



Finance and Corporate Services Committee Agenda

Monday, August 11, 2025, 3:00 p.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Council Chambers

City of Kitchener

200 King Street W, Kitchener, ON N2G 4G7

People interested in participating in this meeting can register online using the delegation registration form at www.kitchener.ca/delegation or via email at delegation@kitchener.ca. Please refer to the delegation section on the agenda below for registration in-person and electronic participation deadlines. Written comments received will be circulated prior to the meeting and will form part of the public record.

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Chair: Councillor S. Davey

Vice-Chair: Councillor B. Ioannidis

Pages

1. Commencement

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof

Members of Council and members of the City's local boards/committees are required to file a written statement when they have a conflict of interest. If a conflict is declared, please visit www.kitchener.ca/conflict to submit your written form.

3. Consent Items

The following matters are considered not to require debate and should be approved by one motion in accordance with the recommendation contained in each staff report. A majority vote is required to discuss any report listed as under this section.

3.1	Idlewood Greenway, INS-2025-321	3
3.2	Property Tax Exemption for Affordable Housing - Union Co-operative, FIN-2025-323	6

4. Delegations

Pursuant to Council's Procedural By-law, delegations are permitted to address the Committee for a maximum of five (5) minutes. All Delegations where possible are encouraged to register prior to the start of the meeting. For Delegates who are attending in-person, registration is permitted up to the start of the meeting. Delegates who are interested in attending virtually must register by TIME on August 11, 2025, in order to participate electronically.

4.1 None at this time.

5. Discussion Items

5.1	Strategic Plan Check-in Report - Insights and Adjustments at the Midway Mark, CAO-2025-312 <i>(Staff will provide a 10-minutes presentation on this matter)</i>	30 m	11
5.2	Kitchener Indoor Recreation Facility Public Artwork Commission, DSD-2025-263 <i>(Staff will provide a 5-minute presentation on this matter.)</i>	20 m	41

6. Information Items

6.1 None.

7. Adjournment

Dianna Saunderson
Manager of Council/Committee Services & Deputy Clerk

Staff Report

Infrastructure Services Department



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REPORT TO: Finance and Corporate Services Committee

DATE OF MEETING: August 11, 2025

SUBMITTED BY: Bu Lam, Director of Sanitary & Stormwater Utilities, 519-783-8835

PREPARED BY: Nick Gollan, Manager of Utility Planning & Programs, 519-783-8827
Ryan Hagey, Director of Financial Planning & Asset Management, 519-904-9347

WARD(S) INVOLVED: Ward 2

DATE OF REPORT: July 15, 2025

REPORT NO.: INS-2025-321

SUBJECT: Idlewood Greenway Budget Reallocation and Pre-Approval

RECOMMENDATION:

That 2026 funding of \$5.36M be reallocated from the Middle Strasburg Naturalization project to the Idlewood Greenway project, as outlined in Infrastructure Services Department report INS-2025-321; and further,

That the Idlewood Greenway funding in 2026 be preapproved for tender in 2025.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to reallocate funding and preapprove spending for the Idlewood Greenway stormwater project.
- Favourable pricing for the Middle Strasburg Naturalization project due to current market conditions provides the opportunity to advance the work on Idlewood Greenway.
- Completing this project earlier than planned has environmental and financial benefits.
- Community engagement included an open house public consultation about the project conducted in spring 2024 and a planned pre-construction open house in fall 2025.
- This report supports the delivery of core services.

BACKGROUND:

As part of the Integrated Stormwater Management Master Plan, the Idlewood Greenway was identified as an area in need of stormwater measures to manage runoff. This project will help to:

- Improve water quality in Idlewood Creek and the Grand River
- Reduce the risk of flooding
- Reduce erosion in Idlewood Creek
- Improve resilience against climate change
- Enhance community safety

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REPORT:

The work on the Idlewood Greenway is currently budgeted to be completed between 2027-2029. However, due to favourable pricing in another stormwater project (Middle Strasburg Naturalization) there is an opportunity to advance the Idlewood Greenway work in 2025-2026. The Middle Strasburg tender price came in considerably below budget due to current market conditions and partially due to staff establishing a roster of pre-approved contractors to bid on complex stormwater projects, ensuring the most efficient construction methods and best possible unit prices for individual contract items could be achieved.

Staff hope to tender the construction of the Idlewood Greenway in the fall of 2025 to take advantage of the favourable market conditions, with the bulk of the work taking place in early 2026. To accelerate the timing of this project, staff need Council approval to reallocate 2026 funding of \$5.36M from the Middle Strasburg Naturalization project to the Idlewood Greenway project and approval to tender the work before the 2026 budget is approved. There will be no impacts to the Middle Strasburg Naturalization project due to the reallocation of these surplus funds.

Completing the work at Idlewood Greenway earlier than originally planned has a number of advantages, including:

- Mitigating flooding and other environmental risks in the area
- Avoiding economic volatility and inflationary pressures that may increase pricing between now and 2027
- Providing significant work in the local economy
- Advancing a project funded by the Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund (DMAF) in an effort to meet the conditions of the City's grant application

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report supports the delivery of core services.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The budget for phase 1 construction of Middle Strasburg Naturalization will be reduced from \$14.5M to \$9.1M due to favourable pricing. Sufficient budget remains to tender phase 2 of the Strasburg project (a connection from phase 1, around the Snow Storage Disposal Facility, to a naturalized portion of North Strasburg Creek at Old Huron Road) later in 2025. The budget for Idlewood Greenway remains unchanged at \$5.8M, but the timing of the project is accelerated by more than two years. Funding that was budgeted for Idlewood Greenway will be reallocated to other stormwater priority projects like Creek Naturalization as part of the 2026 budget process.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

INFORM – This report has been posted to the City's website with the agenda in advance of the council / committee meeting.

CONSULT – An open house was held in spring 2024 regarding the Idlewood Greenway project where citizen feedback was solicited and incorporated into the final design. A pre-construction open house is scheduled to take place in the fall of 2025.

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

There are no previous reports/authorities related to this matter.

APPROVED BY: Denise McGoldrick, General Manager of Infrastructure Services

REPORT TO: Finance and Corporate Services Committee

DATE OF MEETING: August 11, 2025

SUBMITTED BY: Saleh Saleh, Director, Revenue Division, 519-904-6308

PREPARED BY: Saleh Saleh, Director, Revenue Division, 519-904-6308

WARD(S) INVOLVED: 1

DATE OF REPORT: July 16, 2025

REPORT NO.: FIN-2025-323

SUBJECT: Property Tax Exemption for Affordable Housing- Union Co-operative

RECOMMENDATION:

That the draft by-law attached to report FIN-2025-323 as Appendix “A”, allowing units qualifying as a Municipal Housing Project Facility (as defined in By-law 2024-152) located at 475-477 Lancaster Street West to participate in the Regional Municipality of Waterloo’s Municipal Housing Facility Property Tax Exemption program and therefore exempting them from the City’s portion of the property tax levy, be approved.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The City’s affordable housing property tax exemption by-law number 2024-152 made pursuant to section 110(9) of the Municipal Act, 2001 exempts Municipal Housing Project Facilities (as defined in Region of Waterloo By-law 24-007) that are owned and operated by non-profit and co-operative affordable housing service providers to be exempt from the City’s portion of the property tax levy for a period of 20 years starting in 2025.
- This report is seeking council endorsement to allow the Municipal Housing Project Facilities (qualifying units) located at 475-477 Lancaster St. W (owned by USDC at Lancaster Inc. and operated by Union: Sustainable Development Co-operative Inc. (“Union Co-operative”)) to participate in the Region’s property tax exemption program as it relates to exempting the City’s portion of the property tax levy.
- The property tax exemption outlined in this report will result in a tax shift of approximately \$30,700 in taxes which would be redistributed to other property classes

BACKGROUND:

On August 12, 2024, Council supported the City’s participation in the Region’s Municipal Housing Facilities property tax exemption program as outlined in staff report FIN-2024-299 by providing a property tax exemption for the City's portion of the levy to qualifying Municipal Housing Project Facilities owned and operated by non-profit and co-operative affordable housing service providers for a period of 20 years starting in 2025.

Council also expressed support for the inclusion of those qualifying Municipal Housing Project Facilities located at 475-477 Lancaster Street West in this program.

The corporate structure and operations at 475-477 Lancaster Street West are unique, and while the Municipal Housing Project Facility at this property meets the intent of City of Kitchener By-law 2024-152, there is a technical need to create a site-specific by-law pursuant to section 110(9) of the Municipal Act to permit its participation in the program.

The purpose of this report is to approve a by-law exempting the Municipal Housing Project Facility located at 475-477 Lancaster Street West from City's portion of the property taxes.

REPORT:

Previously, Council approved the City's participation in the Region's property tax exemption program by providing a property tax exemption for the City's portion of the levy for Municipal Housing Project Facilities owned and operated by non-profit and cooperative housing services providers for a period of 20 years starting in 2025. This allows the City to provide property tax relief to non-profit and co-operatives who own and operate qualifying affordable housing units.

USDC at Lancaster Inc. is listed as the registered owner of the property located at 475-477 Lancaster St W. This property has 58 rental units of which 60% are at the affordable housing rent threshold and meet the definition of a Municipal Housing Project Facility as defined in Regional Municipality of Waterloo By-law 24-007. All voting shares of USDC at Lancaster Inc. are owned by Union Cooperative.

The City's Municipal Housing Facility Property Tax Exemption By-law 2024-152 permits Municipal Housing Project Facilities (qualifying rental units) owned and operated by non-profit housing co-operatives incorporated under the *Co-operative Corporations Act* to participate in the Region's program, exempting the City's portion of the property tax levy for the qualifying units. The unique ownership structure of Union Cooperative and USDC at Lancaster Inc., requires an additional by-law to be enacted to enable its participation in the program.

Staff are recommending approval of the attached by-law in Appendix "A" to allow the Municipal Housing Project Facility located at 475-477 Lancaster Street West to participate in the Region's Municipal Housing Facility property tax exemption program as it relates to exempting the City's portion of the property tax levy.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report supports **Building a Connected City Together: Focuses on neighbourhoods; housing and ensuring secure, affordable homes; getting around easily, sustainably and safely to the places and spaces that matter.**

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Implementing a property tax exemption for Municipal Housing Project Facilities will have no impact to the City's tax base revenues. However, the recommended tax exemption will result in a shift of tax burden on other taxed property classes such as residential, multi-residential, commercial for example.

In 2025, the City's portion of property taxes for 475–477 Lancaster St W amounted to \$51,168.35. If a tax exemption is applied to the affordable housing portion of this property, approximately \$30,700 in taxes would be redistributed to other property classes.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

INFORM – This report has been posted to the City's website with the agenda in advance of the council / committee meeting.

