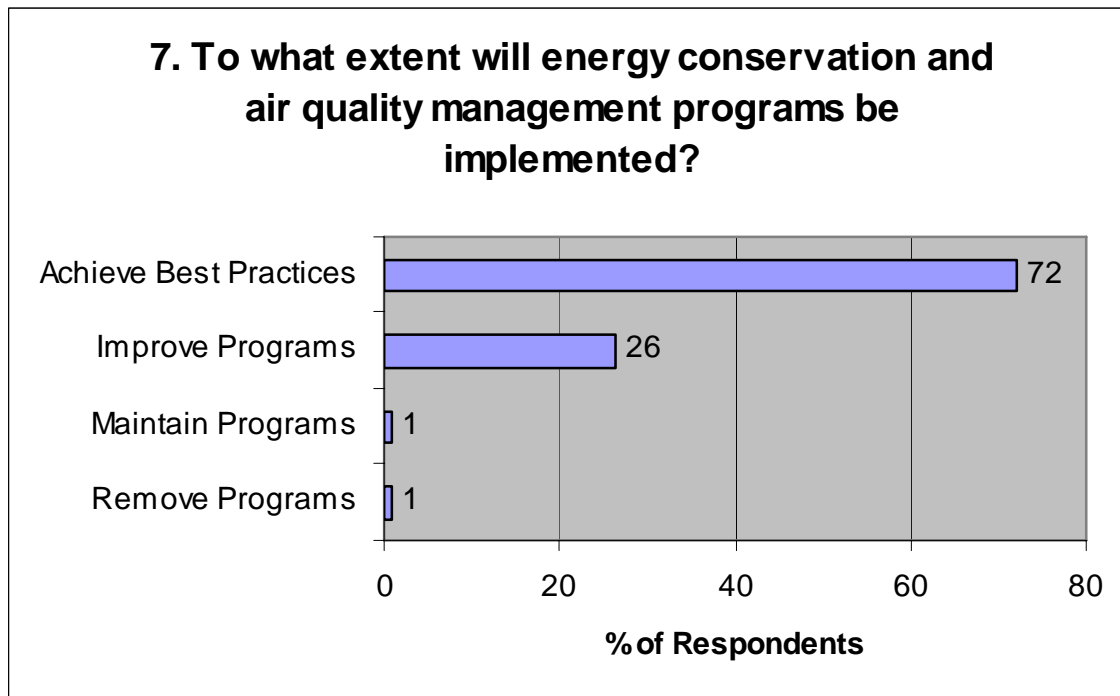
Question 7. To what extent will energy conservation and air quality management programs be implemented?

Table 7. Energy Conservation Options and Responses

| Options: | # of Responses |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Remove Programs | 2 |
| 2. Maintain Programs | 2 |
| 3. Improve Programs | 64 |
| 4. Achieve Best Practices | 175 |

Chosen Option Description: Position Guelph as a North American leader in energy conservation and air quality management by implementing practices that are currently used in Europe and recognize that this will require lifestyle changes. Programs could include community and building design, supporting transit, smart meters, renewable energy sources as well as new initiatives such as district heating, conservation incentive pricing and investment in other forms of alternative energy sources (like solar, wind).

Figure 7.



Summary of participants' comments related to this question:

- Participants recognize that moving to a North American best practices standard will be a lengthy process but feel that establishing a challenging goal is required to focus effort in

this direction. Some participants noted that ‘best practices’ is a moving target that can never really be achieved.

- Participants also noted that long term adherence to the goal is required by successive Councils.
- There is recognition in making the best practices policy choice that there will be implications requiring lifestyle changes.
- Participants noted that on-going education programs and continued support from the community will be critical to achieving success.
- Some participants are concerned about high initial investment costs to put in place infrastructure and practices necessary to achieve the goal as well as the economic risk of using innovative as opposed to proven technology. Others feel these investments will pay for themselves economically and provide significant social and environmental benefits worth such cost.
- Some participants worry that if the standards are too high it may discourage economic development opportunities while others feel it may lead to more jobs by attracting ‘creative economy’ employment uses that desire locations with a high quality of life.
- Participants noted that new City regulations may be needed to achieve these desired outcomes.

