

Downtown Kitchener Vision and Principles

Phase One Engagement Summary

Prepared for: The City of Kitchener

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Executive Summary

The City of Kitchener is undergoing a process to develop a comprehensive vision and set of guiding principles for Downtown Kitchener, which is at a critical point in its evolution and growth. A Downtown Community Working Group (DCWG) is guiding the development of the vision and principles, with support from City staff and LURA Consulting (a community engagement consultancy). The DCWG includes members of the downtown and broader Kitchener community, each bringing unique and diverse perspectives.

The work of the DCWG is at a high level, and the resulting vision and principles will inform new and ongoing City initiatives. These current and future initiatives may include land use and zoning framework for the Major Transit Station areas, Civic District Master Plan, District Energy, Bramm Yards Master Plan, Arts and Culture Strategy, Inclusionary Zoning, Places and Spaces, City-owned Lands plan and a new or updated Official Plan.

In Phase One, the DCWG has shaped and assisted in delivering a fulsome community engagement process to gather input on the vision and guiding principles. This information will be used in Phase Two to draft a vision that encapsulates Downtown Kitchener in the next decade and identify and define a set of principles that will shape, direct, and contextualize future decision-making. This community-driven process has been intended to build consensus, motivate and inspire action and ensure inclusive community building.

This report summarizes input received during Phase One of this project.

Phase Two of the project will draw on this input to draft a vision and principles with the DCWG. The vision and principles will be presented to the community for feedback beginning in June 2023.

Key Findings

Key messages that emerged throughout the engagement process are listed below in no specific order.

- The need for community-building efforts, strengthening the connection between neighbours.
- The importance of public spaces and green space, especially as density grows within the downtown.
- Strong support for more connected and continuous active transportation and public transportation networks.
- Greater efforts to support the unhoused/precariously housed and those in crisis who live in Kitchener.
- Downtown Kitchener was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and requires investment and rejuvenation to support existing local businesses and attract new ventures.
- The importance of integrating climate adaptation and resiliency actions into the city's day-to-day functions.
- Strengthened support, advocacy, and action towards an inclusive, equitable and accessible downtown, that also helps to advance Truth and Reconciliation.

Engagement Process

The figure below summarizes efforts that have been undertaken to engage the DCWG, interested parties, and members of the public in this process. This engagement reflects efforts to raise awareness of the project and gather input to inform a draft the vision and principles. Approximately 2,659 individuals provided input throughout Phase One from June 2022 to April 2023.

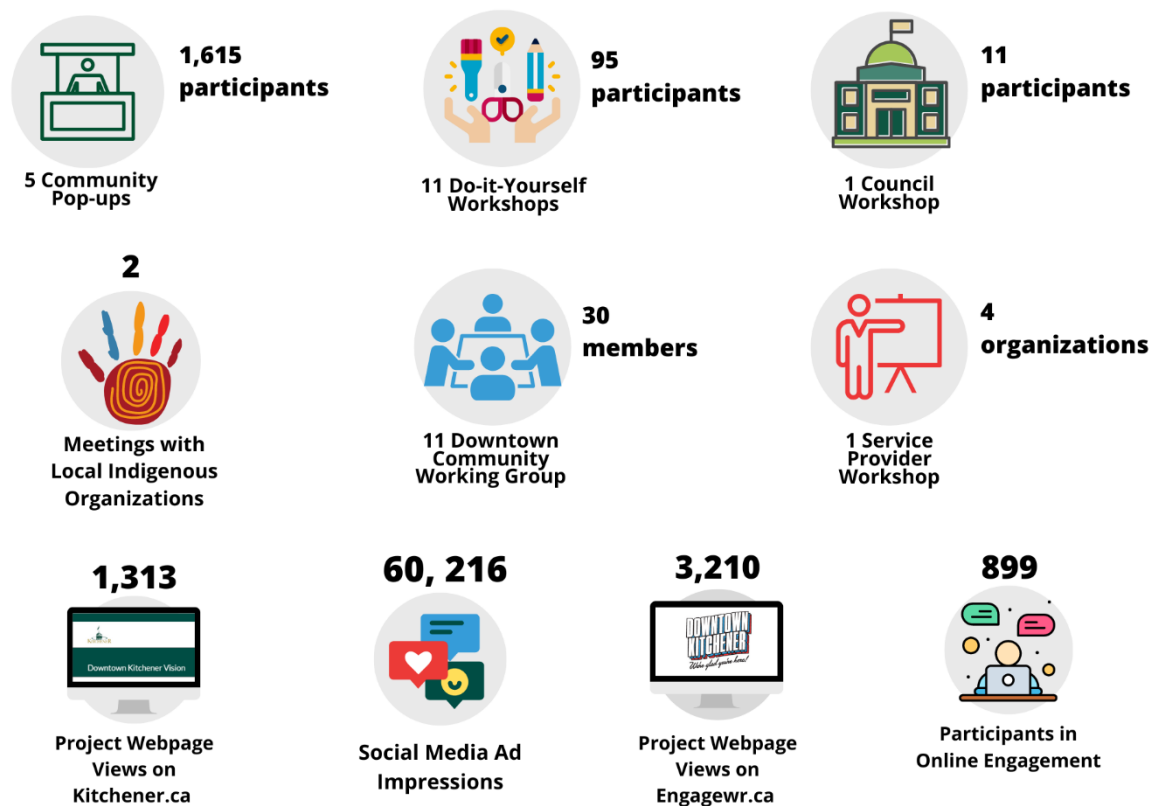


Figure 1: Engagement & Promotion Statistics

Next Steps

The input gathered and summarized here will be used in Phase Two to draft a vision that encapsulates downtown Kitchener in the next decade and identify and define a set of principles that will shape, direct, and contextualize future decision-making. This will be shared with the public for input starting in June 2023.