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

- Municipal Act, 2001
- Assessment Act
- [DSD-2023-160](#) Enabling Missing Middle and Affordable Housing
- [FIN-2024-299](#) Property Tax Exemption for Affordable Housing

APPROVED BY: Jonathan Lautenbach, Chief Financial Officer, Financial Services

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – Draft By-law

APPENDIX “A” TO FIN-2024-299

BY-LAW OF THE
CORPORATION OF THE CITY OF KITCHENER

BY-LAW NO. 2025-XXX

(Being a by-law to provide a property tax exemption for certain qualifying Municipal Housing Project Facilities located at 475-477 Lancaster Street West pursuant to section 110(9) of the *Municipal Act*, 2001)

WHEREAS section 110 of the *Municipal Act*, 2001, S.O. 2001, c.25, as amended (the “Act”), allows municipalities to enter into agreements for the provision of municipal capital facilities;

AND WHEREAS Ontario Regulation 603/06 (the “Regulation”) sets out the classes of municipal capital facilities for which a municipality may enter into such agreements, one of which is municipal housing project facilities;

AND WHEREAS The Regional Municipality of Waterloo enacted By-law 24-007, being a by-law to provide for municipal housing project facilities (the “Municipal Housing Facilities By-law”);

AND WHEREAS the Municipal Housing Facilities By-law contains the elements of a municipal housing facility by-law required by the Regulation;

AND WHEREAS the City wishes to provide financial or other assistance as prescribed by the Act and the Regulation;

AND WHEREAS subsection 110(9) of the Act allows another municipality that has not entered into an agreement to provide a tax exemption provided that an agreement has been entered into with the service manager under the *Housing Services Act*, 2011, S.O. 2011, c.6, Sched. 1 (the “Housing Services Act”).

AND WHEREAS The Regional Municipality of Waterloo is a Consolidated Municipal Service Manager and is authorized to operate and manage housing as well as establish, fund and administer programs for the provision of residential accommodation in its service area under the Housing Services Act;

NOW THEREFORE, the Council of The Corporation of the City of Kitchener enacts as follows:

1. Subject to the following, the City of Kitchener shall approve exemption from taxation in relation to the portion of municipal property taxes levied by the City of

Kitchener, for an approved Municipal Housing Project Facility located at **475-477 Lancaster Street West, Kitchener:**

- a. The Municipal Housing Project Facility must meet the definition of a Municipal Housing Project Facility as set out in Municipal Housing Facilities By-law;
 - b. The exemption shall be limited to the lands, or portion thereof, containing the Municipal Housing Project Facility;
 - c. The Municipal Housing Project Facility must be owned by USDC at Lancaster Inc. and USDC at Lancaster Inc. must be controlled by Union: Sustainable Development Co-operative Inc.;
 - d. The owner of the Municipal Housing Project Facility must have entered into a municipal capital facilities agreement with the Regional Municipality of Waterloo as a service manager under the Housing Services Act, in accordance with the provisions of the Municipal Housing Facilities By-law and section 110 of the Municipal Act to the satisfaction of the Regional Municipality of Waterloo.
2. Any exemptions provided pursuant to this by-law shall be limited to a period of twenty (20) years commencing on the effective date of the any agreement to which said exemption relates, as set out in section 1(c) above.
 3. This by-law shall come into force and effect on the date of its final passing.

PASSED at the Council Chambers of the City of Kitchener this ____ day of August, 2025.

Mayor

Clerk

Staff Report

Chief Administrator's Office



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REPORT TO: Finance and Corporate Services Committee

DATE OF MEETING: August 11, 2025

SUBMITTED BY: Dan Chapman, Chief Administrative Officer

PREPARED BY: Margaret Love, Director, Strategy and Corporate Performance

WARD(S) INVOLVED: All Ward(s)

DATE OF REPORT: July 31, 2025

REPORT NO.: CAO-2025-312

SUBJECT: Strategic Plan Check-in Report: Insights & Adjustments at the Midway Mark

RECOMMENDATION:

That the following adjustments be made to initiatives contained within the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan as outlined in the jointly authored report between the City of Kitchener and KerrSmith Design, titled Kitchener's Strategic Plan Check-in: Insights and Adjustments at the Midway Mark, dated July 24, 2025 and attached to staff report CAO-2025-312:

(1) Sport and Recreation Master Plan and (2) City-led Recreation & Leisure Program Review – REMOVE AND REVISIT AS PART OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE 2027-2030 STRATEGIC PLAN

(3) Make it Kitchener 2.0 Scoped Refresh – Supporting Economic Resiliency and (4) Implementation of the Downtown Safety & Security Action Plan – ADD

And that staff be directed to take the following actions aimed at addressing additional strategic plan midway check-in insights, including: (1) further exploring the theme of social resilience, (2) supporting innovative and cost-effective service delivery through targeted Lean training and prioritized Innovation Lab projects, and (3) improving strategic goal reporting via refined indicators.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to share key insights and recommended strategic adjustments from the midway check-in on the City's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.
- The key finding of this report is that the current strategic plan remains highly relevant with opportunities for refinement in five areas: (1) sharpening the focus on economic resiliency through the addition of two new strategic plan initiatives, (2) removing two strategic plan initiatives due to limited funding, resource constraints, and the need for

clearer understanding of evolving needs, (3) further exploring the emerging theme of social resilience, (4) balancing innovation with operational efficiency and cost-effective service delivery, (5) improving the communication of progress toward strategic goals, and.

- There are no direct financial implications resulting from this report. However, it is anticipated that there may be future costs associated with two new initiatives. For the Make It Kitchener 2.0 refresh, this would be primarily in the area of economic modeling and data analysis. For the Downtown Safety & Security Plan, any significant new funding or staffing requests would be brought forward to Council for approval.
- Community engagement included a variety of direct and indirect methods (e.g., All Advisory Committee Meeting workshop, staff workshops, 2025 budget survey, listening through other engagement processes and various public opinion polls).
- This report supports all five strategic plan goal areas.

BACKGROUND:

As part of the adoption of the City's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan, staff made a commitment to check-in at the midway mark to ensure that the plan remains responsive to a rapidly changing world and aligned with the needs of the Kitchener community. This process allowed staff to evaluate progress on the implementation of the first 30 actions, identify emerging trends, opportunities, and challenges since approval of the plan, and determine if there are any gaps in our strategic plan that require additional adjustments. By proactively adapting to change and refining our priorities, we can strengthen our commitment to effective governance and ensure our strategic plan continues to drive positive outcomes for the city.

REPORT:

1. Introduction, reason for check-in and methodology

The mid-point check-in was conducted to fulfill a commitment made to council to ensure the strategic plan remains relevant and responsive to the dynamic needs of the Kitchener community. The check-in process employed a strategic foresight approach to anticipate future needs and ensure adaptability.

Various engagement methods, including a community survey, stakeholder workshops, expert consultations, public opinion polls and listening through other projects informed the check-in process.

Central questions guiding this check-in included: How are we doing on implementing the first 30 actions? What has changed since the plan was adopted in August 2023? Are there emerging community needs or shifts in the operating environment we should be addressing? This assessment explores progress to date, identifies gaps in the current strategic actions, and considers whether adjustments or new initiatives are needed to ensure the plan remains responsive, relevant, and aligned with community priorities.

2. Current plan progress overview

Implementation of the strategic plan has maintained a disciplined and phased approach. The initial years focused on building momentum, with the plan reaching operational maturity in 2025. Over half of the initiatives are complex, multi-year efforts, intentionally structured for phased outcomes. Delays have been minimal.

The 2026 outlook is dedicated to completing existing work, with no new initiatives starting in 2026 – signaling a disciplined close-out phase and a focus on delivering tangible results before the next strategic plan cycle.

While data is being tracked for the majority of the city's 27 strategic goal indicators, assessing progress remains challenging as targets are still under development for approximately 50% of them. Indicators demonstrate a mixed performance with some economic indicators showing modest gains of 1-3% and others showing regression (e.g., unemployment rose to from 6.6% to 8.2% in 2024). Gains were also made in customer satisfaction ratings related to the ease of accessing city services as well as the number of older adult-focused programs across city neighbourhoods and HR indicators; however, transportation related injuries – minor and serious – rose from the previous year.

3. Top 5 themes and alignment with council feedback and current strategic priorities

As part of the check-in process, council members were interviewed and asked to reflect on the changes they've observed since the adoption of the strategic plan. They were also invited to identify areas where the City may need to adjust or broaden its focus to address any potential gaps in the plan. Their responses, alongside other stakeholder input and expert insights, helped surface five key themes - listed in order of importance below - that reflect the most significant opportunities and challenges facing Kitchener today. The top two themes – the economy and housing - dominated both stakeholder insights and council feedback. Social resilience emerged as a recurring theme among council feedback, with roughly a third of members signaling its importance.

The top 5 themes should not be read as a set of new strategic priorities for the City. The insights from the check-in process affirms that the City is on the right track - there is strong alignment between the top themes and the City's current strategic plan, reinforcing the relevance and responsiveness of the current plan. The following summary outlines the top 5 themes, alignment with current strategic plan actions, and alignment with council feedback:

1. **Economic growth, resiliency and prosperity**, with emphasis on supporting local enterprise, workforce development, downtown renewal, and cultural opportunities

- Emerged as one of the top two most pressing concerns. The strategic plan directly supports this priority through 8 targeted initiatives (see Attachment A for details).
- Strongest councillor alignment: 2/3 of councillors identified economic development, particularly downtown revitalization as top issues.

2. **Housing accessibility and affordability**, including tenant protections and diverse, inclusive housing options

- Emerged as one of the top two most pressing concerns. The strategic plan directly supports this priority through the Building a Connected City Together strategic plan goal area with 2 targeted initiatives: Kitchener 2051 and the Housing for All Strategy.
- Strongest council alignment: 2/3 of councillors identified housing affordability and homelessness as top issues.

3. **Social resilience**, especially in support of youth, vulnerable groups, and intergenerational and culturally inclusive communities

- Being actively supported through four initiatives under the Fostering a Caring City Together strategic plan goal area: the Municipal Newcomer Strategy; Enhance the City's Engagement Practices, Community Centre Operating Model, and Community Grants Review.
- Council alignment: 1/3 of councillors emphasized the role of faith-based communities in fostering belonging and wellbeing.

4. **(a) Public health and wellbeing**, spanning health access, senior services, quality of life and wellbeing (tied with 4b)

- A cross-cutting priority supported by multiple strategic plan goal areas. Existing efforts to enhance inclusion and social connection (Fostering a Caring City Together), sustainable development (Cultivating a Green City Together), and housing (Building a Connected City Together) are expected to contribute positively to overall health outcomes. Addressing access to healthcare and mental health services and healthcare workforce shortages are outside of the City's direct service mandate.
- Councillors did not identify a gap in the current strategic plan related to this theme that is within the City's service delivery mandate.

4. **(b) Sustainable development**, balancing growth with climate action, green infrastructure, accessibility, and economic/affordability considerations (tied with 4a)

- Being advanced through six initiatives under the Cultivating a Green City Together strategic plan goal area. These initiatives focus on enhancing park

spaces and tree canopy cover, planning for energy transition, and implementing corporate climate action strategies.

- No related theme emerged from Councillor feedback.