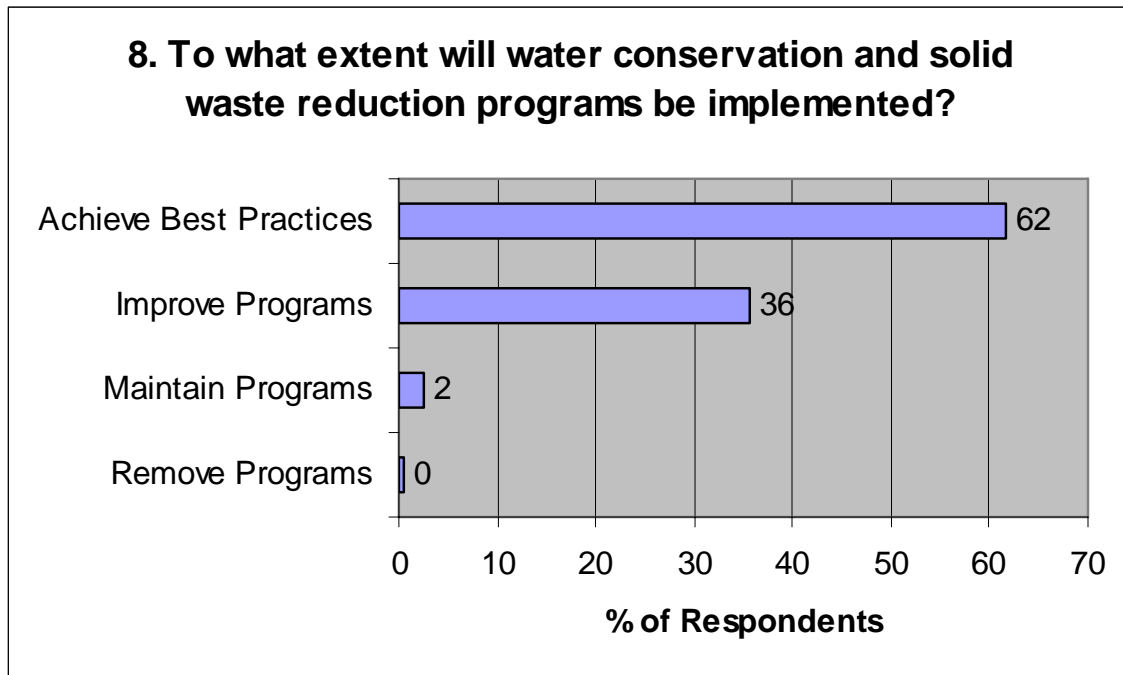
Question 8. To what extent will water conservation and solid waste reduction programs be implemented?

Table 8. Water and Waste Options and Responses

| Options: | # of Responses |
|---------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Remove Programs | 1 |
| 2. Maintain Programs | 6 |
| 3. Improve Programs | 86 |
| 4. Achieve Best Practices | 149 |

Chosen Option Description: Improve current efforts and develop programs so as to eliminate waste going to landfill through intensive recycling and potential incineration. Conserve water to European standards by changing water use behaviours through mechanisms such as regulating mandatory conservation, providing for infrastructure repair, incentives and pricing strategies.

Figure 8.



Summary of participants' comments related to this question:

- Participants recognize that a best practices standard will be a lengthy process but feel that establishing a challenging goal is required to focus effort in this direction. Some participants noted that 'best practices' is a moving target that can never really be achieved.
- Participants also noted that long term adherence to the goal is required by successive Councils.
- There is recognition in making the best practices policy choice that there will be implications requiring lifestyle changes that may need to be mandated.
- Participants noted that on-going education programs and continued support from the community will be critical to achieving success. This is reflected in that several participants dislike current lawn watering restrictions.
- Some participants are concerned about high initial investment costs to put in place infrastructure and practices necessary to achieve the goal as well as the economic risk of using innovative as opposed to proven technology. Others feel these investments will pay for themselves economically and provide significant social and environmental benefits worth such cost.
- Participants noted that current City regulations may need to be changed to facilitate innovative approaches to achieve these objectives.