Section 1: Project Background

The City of Kitchener's downtown has experienced tremendous change over the past 20 years. Over this time, the city has also undertaken considerable work in the form of investments, plans, and policies focused on the downtown. The downtown now hosts the ION LRT, post-secondary institutions, a significant knowledge economy and tech hubs, and ongoing residential development. Downtown Kitchener is known for its mix of innovation, entrepreneurship, academics, and diversity of spaces, services, restaurants, and events. The City of Kitchener has led this evolution in partnership with the private sector, the business community, community groups and organizations, developers, and community members.

Downtown Kitchener is seeing tremendous growth but must confront housing affordability, climate change, and equity challenges. The community established a vision and principles for downtown Kitchener in 2003, and the time has come to develop a new collective vision. As such, the City of Kitchener is undergoing a process to develop a comprehensive vision and set of guiding principles for Downtown Kitchener. The city will be undertaking considerable work related to the downtown over the next several decades. This work must be founded on a forward-thinking, progressive, and consensus-built vision and principles.

The vision and principles will establish the direction for City initiatives in equity, experience, growth, and sustainability. These current and future initiatives may include land use and zoning framework for the Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs), Civic District Master Plan, District Energy, Bramm Yards Master Plan, Arts and Culture Strategy, Inclusionary Zoning, Places and Spaces, City-owned Lands Plan and a new or updated Official Plan.

Engagement Objectives

A Downtown Community Working Group (DCWG) is guiding the development of the vision and principles, supported by City staff and LURA Consulting (a community engagement consultancy). The DCWG includes downtown and broader Kitchener community members, each bringing unique and diverse perspectives.

The process includes two engagement phases. In Phase One, the DCWG has shaped and assisted in delivering a fulsome community engagement process to gather input on the vision and guiding principles. Phase Two of the project will draw on this input to draft a vision and principles with the DCWG. The vision and principles will be presented to the community for feedback beginning in June 2023.

Input was gathered through:

- 11 DCWG meetings
- Meetings with local Indigenous organizations
- A workshop with downtown service provider agencies
- A Do-it-Yourself Workshop completed by eight community organizations/city advisory committees
- Five community pop-ups
- Online engagement (survey, ideas board, and mapping)

Summaries of each of these inputs, workshops and conversations can be found in the Appendices.

Section 2: What We Heard

Vision Elements

Within the broader community engagement process, we asked community members to identify their top three words to describe their ideal downtown Kitchener. The top 25 occurring words, and their associated word counts, are listed below. These words will be used by the DCWG to inform the vision during Phase Two.

- | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Safe (200) | 14. Affordable (28) |
| 2. Vibrant (140) | 15. Busy (27) |
| 3. Clean (80) | 16. Interesting (20) |
| 4. Green (72) | 17. Pedestrian (19) |
| 5. Walkable (69) | 18. Diverse (19) |
| 6. Accessible (55) | 19. People (18) |
| 7. Fun (51) | 20. Parking (18) |
| 8. Friendly (42) | 21. Events (17) |
| 9. Lively (41) | 22. Inviting (16) |
| 10. Welcoming (39) | 23. Bustling (16) |
| 11. Active (31) | 24. Variety (15) |
| 12. Community (30) | 25. Shops (13) |
| 13. Inclusive (29) | |

The above words are being reported based on frequency among those participating in the broader community engagement process. It is important to note that the meaning of each word varies among respondents.

Thematic Summary

At the outset of the process, the DCWG established seven key themes/focus areas to examine and contextualize the conditions in the downtown area. These themes served as the basis for a series of DCWG workshops and the context for broader community engagement. The themes established by the DCWG differed slightly from those in the original Terms of Reference for the project, in the sense that they merged some topics, with equity serving as a lens for all seven. The themes established by the DCWG, as well as the original set from the Terms of Reference, are provided below.

Themes Established by DCWG	Original Terms of Reference Themes
1. Public Spaces and Parks	1. Growth
2. Culture, Events and Street Life	2. Housing
3. Growth and Housing	3. Neighbourhood
4. Neighbourhoods and the Movement of People and Goods	4. Supporting Existing Business and Recovery
5. Business Recovery and Imagine Forward	5. Business Imagine Forward
6. Climate Change and Environmental Leadership	6. Movement of People and Goods
7. Safety and Security	7. Public Spaces
	8. Events, Animation and Street Life
	9. Climate and Environmental Leadership
	10. Equity
	11. Safety and Security

The following section summarizes the input received during Phase One across all community engagement activities, sorted within these seven themes.