5. **Responsible innovation**, ensuring responsible adoption of emerging technologies while ensuring cost-effective service delivery

- Being championed through three initiatives under the City's Stewarding a Better City Together strategic plan goal area: Digital Kitchener Strategy, City-wide Data Strategy and Procurement Innovation. These initiatives aim to modernize services and enhance the City's capacity to adapt and lead.
- No related theme emerged from Councillor feedback.

4. Recommended strategic adjustments informed by check-in findings

Through a gap analysis, the key finding of the check-in process is that the current strategic plan remains highly relevant with opportunities for refinement in five areas (see Attachment A for details):

- (1) Sharpening the focus on economic resiliency through the addition of two new strategic plan initiatives that focus on the core priorities of business attraction and outreach/support for local enterprises and supporting downtown revitalization:
 - i. Make It Kitchener 2.0 Scoped Refresh – Supporting Economic Resiliency
 - ii. Implementation of the Downtown Safety and Security Action Plan
- (2) Removing two strategic plan initiatives due to limited funding, resource constraints, and the need for clearer understanding of evolving needs:
 - i. Sport and Recreation Master Plan (formerly Leisure Facilities Master Plan), and
 - ii. City-led Recreation & Leisure Program Review
- (3) Further exploring the emerging theme of social resilience as it was a prominent theme in the feedback and a perceived gap by some community members.
- (4) Balancing innovation with operational efficiency and cost-effective service delivery through: (i) the expansion of the City's 2026 Lean training program to up to 50 management staff, (ii) adjusting the scope of the Digital Kitchener Strategy to prioritize Innovation Lab projects that drive efficient and cost-effective service delivery, and (iii) exploring new possibilities with community organizations aligned with strategic priorities, aiming to uncover collaboration and/or knowledge-sharing opportunities and reduce duplication.
- (5) Improving the communication of progress toward strategic goals through the addition of 10 new, outcome-based strategic plan indicators; finalizing targets for 13 remaining indicators; and, improving public transparency through clear data sources.

All remaining themes identified during the check-in process are believed to be sufficiently addressed by current strategic plan initiatives.

5. Conclusion

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- The check-in affirms the strategic plan's strength and relevance while recommending targeted refinements to deepen impact and responsiveness.
- The insights gathered provide momentum and direction for the 2027–2030 strategic planning cycle, reinforcing that refinement of the current plan – not reinvention – is likely an appropriate path forward.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report supports **all strategic plan goal areas**.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

There are no direct financial implications resulting from this report. However, it is anticipated that there may be future costs associated with two new initiatives.

The Make It Kitchener 2.0 refresh will likely incur some costs related to economic modeling and data analysis. This will inform strategic, data-driven decisions as part of the Make It Kitchener 2.0 refresh, with a focus on enhancing economic resilience. Any significant investments emerging from this initiative are expected to be supported through the Economic Development Investment Fund (EDIF).

The implementation of the Downtown Safety & Security Action Plan does not require immediate funding. However, as detailed implementation plans are developed for the 47 actions, some actions may have budget implications that cannot be absorbed through existing approved budgets. Any new funding requests will be presented to Council through a formal report.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

INFORM – This report has been posted to the City's website with the agenda in advance of the council / committee meeting.

CONSULT – 176 Kitchener residents were surveyed as part of the 2025 budget process. Questions were focused on satisfaction with current investments related to the strategic plan and which strategic plan goals are most important to invest in moving forward (Nov 2024).

COLLABORATE – 41 community members participated in a workshop to check-in on the strategic plan using a strategic foresight lens as part of the Spring 2025 All Advisory Committees meeting.

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

- [CAO-2023-337](#) 2023-2026 Strategic Plan Development – Proposed Strategic Plan Content
- [CAO-2024-220](#) Strategic Plan Update – April 2024 Implementation

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Staff Report

Chief Administrator's Office



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- CAO-2024-412 Strategic Plan Update – August 2024 Implementation
- CAO-2025-033 Strategic Plan Update – Winter 2025 Implementation
- CAO-2025-214 Strategic Plan Update – Spring 2025 Implementation

APPROVED BY: Dan Chapman, Chief Administrative Officer

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – Kitchener's Strategic Plan Check-in: Insights and Adjustments at the Midway Mark

KITCHENER'S STRATEGIC PLAN CHECK-IN:

Insights and Adjustments at the Midway Mark

Prepared by:

Helen Kerr

Co-President, KerrSmith Design

**Kerr
Smith**

Margaret Love

Director, Strategy and Corporate Performance, City of Kitchener



FINAL REPORT

July 24, 2025

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Executive Summary

This midway check-in confirms that Kitchener's current strategic plan remains a solid foundation for meeting evolving community needs. While a full-scale revision of the strategic plan is not necessary, a series of focused and deliberate updates will enhance responsiveness to pressing challenges such as housing affordability, economic resilience, and social wellbeing. Key themes identified through the check-in process include:

- **Economic growth, resiliency and prosperity**, with emphasis on supporting local enterprise, workforce development, downtown renewal, and cultural opportunities
- **Housing accessibility and affordability**, including tenant protections and diverse, inclusive housing options
- **Social resilience**, especially in support of youth, vulnerable groups, intergenerational and culturally inclusive communities
- **Public health and wellbeing**, spanning health access, senior services, and quality of life and wellbeing
- **Sustainable development**, balancing growth with climate action, green infrastructure, and economic/affordability considerations
- **Responsible innovation**, ensuring responsible adoption of emerging technologies while ensuring cost-effective service delivery

The table on the following page provides an overview of the strategic plan check-in process, including key insights and outcomes. These insights will be discussed further in this report.

The City is responding to the check-in themes through a pragmatic mix of continued investment in existing initiatives and new strategic additions. These include a scoped refresh of Make It Kitchener 2.0 to support economic resiliency, and the implementation of a Downtown Safety & Security Action Plan. While two existing initiatives are being removed, resources will be reallocated to higher-priority work. A refined approach to strategic plan indicators will improve transparency and outcome-based reporting. Additional actions will be taken outside of the plan to explore emerging themes and opportunities, including social resilience and operational effectiveness/efficiency. These adjustments reinforce the City's adaptive mindset and commitment to community-focused governance.

The insights gathered throughout the check-in process will inform a more streamlined and adaptive approach to developing the 2027–2030 Strategic Plan, building on our current direction rather than starting from scratch.

Table i. Snapshot of Strategic Plan Check-in Process – Insights and Outcomes

	Connected city	Green city	Economically-thriving city	Caring city	Better city
Goal statements	We live in all kinds of neighbourhoods and types of housing. We work together to ensure that we each have secure and affordable homes. We get around easily, sustainably and safely to the places and spaces that matter most to us.	We follow a sustainable path to a greener, healthier city. We work together to enhance and protect our parks and natural environment while transitioning to a low-carbon future. We support businesses and residents to make more climate-positive choices.	We use our collective strengths to grow an agile and diverse local economy powered by talented entrepreneurs, workers and artists. We work together to create opportunities for everyone and a resilient future that propels our city forward.	We welcome residents of all ages, backgrounds and lived experiences. We work together on the decisions that matter to us and have a meaningful influence in our community. We're healthy and thriving as we easily access the diverse and inclusive programs and services we need to succeed.	We, the City's employees, are stewards of Kitchener's present and its future. We're responsive, innovative, diverse and accountable public servants who work together efficiently to serve residents. We remove barriers and champion residents' collective vision for a better city and a better world.
What we heard – challenges and opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Affordable, secure housing• Diverse, inclusive options• Tenant rights, support• Cooperative, multi-generational living	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Balanced growth• Climate resilience planning• Green infrastructure action• Prioritize existing environmental commitments• Inclusive accessibility• More parks and protection of natural areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Economic resilience and growth• Proactive policy adaptation• Urban and cultural renewal• Local business support and business attraction• Workforce skills strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Social inclusion efforts• Civic trust building• Support for vulnerable groups• Culturally inclusive communities• Faith-based supports/services• Respond to aging population• Prioritize wellbeing and quality of life	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responsible tech adoption• Ethical AI governance• Equitable digital access
Existing strategic plan initiatives addressing challenges and opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Housing for All Strategy (next iteration)• Kitchener 2051 - Official Plan Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parks and Tree Canopy (four initiatives)• Clean Energy Strategy• Corporate Climate Action Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pitch Kitchener• Accelerating Commercial Business Approvals• Health Innovation Campus• Creative Industries School• Events, Festivals, Arts and Culture (3 initiatives)• Municipal Newcomer Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Municipal Newcomer Strategy• Enhance city's engagement• practices• Community centre operating model• Community grants review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Digital Kitchener Strategy• City-wide Data Strategy
Adjustments to existing strategic initiatives	None	None	None	Removal of: (1) Sport and Recreation Master Plan and (2) City-led Recreation & Leisure Program Review	The Innovation Lab will prioritize projects that drive cost-effective and efficient city service delivery as part of the Digital Kitchener Strategy.
New strategic plan initiatives	None	None	Addition of: (1) Make It Kitchener 2.0 Scoped Refresh – Supporting Economic Resiliency and (2) Downtown Safety & Security Action Plan	None	None
Actions being taken outside of the plan	None	None	Kitchener's 2026 Budget focuses on affordability, with no new funding for expanded services or staffing	Exploration of opportunities related to 'social resilience' in collaboration with academic partners	Expanding Lean program to drive efficiencies in the delivery of core services
Key indicator insights	Anticipate meeting housing target • Close to intensification target • Increase in transportation injuries • 6 new indicators being added to enhance reporting on housing and trails	Corporate greenhouse gas emissions reduced from -4% in 2023 to -6% in 2024 (target by 2026 is -8%) • Modest decrease in local park area/person • 1 new indicator being added	Unemployment rate rose from 6.6% to 8.2% in 2024 • Four other indicators showed modest gains (1–3%): business start-up and retention, event visitation rates, employment rate, and labour force participation • 1 indicator removed	Increase in the number of older adult-focused programs • Rate of diverse populations participating in programs approx. 20-23% • 2 new indicators being added	Significant increase in customer satisfaction with ease of accessing city services • Positive movement in staff turnover, time to fill positions • 1 new indicator being added

1. Introduction

1.1 Why we're checking in on the Strategic Plan

As part of the adoption of the City's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan, staff made a commitment to check-in at the midway mark to ensure that the plan remains responsive to a rapidly changing world around us and aligned with the needs of the Kitchener community. This process allowed staff to evaluate progress on the implementation the first 30 actions, identify emerging trends, opportunities, and challenges since approval of the plan, and determine if there are any gaps in our strategic plan that require additional adjustments. By proactively adapting to change and refining our priorities, we can strengthen our commitment to effective governance and ensure our strategic plan continues to drive positive outcomes for the city.