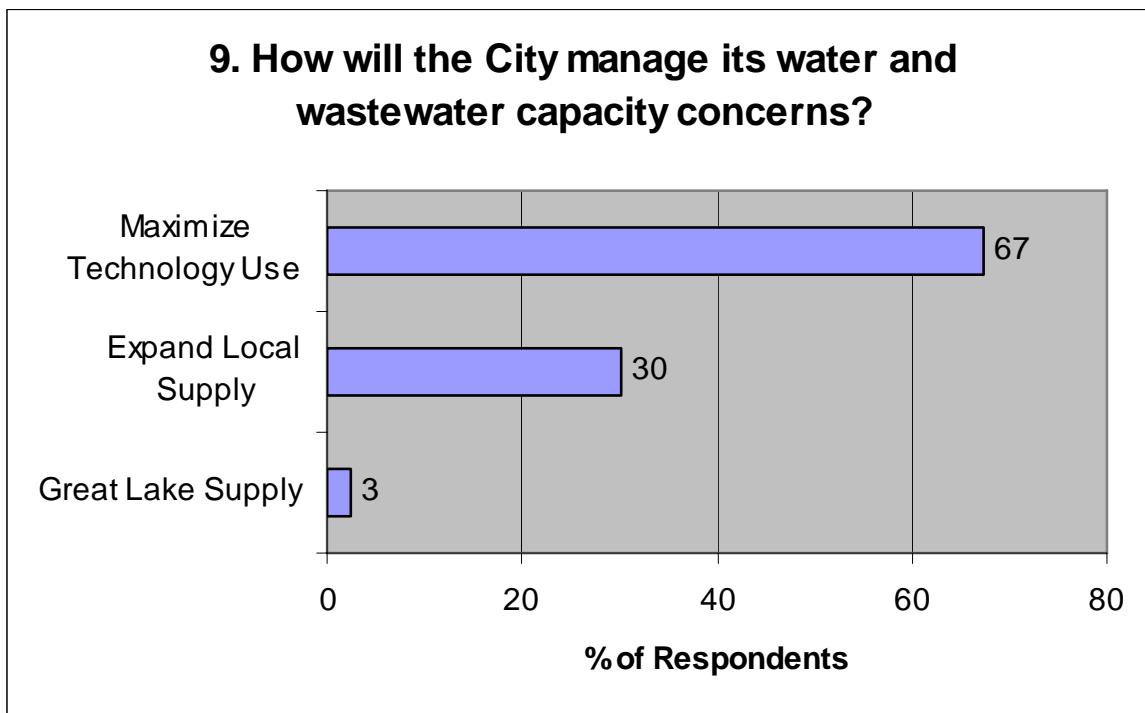
Question 9. How will the City manage its water and wastewater capacity concerns?

Table 9. Water Capacity Options and Responses

| Options: | # of Responses |
|----------------------------|----------------|
| 1. Great Lake Supply | 6 |
| 2. Expand Local Supply | 71 |
| 3. Maximize Technology Use | 159 |

Chosen Option Description: Use the local groundwater supply more efficiently by using innovative (and potentially costly) technologies/engineered solutions for water supply / waste water treatment (i.e. reverse osmosis, grey water reuse).

Figure 9.



Summary of participants' comments related to this question:

- Participants selected this option understanding that there may be significant cost implications for new technology. Participants are concerned about the economic risk of using innovative as opposed to proven technology.
- Concerns were raised about the amount of potable water that is used for non-potable purposes and that this represents a waste of the resource. There is a perception that the local water supply should be managed better.
- The majority of participants were very much opposed to the pipeline option.