1.2 Description of the Check-In Process

1.2.1 Using a strategic foresight lens

Strategic foresight involves a systematic analysis of the driving forces of change, allowing us to anticipate and prepare for future challenges and opportunities. Continuing the approach that was supported during the development of the strategic plan, the City hired a strategic foresight consultant to ensure that our strategic plan remains adaptable and future-ready in the face of a rapidly evolving world. By incorporating this forward-thinking approach into our midway check-in process on the strategic plan, we aimed to assess whether adjustments are needed to keep our plan relevant and effective. Foresight activities generate explicit, contestable, and flexible interpretations of the future, enabling better preparedness and positioning us to find solutions and responses that lead to positive outcomes. Through new imagery of the future, we can reveal and test assumptions about our understanding of the world, ensuring our governance remains proactive rather than reactive. This consultant's expertise helped us evaluate opportunities and refine our strategic plan and reinforce our commitment to sustainable, community-focused decision-making.

1.2.2 Check-in approach

The strategic plan midway check-in focused on validating the relevance of our goals and identifying any emerging trends or challenges that may not be adequately addressed. Staff prioritized a meaningful midway review through a focused engagement approach. Given that more extensive community consultation is planned for 2026 during the next iteration of the strategic plan, staff aimed to avoid engagement fatigue while still ensuring the plan remains responsive to evolving needs. As such, staff leveraged existing data through a variety of survey sources, listened through other strategic consultations, conducted councillor interviews and held four strategic foresight-focused workshops.

1.2.3 Central questions guiding the midway check-in process

The central questions that staff explored as part of the midway check-in were:

- How are we doing on our implementation of the first 30 actions?
- What has changed since the plan was adopted in August 2023?
- Are there any emerging community needs that aren't addressed in the current set of strategic plan actions?

- Are there emerging issues or changes in the operating environment we should be anticipating, or preparing for?
- Should adjustments be made to any existing actions or are any new actions needed?

These questions ensured feedback was comprehensive, timely, and locally specific, while maintaining a longer-term outlook.

1.2.4 Methodology

Kitchener Strategic Plan Mid-Way Check In

Our Approach

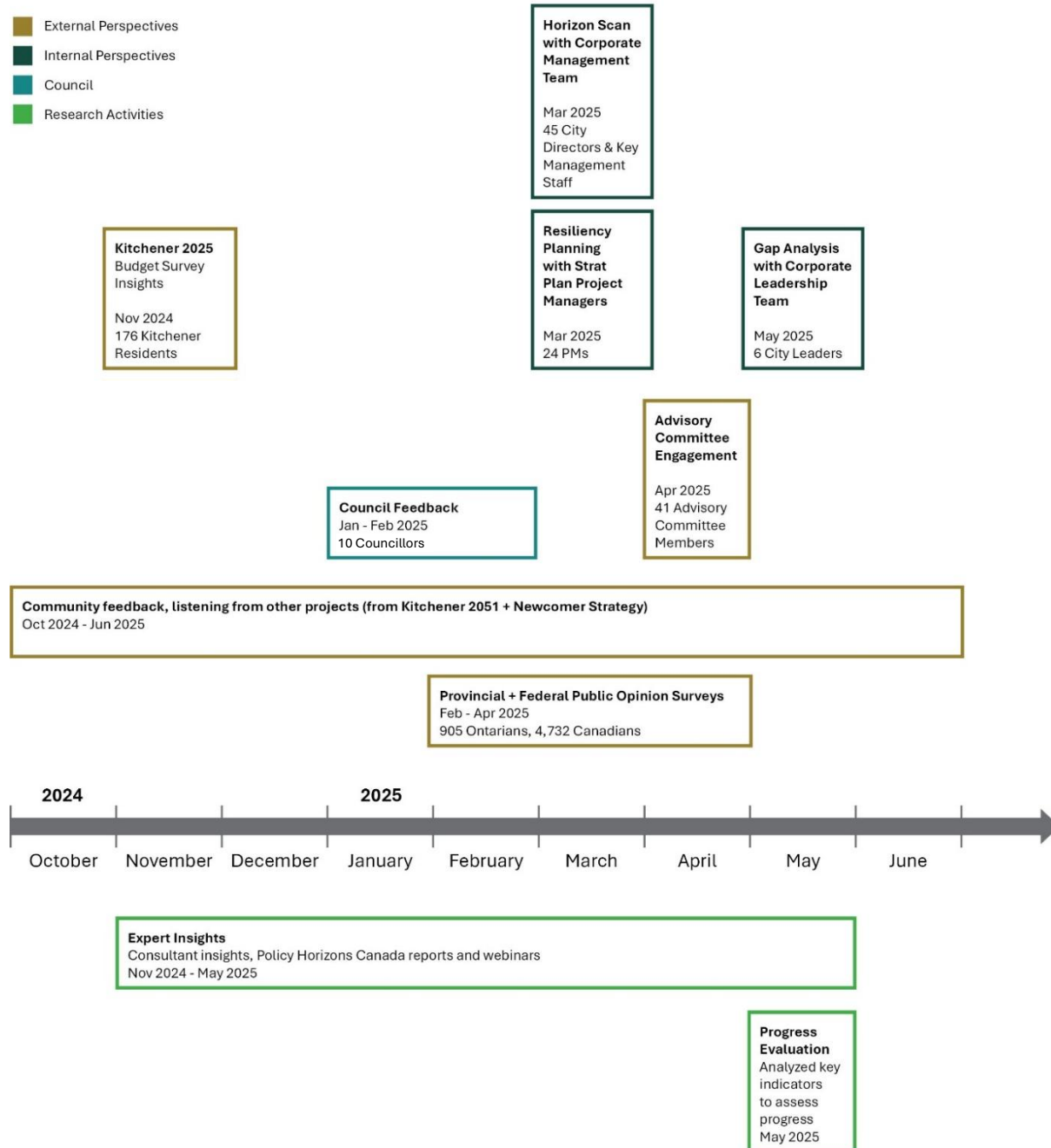


Figure 1. Strategic Plan Check-in Approach

To ensure a well-rounded and informed strategic plan check-in process, this approach integrated diverse perspectives from internal teams, external stakeholders, and expert insights. The methodology emphasizes engagement, data analysis, and foresight to guide decision-making and measure progress effectively.

2. Progress on the current strategic plan

2.1 Snapshot of Progress

A snapshot of the City’s strategic plan progress is shown in the table, below.

Table 1. Strategic Plan Progress Snapshot

Year	Continuing Initiatives (Prev. Year)	New Initiatives (Original Plan)	New Initiatives (Midway Check-in)	Total In-Progress	Completed	Continuing (Next Year)	Delayed
2023	N/A	13	N/A	13	0	13	0
2024	13	10	N/A	23	2	21	2
2025	21	6*	2	29	1 to-date; 7 additional anticipated**	21	0 as-of the completion of this report
2026	21	0	0	21	21 anticipated	0	0 anticipated

Notes:

*Of the 7 remaining initiatives set to start in 2025, one is recommended for removal from the strategic plan before its start-date in Sept 2025.

**While 8 additional initiatives were anticipated to be completed by the end of 2025, one is being recommended for removal from the strategic plan.

The observations below illustrate how the City has maintained disciplined execution while remaining responsive to evolving priorities:

- Since the plan’s approval in August 2023, the City has demonstrated a disciplined and phased approach to implementation.
- The rollout of initiatives reflects a deliberate balance between workload and capacity.
- The initial years focused on building momentum, with the plan reaching operational maturity in 2025.
- Ongoing, multi-year initiatives underscore the plan’s deliberate and strategic design – over half of the initiatives are complex, long-term efforts intentionally structured to deliver phased outcomes over time.
- Delays have been minimal - only two.
- The addition of two new initiatives and the removal of two initiatives during the 2025 midway check-in – both of which are described further in this report - demonstrates the City’s ability to adapt and refine its strategy based on evolving opportunities and challenges —without disrupting overall progress of the remaining initiatives.

- The 2026 outlook is focused entirely on completing existing work, with no new initiatives planned to start in 2026. This signals a disciplined close-out phase and a commitment to delivering tangible results before embarking on a new strategic planning cycle.

2.2 Progress Indicators/Measures of Success

In September 2024, the City introduced its first set of strategic plan indicators to enhance transparency and communicate progress toward achieving the five strategic goals outlined in the plan. These indicators are available at kitchener.ca/ourplanprogress. The following summarizes the most notable highlights from implementation to date:

- Of the 27 strategic indicators, 7 cannot currently be measured or reported due to various limitations—such as lack of historical data, infrequent data collection cycles, tracking not yet initiated, or the need for more time to gather and analyze results. Of the remaining indicators, 8 are trending in a negative direction, 11 are showing positive movement, and 1 has remained unchanged but continues to reflect a positive outcome.
- While data is being tracked for the majority of indicators, assessing progress remains challenging as targets are still under development for approximately 50% of them.
- The City anticipates meeting its annual housing target, though final counts are still pending.
- Although there has been a decline in residential development within built-up areas between 2023 and 2024, the City is just 3% below its 60% intensification target.
- While the unemployment rate rose from 6.6% in 2023 to 8.2% in 2024, four other economic indicators showed modest gains (1–3%): business start-up and retention activity, event visitation rates, employment rate, and labour force participation.
- The number of older adult-focused programs offered across City neighbourhoods increased by approximately 26% between winter/spring 2024 and winter/spring 2025.
- Customer satisfaction with ease of accessing City services rose significantly - from 59% in 2023 to 82% in 2024.
- The permanent staff turnover rate decreased by approximately 22.5%, and the time to fill full-time permanent positions dropped by 15.5% between 2023 and 2024.

3. What was heard/learned through the check-in process

3.1 Expert Insights

Resilient preparation for the future requires consideration of emerging issues that may impact the governance and operations of cities like Kitchener. Exposure to concurrent risks have the potential to disrupt city management. By regularly monitoring these transitions and considering their potential significance for city wide responsibilities, Kitchener will position itself to be more economically tenacious and socially adaptable. Some key issues to consider over the remainder of the strategic plan period include the following:



Localized impacts of global geopolitical unrest

- Conflicts between rival states are erupting worldwide and increasingly are carried into the Canadian context.
- Protests regarding gov't involvement
- Fears of war, border protection escalate, immigration support shifts.

Relevance for Kitchener:

- Increased public safety measures and costs
- Increased demand for law and order
- Impact on public mental health
- Tensions over freedom of speech



Agentic AI and the spread of advanced technology

- Cities are using automated digital service delivery and improving systems such as traffic, water use, energy management and crime prediction. Concentration of foreign tech influence is a risk.

Relevance for Kitchener:

- Reduced costs for many services
- Exposure to cyber crime, more secure digital infrastructure required
- User data privacy and protection
- Adaptation of City resourcing/roles



Increase in severe weather events and climate impacts

- Storms, flooding, extreme heat will affect populations and infrastructure.
- Higher insurance costs, road closures, building repairs.

- Staff may not be performing well or have more absences due to strain

Relevance for Kitchener:

- More structural maintenance costs
- Procurement of knowledgeable and affordable contractors is difficult
- Canopy at risk and public health benefits of nature affected



Perception of Over-governance

- Erosion of public trust
- Demand for streamlined and efficient gov't services globally
- Budgetary alignment with reduced taxes

Relevance for Kitchener:

- Potential workforce reductions while specialized requirements for tech expertise rise
- Human resources will be strained
- Transparent reporting is critical



Affordability and supply chain disruptions

- Tariffs, global trade shifts
- Job losses in affected industries
- Income growth not keeping pace with cost-of-living increases

Relevance for Kitchener:

- Increased costs for supplies, delays in repairs and new builds
- Buy Canadian approach may complicate procurement and impact timing



Public Health strain, more infectious disease outbreaks

- Less provincial monitoring and increased vaccine hesitancy impacts disease management

- Addiction and mental health requires attention. Workforce burnout is high

Relevance for Kitchener:

- Public health issues intersect with provincial health stresses.
- Vulnerable populations especially at risk. Threat to social fabric requires attention.

3.2 Top 5 themes from midway check-in feedback

The key themes identified through interviews, surveys, workshops, and insights from related projects are summarized below. Notably, the economy and housing consistently ranked among the top five themes across all engagement methods, while other themes appeared prominently in several, but not all, sources.

The top 5 themes should not be read as a set of new strategic priorities for the City - there is strong alignment between the top themes and the City's current strategic plan, reinforcing the relevance and responsiveness of the current plan. While most challenges and opportunities align with ongoing priorities, a few emerging or evolving areas – particularly new economic pressures and the growing importance of social resilience – have surfaced as key considerations for deeper exploration.

Table 2. Top 5 themes from check-in process in order of priority

Top 5 Themes	Key insights	
1 Economic Growth, Resiliency and Prosperity	Goal Alignment: Creating an economically thriving city together	Overview: Reinforce strategic focus on business development and business outreach and supports for local enterprise, especially small businesses
2 Housing Accessibility and Affordability	Goal Alignment: Building a connected city together	Overview: Improvements made but more required
		Challenges and Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening economic resilience through cost control, job creation, and diversified industry growth • Adapting to shifting political and global landscapes with proactive policies and education • Revitalizing urban life by investing in downtown development and city-wide cultural opportunities • Supporting local businesses and attracting new businesses via improved infrastructure, supply chain solutions, and tailored support • Future-proofing the workforce through skills development and talent retention
		Challenges and Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving housing affordability and access to address homelessness and insecurity • Creating diverse and inclusive housing options that reflect evolving community needs • Enhancing tenant protections and supportive housing services • Fostering community through multi-generational and cooperative living

Top 5 Themes	Key insights	
3 Social Resilience	Goal Alignment: Fostering a caring city together	Overview: Incorporate enablers of belonging, wellbeing and cohesion, and leverage partnerships to build connections and support for social good
	Challenges and Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening social cohesion and inclusion to counter isolation, racism, and polarization • Building trust in government institutions and civic life through participation and transparency • Supporting vulnerable groups, especially disengaged youth and socially isolated individuals • Promoting intergenerational and culturally inclusive communities • Leveraging existing faith-based supports and services to foster connection, belonging and well-being 	
4a Public health and wellbeing (tied with 4b)	Goal Alignment: Fostering a caring city	Overview: Large multi-layered concern (Federal, Provincial, Regional, Local)
	Challenges and Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Responding to an aging population with increased senior support • Prioritizing quality of life and wellbeing for a healthier, more productive community • Expanding access to inclusive healthcare and mental health services* • Addressing healthcare workforce shortages and improving system capacity* <p><i>*While these were identified as important challenges in the Region, they fall outside of the scope of the City's direct service delivery mandate and are not within the City's span of control.</i></p>	

Top 5 Themes	Key insights	
4b Sustainable Development (tied with 4a)	Goal Alignment: Cultivating a green city together	Overview: Urgent need for continued environmental improvements BUT awareness of affordability remains
	Challenges and Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advancing sustainable urban development that balances growth, ecological responsibility and economic constraints • Enhancing climate resilience through adaptation, green infrastructure, and clean energy • Prioritizing environmental commitments and expanding parks and biodiversity • Improving citywide accessibility for inclusive, livable communities • Navigating resource and energy instability while integrating environmental stewardship into economic planning 	
5 Responsible Innovation	Goal Alignment: Stewarding a better city together	Overview: Careful integration of new tech required
	Challenges and Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leveraging and responsibly integrating emerging technologies like AI and cybersecurity, while keeping pace with rapid digital advancements • Ensuring ethical use and governance of technologies like AI and cybersecurity • Boosting digital literacy for equitable access and community inclusion • Balancing innovation with cost-effective service delivery 	

While already reflected in the themes above, several specific examples of how staff listened and learned throughout the check-in process are highlighted in more detail below.

3.3 Listening through other community engagement initiatives

As part of the midway check-in, staff have also been listening through two related strategic initiatives – Kitchener 2051 and the Municipal Newcomer Strategy - both of which are actively exploring residents’ vision for the city. While both projects are ongoing, preliminary findings indicate strong alignment with the goals outlined in the City’s strategic plan.

Table 3. What we heard through other projects

Initiative	Engagement Level	Focus	Key Insights
Municipal Newcomer Strategy	450+ participants	Newcomer experiences and needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong alignment with broader feedback on employment, small business support, housing, and belonging Other themes are newcomer-specific and will be addressed in the strategy
Kitchener 2051	1,600+ participants	Long-term vision for city growth and resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified 5 shared community values that had strong alignment with broader feedback: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordability Access and Inclusion Thoughtful and Resilient Growth Safe and Sustainable Mobility Mutual Care and Belonging

3.4 City of Kitchener 2025 Budget Survey

In fall 2024, the City launched a public budget survey to gauge satisfaction with investments in its five strategic goal areas and identify priorities for future funding. Key findings follow.

Table 4. City of Kitchener 2025 Budget Survey

Insight Area	Key Findings
Goal areas	Relatively equal importance across all goal areas in terms of new investments
Satisfaction Levels	Satisfaction with current investments across four goal areas ranged from 42% to 55%; lowest for “Stewarding a Better City Together” (34%)
Strategic Priorities	Housing & homelessness, the economy, and accessibility were identified as top priorities

Public Feedback

Mixed views on bike infrastructure; calls for better transit, tax restraint, and focus on core services and finding efficiencies

4. Existing strategic plan initiatives addressing feedback from the midway check-in

The feedback gathered through the strategic plan check-in affirms that the city is on the right track – there is strong alignment between the community’s current priorities, as articulated in the City’s current strategic plan, and the initiatives already underway. Notably, the economy emerged as the top priority, reflecting both its importance to residents and the broader uncertainty driven by global and geopolitical factors. Housing accessibility and affordability followed closely, underscoring the urgency of addressing local needs in a rapidly changing environment.

The existing strategic plan includes a robust set of initiatives that directly support these priorities. The table below highlights key initiatives already in motion that are well-positioned to address many of the community’s most pressing concerns and continue to guide our work moving forward.

Table 5: Existing Strategic Initiatives Supporting Feedback from the Midway Check-in

Focus Area	Current Initiative(s)	Description
Economic Growth, Resilience and Prosperity	<i>Pitch Kitchener</i>	Supports innovative procurement with local start-ups.
	<i>Accelerating Commercial Business Approvals</i>	Implementation of 55 improvements to streamline approvals and help businesses open faster is underway.
	<i>Health Innovation Campus (UW) & Creative Industries School (Conestoga)</i>	Two strategic collaborations to support innovation, education, and economic development.
	<i>Events, Festivals, Arts & Culture Initiatives</i>	Three strategic initiatives underway as part of the city’s strategic plan to enhance vibrancy, tourism, and investment.
	<i>Municipal Newcomer Strategy</i>	Includes a strategic focus on economic prosperity for newcomers, including employment and small business support.
Housing Accessibility and Affordability	<i>Housing for All Strategy</i>	44 objectives have been achieved or substantially achieved. A new Housing Needs Assessment is underway to inform Kitchener 2051 (Official Plan). A refreshed Housing for All work plan is in development.

Focus Area	Current Initiative(s)	Description
	<i>Official Plan Review (Kitchener 2051)</i>	Explores how the city should grow, move, adapt, and thrive over the coming decades, and provides insights to guide future housing policies.
Social Resilience	<i>Municipal Newcomer Strategy</i>	Focuses on welcoming newcomers to Canada, including identifying needed supports related to economic prosperity, cultural inclusion, and active community participation
	<i>Enhance the City's engagement practices</i>	Explores ways to enhance engagement practices to increase diverse representation, with a focus on more deliberate and collaboration approaches as well as ongoing relationship-building with equity deserving communities
	<i>Community centre operating model</i>	Streamline community centre operations to expand and diversify programs and other supports —especially in under-served neighbourhoods.
	<i>Community grants review</i>	Explore how the City utilizes its community grant program to better support community groups working on priorities that are aligned with the City's Strategic Plan.
Sustainable Development	<i>Parks & Tree Canopy Initiatives</i>	There are currently four strategic plan initiatives focused on enhancing green space and urban canopy across the city.
	<i>Clean Energy Transition Strategy</i>	Supports the shift to renewable energy and low-carbon systems.
	<i>Corporate Climate Action Plan 2.0</i>	Guiding the City's internal climate mitigation and adaptation efforts.
Responsible Innovation	<i>Digital Kitchener Strategy</i>	Aims to enhance digital service delivery, improve connectivity, and support digital equity across the community.
	<i>City-wide Data Strategy</i>	Focuses on improving data governance, accessibility, and analytics to support evidence-based decision-making and transparency.
	<i>Procurement Innovation</i>	Supports innovative procurement with local start-ups.

Note: Public Health and Wellbeing is not explicitly listed as a theme aligning with the current strategic plan in the table above, as it is a cross-cutting priority supported by multiple strategic plan

goal areas. The majority of feedback related to this theme centred on issues such as healthcare workforce shortages and inclusive access to primary and mental healthcare – areas that fall outside of the City’s direct service mandate. However, the strategic plan is expected to contribute positively to community health and wellbeing through numerous initiatives that enhance inclusion, social connection, sustainable development, and housing.

5. Opportunities to respond to the midway check-in feedback

Building on insights gathered throughout the internal and external midway check-in engagement, potential areas for improvement to the plan were noted. As a follow-up, a more focused and detailed gap analysis was undertaken. Through this process, several strategic opportunities were identified to respond to the most pressing challenges facing the city, to ensure the current plan remains responsive and results-driven.

SHARPENING ECONOMIC FOCUS

- Renewed focus on core priorities of business attraction and providing business outreach and support to local enterprises.
- Support revitalization of the downtown.

SOCIAL RESILIENCE

- Explore additional areas within the theme of social resilience that are within the City’s service mandate, including the valuable contributions of faith-based organizations and identifying opportunities to collaborate or complement rather than duplicate.

MEASURING AND COMMUNICATING PROGRESS

- Make improvements to how progress on the strategic plan is tracked and shared with the community to increase transparency, accountability and trust.

OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCIES

- Identify ways to reduce municipal spending through innovation and operational efficiencies.

Section 6 of this report outlines a series of recommended actions based on these opportunities, including adjustments to the strategic plan as well as complementary initiatives that may be pursued outside of it.

6. Recommendations

While no major overhaul is required, several targeted adjustments will help us leverage the identified opportunities in section 5 of this report and deepen our impact.

6.1 Proposed changes to existing strategic plan initiatives

Remove the Sport and Recreation Master Plan (formerly Leisure Facilities Master Plan) and City-led Recreation & Leisure Program Review

The recommendation to remove the Sport and Recreation Master Plan and City-led Recreation and Leisure Program Review from the current strategic plan emerged as a need during the Corporate Leadership Team workshop in May and reflects a pragmatic response to shifting priorities, resource constraints, and external pressures. While the intent behind these bodies of work remains important, competing priorities and a high degree of financial uncertainty make their timely development and implementation unfeasible.

Several factors contribute to this recommendation:

1. Limited funding to implement recommendations of these two reviews in the short and medium-term: The new Kitchener Indoor Recreation Complex (KIRC) is the single largest capital project ever undertaken by the City (\$174M). The City's portion of that budget is funded through debt that will be repaid through development charge revenue collected over the next 10-15 years. The City will not have sufficient funding to implement any new growth-related indoor recreation projects in the short or medium-term as a result of limited development charge funding. For this reason, staff do not believe it would be prudent to conduct these reviews and raise stakeholder expectations.
2. Staff resources re-allocated to preparing to open and operate KIRC next year: Substantial staff resources have been reallocated to support the planning and operational readiness of KIRC over the next 18 months. This includes the two project managers that had previously been assigned to lead the Sport and Recreation Master Plan and the City-led Recreation and Leisure Program Review. In addition, all the senior staff that would be involved in helping to move these two reviews forward are heavily involved in preparing to open KIRC.
3. KIRC will have a significant impact on the City's provision of sport, recreation and leisure programming at many of its other facilities: As the second-largest recreation facility operated by the City, KIRC will introduce a substantial volume of new community programming, which will influence participation patterns and program delivery at other facilities. Given this anticipated shift, it is important to allow time for the City to operate KIRC and assess its broader impacts before undertaking comprehensive reviews. Deferring the Sport and Recreation Master Plan and the City-led Recreation and Leisure Program Review will enable a more informed and strategic approach, grounded in a clearer understanding of evolving user needs and trends.

It is therefore recommended that these two strategic plan initiatives be removed from the current plan and reconsidered as part of the next strategic planning cycle for the next iteration of the plan (2027-2030).

Scope Adjustment: Digital Kitchener Strategy

To reflect current fiscal realities and community priorities, a scope adjustment is recommended for the Digital Kitchener Strategy. As part of the development of the strategy, the Innovation Lab will prioritize initiatives that enhance the cost effectiveness and efficiency of city service delivery. This shift ensures that the City continues to deliver high-quality, accessible services while responding to cost-of-living concerns and maintaining prudent use of public funds.

This adjustment also aligns with the broader goals of the Digital Kitchener Strategy, which is focused on co-creating a digital future with the community. As the City explores emerging technologies—such as AI—to improve equity, sustainability, and service innovation, this refined focus will help ensure that digital investments are both impactful and aligned with what matters most to residents.

Remaining strategic plan initiatives

All remaining strategic plan initiatives will continue as planned and are expected to proceed according to the timelines presented to Council in May 2025. Any future adjustments will be communicated through the regular strategic plan reporting cycle, which occurs three times per year.

6.2 New initiatives to be added to the Strategic Plan

To further strengthen economic vitality in Kitchener, two new strategic initiatives are being recommended. These projects reflect a return to core priorities - supporting local businesses and revitalizing the downtown - by addressing the foundational elements that drive a thriving urban economy. In response to ongoing economic challenges and community feedback, the City is sharpening its focus on practical, high-impact actions that reinforce business development and create a safe, vibrant downtown environment.

Table 6: Make it Kitchener 2.1 Scoped Refresh

Category	Details
Project Title	Make It Kitchener 2.0 Scoped Refresh – Supporting Economic Resiliency
Project Description	Approaching the mid-way mark of the 10-year Make It Kitchener 2.0 economic development strategy, and given the significant economic factors currently at play, it is essential that the areas of focus be evaluated to determine if they are still relevant and to determine if any new initiatives are required to respond to the current economic climate.

Category	Details
Project Lead	Lauren Chlumsky, Economic Development Analyst
Timeline	Start: July 2025 End: March 2026
2025 Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage a consultant to understand the macro-economic challenges and opportunities for Kitchener's economy Engage key local business leaders and industry experts to gain their perspective on the current state of the economy Engage Council in a strategic discussion on the current areas of focus and any new emerging priorities
2026 Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and present to Council a Make It Kitchener 2.1 document for approval
Key Considerations of the Refresh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation of the following economic impacts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trade and tariff war High commercial interest rates Predicted recession 'Hybrid work' on the Downtown office market Declining enrollment in international students Slowing development/construction Prioritization of short- and medium-term actions to respond to the economic impacts Anticipated immediate focus on economic resiliency through business outreach and supports for local enterprises

Table 7: Downtown Safety & Security Action Plan

Category	Details
Project Title	Implementation of the Downtown Safety & Security Action Plan
Project Description	A multi-year, collaborative initiative to enhance business vitality in Downtown Kitchener. The plan aims to create a welcoming, vibrant downtown through targeted business support, strengthened enforcement, improved coordination, and proactive promotion.

Category	Details
Project Lead	Aaron McCrimmon-Jones, Manager, Corporate Projects (Interim)
Timeline	Start: February 2025 End: December 2026
2025 Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop the action plan with partners and initiate quick wins (Winter/Spring 2025) • Initiate short-term actions (Summer/Fall 2025) • Develop resource and mobilization plan for longer-term actions (Fall 2025 - onward)
2026 Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement and evaluate initiatives • Maintain accountability with strategic partners • Monitor progress and impact
Key Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support downtown businesses to help them thrive • Enhanced enforcement to address disturbances • Improve safety through collaboration, data, and maintenance efforts • Appropriate spaces and support for the vulnerable population • Marketing and promotion to amplify the positive and authentic narrative of DTK • Enhance vibrancy through public realm improvements

6.3 Emerging themes for further exploration

Engagement feedback highlighted two important themes that extended beyond the current scope of the City’s strategic plan initiatives. These themes present an opportunity for further research and exploration.

Social Resilience

Social resilience refers to an individual’s and community’s ability to withstand, adapt to, and recover from challenges, disruptions, or changes – e.g., economic shifts, public health crises, climate events, or social tensions – while maintaining and strengthening social cohesion, inclusion/belonging, and overall well-being.

While this was a recurring theme, further exploration is required to identify meaningful actions that align with the City’s role and scope of influence. To support this work, staff are actively exploring opportunities for academic partnerships to conduct research and develop a deeper understanding

of this theme. Potential areas of focus, as identified during the midway check-in engagement, include:

- Explore potential areas within the theme of social resilience within the City’s mandate.
- Explore best practices and success stories in other jurisdictions.
- Explore the role of faith-based organizations in supporting social resilience and how the City might collaborate or complement rather than duplicate efforts.

Operational Efficiencies

In addition to enhancing efficiencies through the City’s Digital Kitchener Innovation Lab, the City is also undertaking the following initiatives in 2025/2026:

- Exploring collaborations with academic institutions to conduct research on community organizations operating in areas aligned with the City’s strategic priorities. This initiative may help identify new partnership and knowledge-sharing opportunities as well as highlight areas where efforts could be streamlined to avoid duplication.
- Expanding LEAN training across city management teams to foster continuous improvement and operational excellence (50 staff to be trained in 2026).

These exploratory efforts will help inform potential future recommendations – and the next iteration of the strategic plan – and ensure that any proposed actions are grounded in evidence and aligned with the City’s capacity to influence outcomes.

It is important to emphasize that Kitchener continues to face affordability challenges as a tariff-impacted community, with residents and businesses affected by ongoing trade-related financial pressures. For this reason, the 2026 Budget will prioritize maintaining affordability, aligning with Council’s approach of delivering reasonable tax rate increases for Kitchener residents. While key corporate growth pressures have been accounted for, no additional funding will be available for new growth initiatives, program expansions, or staffing.

6.4 Check-in and adjustments to strategic plan indicators

As part of our ongoing commitment to transparency and continuous improvement, staff are conducting a focused review of the City’s strategic plan indicators. This work responds to feedback from the strategic plan’s midway check-in, which highlighted a need to better understand the impacts and outcomes associated with each goal area.

Key highlights

- **Targeted adjustments**
Strategic adjustments are being made to improve clarity and better communicate outcomes.
- **Updated indicators**
Existing indicators were refreshed with available data from 2024 and published in July.

- **Removal of indicators**

The strategic plan indicator **Density Near Major Transit Station Areas** has been removed from kitchener.ca/ourplanprogress as the volume of data required to clearly communicate this metric makes it better suited for detailed reporting in the City's Annual Growth Monitoring Report.

- **Staff engagement is underway to support the identification of additional outcome-based indicators** that the City can influence, including:

1. City-wide density
2. Rental vacancies
3. Housing pledge data
4. Housing suitability
5. Total connected kilometres on all ages and abilities (AAA) cycling route
6. # users at major connections on the downtown cycling grid
7. Employee engagement index
8. # people who access inclusion support services
9. # Leisure Access Program users
10. Average age of playgrounds in city parks

- **Strengthening indicator reporting through:**

1. Finalization of 13 indicators that still require defined targets
2. Improved public transparency through clear data sources

- **Benefits of indicator updates**

These updates and refinements will help staff:

- Improve progress tracking
- Enhance decision-making
- Better demonstrate impact
- Proactively address gaps and build on successes
- Improve overall efficiency and effectiveness

Indicator data will continue to be updated on an annual basis, with the next update in Spring 2026.

7. Concluding remarks & key takeaways

Through this midway check-in, Kitchener remains focused on what matters most: delivering tangible outcomes today while building resilience for the future.

The check-in confirms that Kitchener's current strategic direction remains a strong foundation for addressing the evolving needs of our community. Rather than pivoting from our current trajectory, we are choosing to deepen our impact and responsiveness through targeted refinements, recognizing the importance of staying flexible and responsive to rapid external changes.

The themes that surfaced – economic growth, resiliency and prosperity, housing accessibility and affordability, social resilience, public health and wellbeing, sustainable development, and responsible innovation – are pillars of a thriving, future-ready city. Through measured adjustments,

such as refining initiatives, adding new actions, and updating performance indicators, we are taking thoughtful steps to deepen our impact in each of these areas without diverting from the core direction we've already established.

Looking ahead, this check-in also lays the groundwork for our 2027-2030 plan. It reinforces a shift in mindset - from viewing strategic plans as fixed roadmaps to embracing them as adaptive frameworks. The insights gathered through this process will help inform our broader engagement strategy in 2026, enabling a more streamlined and focused planning approach. The insights gathered as part of this check-in process provide momentum and direction for the 2027–2030 strategic planning cycle, reinforcing that refinement of the current plan – not reinvention – is likely an appropriate path forward.

REPORT TO: Finance and Corporate Services Committee

DATE OF MEETING: August 11, 2025

SUBMITTED BY: Andrea Hallam, Manager, Arts & Creative Industries

PREPARED BY: Elin Moorlag, Manager, Service Coordination & Improvement, Community Services Department

WARD(S) INVOLVED: Ward 5

DATE OF REPORT: August 1, 2025

REPORT NO.: DSD-2025-263

SUBJECT: Kitchener Indoor Recreation Facility Public Artwork Commission

RECOMMENDATION:

That the commission and installation of a new artwork “Gidinawendimin” by Jackie Traverse, at the City of Kitchener’s new indoor recreation complex at RBJ Schlegel Park, be approved; and,

That the Mayor and Clerk be authorized to implement an agreement, satisfactory to the City Solicitor, with the artists’ representative, Highness Global Inc., outlining the obligations of the facility public art commission.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to provide Council with a recommendation for a public art commission for the Kitchener Indoor Recreation Complex.
- The recommendation for this public art commission was made by a jury of Kitchener arts professionals assembled for the purpose of selecting public art for the facility; the recommendation by this jury has been unanimously endorsed by the City’s *Arts & Culture Advisory Committee*
- The financial implication is \$320,000 from the consolidated public art account.
- Community engagement included a diverse jury composition as well as consultation with the *Arts and Culture Advisory Committee* and *Public Art Working Group*.
- This report supports the delivery of core services through the 1% for Public Art Policy.

BACKGROUND:

City of Kitchener’s public art program is focused on the selection and installation of site-specific artworks at newly constructed facilities such as libraries, community centres, sports and recreation facilities, fire stations, parking garages and other public civic buildings and spaces. These artworks include permanent installations in a wide variety of styles and materials, selected with the preference for artistic merit and innovation, site responsiveness, public engagement and accessibility, durability and sustainability.

Kitchener's forthcoming new indoor recreation complex is eligible for a public artwork allotment through the City of Kitchener's percent for public art program, guided by the Public Art Policy (GOV-COR-816). Once complete, this facility will be Kitchener's premier indoor recreation destination, providing a diverse selection of recreational opportunities for residents, including an aquatics centre with two pools, an indoor turf, two cricket practice nets, a walking track, a quad gymnasium, multi-purpose rooms for community use and dedicated team change rooms. The facility is expected to attract more than 570,000 visits per year, including more than 100,000 event-related visitors.

This facility will be the City's first ever net-zero carbon sport and recreation building and one of the most environmentally sustainable recreation facilities in Canada. Envisioned as a sports venue where community comes together, this facility will serve as a gathering place, thoughtfully designed to be comfortable, welcoming and accessible for the diverse needs of Kitchener residents.

The open call for proposals that went out for this commission aimed to prioritize submissions from underrepresented artists, including those by artists of Indigenous background. The proposal submission process allowed artists to self-identify as a member of an equity-deserving group, including but not limited to, Indigenous identity, racialized people, immigrants and refugees, women, 2SLGBTQ+ identified, and people living with disabilities.

While the open public art call was underway, City staff from the facility design and construction team also explored opportunities for invitational art commissions in other areas of the recreation complex identified as benefiting from artistic enhancement. Given the facility's size, scope, and overall budget, additional funds were allocated for this purpose, and consideration was given that artists submitting to the open call could also be considered potential candidates for these invitational commissions.

REPORT:

The Kitchener Indoor Recreation Complex art competition was open to artists or artist collaborations with experience in creating site-responsive public art projects. A commission of \$300,000 was available, which promotional content indicated must be used to cover the artist's or collaborative's design and production fees, insurance and legal costs, materials, fabrication and subcontractors' costs, studio, storage and installation expenses, including transportation of artwork to the site, any required official documentation, and any travel expenses.

Staff in Arts and Creative Industries (A&CI) assembled a jury to recommend one proposal from those submitted to the selection process for the Kitchener Indoor Recreation Complex. Jurors for this commission were considered carefully, and included the following members:

- Rick Haldenby (representative from the City of Kitchener's citizen advisory Public Art Working Group & Professor of Architecture at the University of Waterloo School of Architecture)
- Danille Byers (representative from the Kitchener Soccer Club)
- Logan MacDonald (Kitchener citizen & professional artist & Canada Research Chair in Indigenous Art at the University of Waterloo's department of Fine Arts)
- Margaret Lam (representative and past chair of the City of Kitchener's Arts & Culture Advisory Committee)

- Soheila Esfahani (Kitchener citizen & professional visual artist & curator)
- Elin Moorlag (City of Kitchener staff & representative from the facility design & construction team)
- Margaret Johnston (Ward 8 councillor for City of Kitchener)

Open Public Art Competition

A two-stage public art competition for the Kitchener Indoor Recreation Complex was announced in August 2024. An open call for expressions of interest was posted and promoted on the City's website for 90 days from August 7, 2024 to November 4, 2024. Of all the Expression of Interests received, one-third of submissions were eliminated due to a failure to include all eligibility requirements, misinterpreting the commission available, or otherwise not aligning with the A&CI team's preference to realize a made-in-Canada proposal. After completing a comprehensive review of all expressions of interest, staff identified 28 proposals that were eligible, which were then reviewed and rated by members of the jury.

From December 2024 to February 2025, jurors independently reviewed and rated submissions. In February the jury met to discuss the highest-rated 10 to 12 proposals in detail, and as a first step, five artists were selected and discussed further as potential candidates for the next round of consideration. Three of those top five artists were asked to provide more detailed and in-depth concepts of the artwork they proposed in the first round for a suspended artwork located in the main lobby, based on the project team's preference for animating that space. Each of the three artists selected were paid the stage-two fee of \$2,500 to develop this second-round concept.

In May 2025, the three shortlisted proposals from the second round for suspended artwork in the main lobby were presented to the public art jury for final deliberation. Each concept demonstrated artistic merit and originality; however, the jury encountered a significant challenge due to major design changes to the facility since the open call was issued in August 2024. Most notably, the addition of a quad gymnasium altered the spatial character of the lobby. Originally envisioned as a light-filled, open area with exterior windows on one side, the lobby is now fully enclosed, bordered by the gymnasium on one side, the aquatics centre on the other, with the registration area, stairwell, and corridor to the indoor turf field directly ahead from the main entrance.

Given these substantive design changes, and after careful consideration of how each proposed suspended artwork would function in the newly configured space, the jury decided to terminate the public art competition, which the City has the express right to do at any time throughout an open call process as per Public Art Policy GOV-COR-816.

Additional Artwork for the Facility

Responding to the team's interest in pursuing additional artworks for the facility, city staff began coordinating a new location opportunity within the facility by inviting a revised pitch from one of the artists identified by the jury as the top five contenders in the first round, contemporary Indigenous artist Jackie Traverse. The proposal submitted in response to the open call by this artist was no longer feasible due to design changes in the facility, but members of the jury were supportive of city staff reaching out to this artist to explore a

potential invitational commission. That artist's representation firm, Highness Global Inc., had recently completed installation of Nyle Johnston and Isaac Murdoch's *Wintertime Stories* at KPL Southwest, and were asked to prepare a new proposal for a feature wall inside the aquatic centre.

In response to this request, Traverse's proposal, *Gidinawendimin* (see Appendix A), was presented to city staff and was shared with members of the jury as a potential alternative once the public art call process was terminated. The proposal outlined a 95-square-metre tile mosaic featuring four women interwoven with flowing lines of water, rendered in vibrant blues with black and white accents. Following a fulsome discussion, the jury unanimously recommended proceeding with this artwork as an invitation-based public art commission, with the funding originally allocated to the suspended artwork competition to be redirected to support this installation. While this recommendation marks a departure from the initial direction for the public art commission, the jury was confident that this striking piece of art will be a powerful and fitting addition to the Kitchener Indoor Recreation Complex, as captured in the jury statement below.

Jury Statement

***Gidinawendimin* by Jackie Traverse will be a stunning addition to the Kitchener Indoor Recreation Complex. The beauty and depth of this piece tell a story that will be broadly appreciated, and the theme of the work fits beautifully with the overall architectural style of the facility and the aquatics centre.**

Covering a 95-square-meter space (roughly 70 feet across), the mosaic tile piece captures the theme of women and water, featuring four figures interwoven with the flowing lines of water on a palate of bright and vibrant blue tones with white and black accent. Not only does this piece have incredible artistic appeal, it is also a fitting, durable and practical choice for the facility, requiring very little ongoing maintenance. In particular, the use of vitreous glass tile is an excellent choice for this mosaic, as the light will shine through the glass, accentuating the vibrant colors which will never fade over time.

The decision to select this piece of art required flexibility from the jury and an openness to providing opportunity for the artist to present something that was more suitable to their skillset than what was set out in the original call. This process resulted in an amazing piece of art coming forward, and the jury is thrilled with the commission of this piece. *Gidinawendimin* will be a striking and memorable piece of the Kitchener Indoor Recreation Complex's aquatics centre for kids and families using the facility for many years to come.

Artwork

Gidinawendimin ("We Are All Related") is a striking tile mosaic by Anishinaabe artist Jackie Traverse that explores the deep connection between women and water. The artwork honours the leadership of women, their intergenerational strength, and the ways in which their voices, like water, flow outward in protection of land, life, and spirit. This relationship is rooted in both ceremony and everyday practices, such as water walks, offerings, and advocacy to protect water for current and future generations.

The piece reflects a powerful Indigenous worldview, celebrating the sacred feminine through themes of continuity, collective responsibility, and reverence for life, and will certainly serve as a compelling cultural statement and a meaningful addition to the City's public art collection.

The original painting has been meticulously translated into a mosaic through a digital rendering process, which maps the artwork onto a carefully selected palette of vitreous glass tiles. This adaptation preserves the integrity of Traverse's original composition—retaining its bold lines, dynamic colour transitions, and expressive forms—while accommodating the geometric and material properties of mosaic art. The mosaic is composed of vitreous glass tiles, known for their rich colour, durability, and resistance to fading or staining. These tiles are suitable for both indoor and outdoor use, including high-moisture environments, ensuring that the artwork will remain vibrant and resilient over time.

Highness Global is a Toronto-based artists' representation firm whose mandate is to translate Indigenous artists' visions to new scales, materials and audiences. Their involvement in the project is an essential factor in this selection and recommendation. Recently, Highness Global support the recent public art installation at KPL Southwest. The development experience at KPL Southwest clearly indicated the Toronto-based artists' representation firm's adaptability, careful collaborative approach and incredible production capability. Their involvement aligns with the priorities of the Kitchener Indoor Recreation Complex.

Next Steps

On July 15th, 2025, the recommendation to commission the tile mosaic by Jackie Traverse made by the jury was unanimously endorsed by the *Arts and Culture Advisory Committee* (ACAC), a committee of citizens in place to provide advice and recommendations to city council and staff on arts and culture matters to further the city's strategic directions. The ACAC committee meets monthly and is comprised of local arts professionals representing a diverse range of specialities.

Since the jury recommendation was made to commission this work, City staff have been working closely with the Kitchener Indoor Recreation Complex design and construction team on integrating the installation of this piece into the schedule for the aquatics centre to facilitate a seamless process and ensure installation is complete well before the facility opening.

In addition to the \$300,000 commission for *Gidinawendimin*, a second public art opportunity for the Kitchener Indoor Recreation Complex will be launched in Fall 2025. Recognizing the size, scope, and significance of the facility as a central gathering space for the community, an additional \$200,000 has been allocated to support this next public art initiative. This upcoming call will follow a similar process to the initial one, emphasizing public engagement, transparency, and collaboration. A jury process will be used to ensure community involvement in decision-making, while close coordination with the design and construction team will support the successful integration of the selected artwork within the facility and its construction timeline.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report supports the delivery of core services through the 1% for Public Art Policy.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Capital Budget – Funding for this public art commission has already been allocated to the consolidated public art budget in accordance with Public Art Policy GOV-COR-816. The construction costs of the new Indoor Recreation Complex resulted in a \$300,000 allotment, which is what was offered as commission in the open call for expressions of interest. Any ongoing maintenance costs for this work will be funded through the City's Public Art maintenance account.

The A&CI team has used additional funds generated by other project allotments from the consolidated account to support this selection process, including stage-two artists payments and jury fees informed by the CARFAC (Canadian Artists' Representation/le front des artistes Canadiens) industry standards, meetings and marketing costs.

Operating Budget – The recommendation has no impact on the Operating Budget.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

INFORM – This report has been posted to the City's website with the agenda in advance of the council / committee meeting.

CONSULT – Staff produced an open call for expressions of interest that was posted on August 4, 2024, remaining up until November 4, 2024. The open call was published on the City of Kitchener website and promoted on its social media and by paid advertising.

COLLABORATE – The jury included representatives from the City's *Public Art Working Group* and *Arts and Culture Advisory Committee*, both of which are made up of citizens. The jury also included visual arts professionals and local citizens, a representative from a sports club with a vested interest in the facility and a staff representative from the recreation complex design and development team. On July 15th, 2025, the recommendation of this jury was unanimously endorsed by the *Arts and Culture Advisory Committee*.

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

- GOV-COR-816 Public Art Policy

APPROVED BY: Barry Cronkite, Acting General Manager, Development Services Department

ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix A – *Gidinawendimin* proposal by Jackie Traverse

GIDINAWENDIMIN

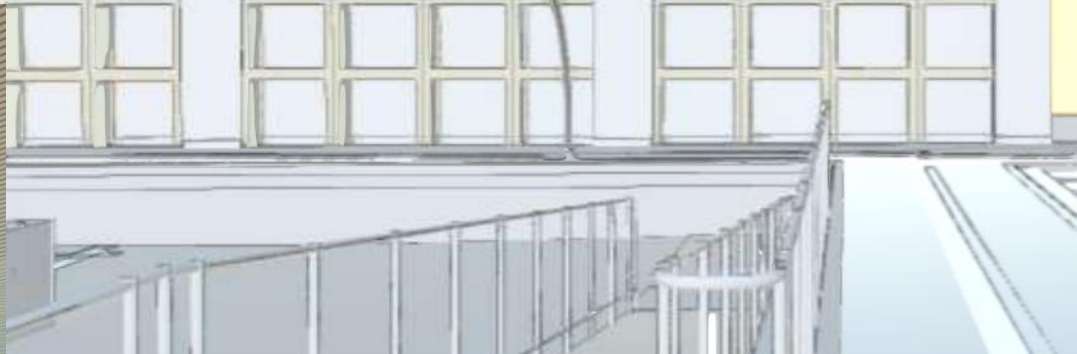
by Jackie Traverse
for Kitchener Aquatic Centre



GIDINAWENDIMIN

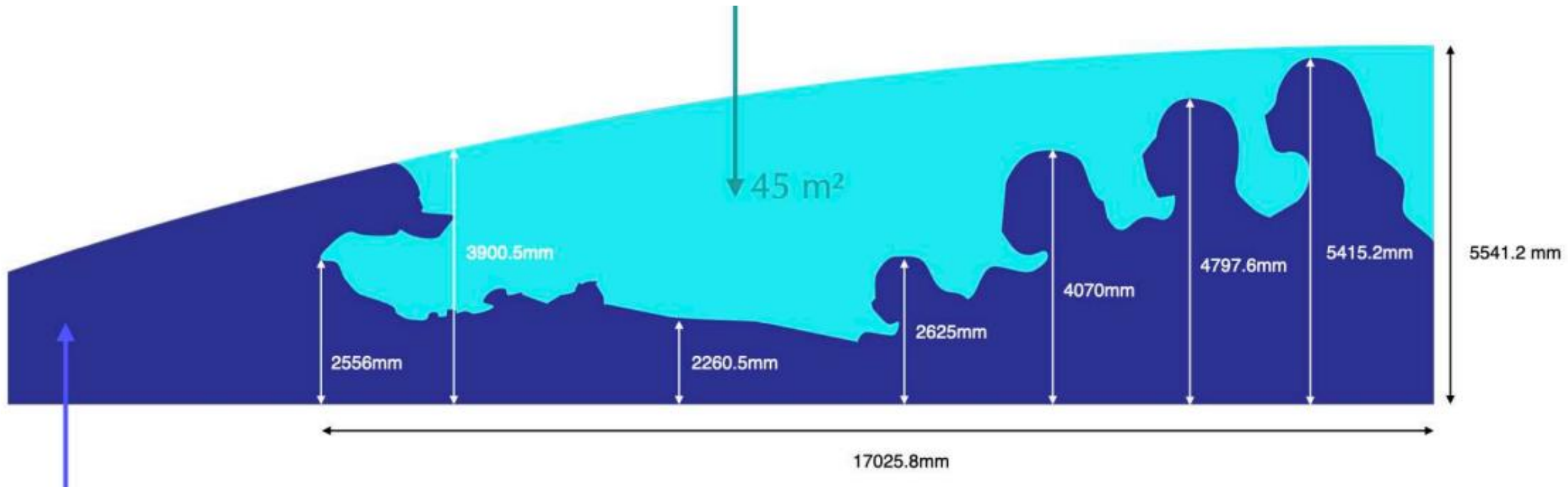
For the Anishinaabe, water, or nibi, is not simply a resource but a sacred, living spirit that sustains and connects all life. It holds deep spiritual, cultural, and relational significance. Within Anishinaabe teachings, women have a unique and sacred responsibility as Water Keepers. This role is not symbolic; it is grounded in Natural Law and traditional knowledge passed down through generations. Anishinaabe women carry the water teachings and are entrusted with the duty to protect, care for, and speak on behalf of the water. Their connection to water is deeply tied to their ability to give life, reflecting the nurturing and sustaining qualities of nibi itself.

This relationship is expressed through both ceremony and daily practice, including water walks, offerings, and advocacy to ensure the health of the water for all living beings and future generations. *GIDINAWENDIMIN* brings forward this powerful Indigenous worldview, celebrating the sacred feminine through themes of continuity, collective responsibility, and reverence for life. It honours the leadership of women, the intergenerational strength they carry, and the ways their voices flow outward, like water, in protection of land, life, and spirit.



Design Process

The original painting by Jackie Traverse has been carefully translated into a mosaic by digitally rendering the artwork and mapping it to a palette of vitreous glass tiles. This process involves analyzing the composition, colour, and detail of the painting, then recreating it using thousands of individually placed tiles in 1/2" or 3/4" sizes. Special attention is given to preserving the visual integrity of the original artwork - capturing its bold lines, colour transitions, and expressive forms - while adapting it to the geometric and material qualities of mosaic. The final design will be developed as a detailed tile-by-tile layout, and once approved, the design will be fabricated and ready for installation.

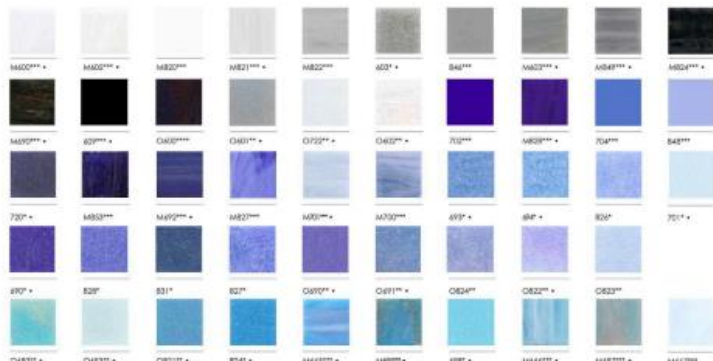


Material

The tiles used are vitreous glass, available in both 1/2" and 3/4" sizes, offering flexibility for a range of design needs and project scales. Known for their durability and vibrant appearance, these tiles feature through-body colour and are highly resistant to fading, staining, chemicals, and fire. They are suitable for both indoor and outdoor applications, including wet areas. The extensive colour palette and variety of finish options allow for dynamic, visually striking mosaic surfaces. The 3/4" size provides a more cost-effective option for large projects, while each tile sheet is labeled and matched to a detailed installation diagram to ensure a precise and efficient installation process.

Extended Palette

Expediting May Be Available



SIZE: 3/4" x 3/4" x 1/8"

COLORS: 136 available

FINISHES: Metallic, Opalescent, Specialty

APPLICATIONS:

Interior	Exterior	Residential	Commercial	Wall	Pool	Floor
✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	light residential traffic

STATS:

Sheet Dimensions:		11.81" x 11.81"
Tiles per Row/Column:		15 x 15
Tiles per Sheet:		225
Sheet Weight:		1.45 lbs
Grout Spacing:		.045" (1.14mm)

3/4" VITREOUS GLASS



DESCRIPTION

Artaic's vitreous glass is our most popular tile material. An extensive color palette with many finish options lead to vibrant and dynamic surfaces of mosaic imagery. Tile is the perfect way to inject style into any design without losing functionality.

VITREOUS GLASS:

- through-body color
- resistant to fading
- resistant to staining
- resistant to chemicals
- resistant to fire
- suitable for any indoor or outdoor projects as well as for use in wet areas



RESISTANT TO SCRATCHES
EN 101 / ISO 13630



RESISTANT TO COLORS FADING
DIN 51904



<0.5% WATER ABSORPTION
ISO 10545-3 / ASTM C1026





JACQUELINE TRAVERSE

PAINTER | MURALIST | SCULPTOR | MIX MEDIA

Jacqueline Traverse is an accomplished Indigenous Contemporary Artist who has a profound connection to her Anishinabe heritage and the community of her hometown, Winnipeg. Traverse's artistic journey, rooted in her heritage and shaped by her education at the University of Manitoba's School of Fine Arts, has established her as a dynamic and influential creator. With a diverse range of mediums, including painting, sculpture, mixed media, and video art, Traverse's work encapsulates the essence of her identity and experiences. With a professional commitment to social impact and a resounding voice on social justice, Traverse's art offers aesthetic beauty merged with a powerful force for change. She beautifully weaves a compelling visual narrative of resilience, identity, and hope through her work.

JACKIETRAVERSE.COM | @artbyjackietraverse

EQUITY SEEKING: FEMALE | INDIGENOUS