Public Spaces and Parks

Community members of Kitchener largely agree on the importance of public spaces and parks, and these vital community spaces require continued investment and focus over the next ten years. Community members want to see open and informal spaces that people can use in various ways and feel comfortable in. This includes spaces that are free to use and accessible to all community members. DCWG members identified that public spaces need to be intentionally connected to one another.

Community members often spoke about establishing places downtown where they could socialize and run programming, such as a farmers' market or concerts.

Many community members and DCWG members noted the need for more green space in Downtown Kitchener. Community members desire green space to sit, play, and gather. Specific mention was made regarding having picnic tables, benches, washrooms, and trees. Including those amenities within the green space allows them to be intergenerational, inviting people of all ages and abilities to use the area.

Many people mentioned Victoria Park as a valuable area downtown that many people visit. Specifically, participants want the park to have more trees, shade, and social services to assist people currently living there.

It was noted that all aspects of parks and public spaces need to be designed for all community members, regardless of ability or mobility considerations. There is a need for accessible picnic tables in parks and public spaces, as well as fully accessible washrooms.

For community members to access public parks and spaces, they need to be easy to get to via public transit or cycling. DCWG members mentioned the need for greater connectivity between active transportation routes and public spaces, especially parks. Greater connectivity between amenities would encourage active transportation and is a thread between all seven themes.

Culture, Events and Street Life

Community and working group members noted the importance of establishing downtown Kitchener as a destination place. DCWG members want the downtown area to be vibrant, unique, and welcoming. Community and working group members felt that the downtown has become less lively in recent years. Specific suggestions to bring energy downtown include an art walk, more public art, street patios, and musicians.

Community members often said they want to spend more time downtown, shopping, eating and enjoying the public spaces. Working group members enjoyed the multicultural festival and would support more events highlighting downtown's multiculturalism. These festivals bring the community together and support the downtown economy. Many community members spoke about the need for activated public spaces and wanted to see more events and festivals in areas such as the Victoria Park Pavilion. Community members who use mobility devices noted they often cannot access event stalls during events because there is no hard surface.

When discussing how to reinvigorate the downtown area, specific suggestions from community members include closing King Street to vehicles, keeping the roads and sidewalks clean of litter, better lighting and more seating areas. It was also suggested that items like a piano for people

to use spontaneously, would bring joy and vibrancy downtown. With more people living downtown, community members feel that introducing commercial spaces to the ground floor of multi-unit buildings would bring vibrancy. Mixed-use buildings were often mentioned by community members who want to see a mix of restaurants and shops that represent the multicultural nature of downtown.

Community members suggested that additional City signage in other languages, especially Indigenous languages spoken in the area, would make downtown a diverse and welcoming space. It was noted that this would integrate more culture into the neighbourhood, make it more welcoming, and provide a learning opportunity for all.

Other community members would like to see more wayfinding and signage that speaks to Kitchener's past and provides information about historical moments. These ideas contribute to a sense of place and build Kitchener's culture. Specific places like the Kitchener Library and the Museum bring significant value to the culture and life of downtown.

Growth and Housing

The input was wide-ranging when discussing downtown growth, housing, and density. While there is a general understanding that cities in Ontario are growing and becoming denser, there were varying opinions on how Kitchener should accommodate this growth downtown.

Some community members, and DCWG members feel downtown Kitchener is the most appropriate place to plan for growth. This would include tall buildings in the downtown core and along the LRT. Those supporting more growth downtown want to encourage it along public transportation routes to support both active transportation and climate goals. DCWG members noted that encouraging growth downtown would bring more significant foot traffic to businesses, likely allowing more local businesses to thrive and attract new businesses.

Other community members suggested that growth take place outside of downtown Kitchener. There is a concern among some that providing for a lot of growth downtown may happen without amenities such as parks and shops. Community members generally agreed growth should be done holistically, including green space, public amenities, and investment in public transit.

Community members discussed affordable housing throughout the engagement process. Community members would like to see affordable housing built, as well as supportive housing for those experiencing homelessness. Indigenous organizations noted that affordable housing needs to be built in proximity to support services that are required.

DCWG members and social service providers noted that supportive housing is currently lacking in the area. It was recognized that the housing crisis needs to be addressed at every level of government.

Participants noted that there should be housing types for all provided downtown, including larger units to accommodate larger households. It was noted that encouraging missing middle housing could be one way to address this.

Neighbourhoods and the Movement of People and Goods

Connected and consistent transportation networks were regularly mentioned when discussing neighbourhoods and the movement of goods and people. DCWG members noted that the current active transportation and public transit routes are not fully connected, making them

unreliable and, at times, unsafe. Many community members said they would prefer to cycle or take the bus downtown but find it difficult. One example noted often was the bus service, which people would like to operate more frequently.

Community members also spoke about the desire for improved active transportation infrastructure. This enhanced infrastructure would include snow clearing of cycling routes year-round. More people would travel that way if the cycling system were improved, with better connection and safety. Many people spoke about bike routes which end abruptly, with no signage directing them to the next path. Community members want to see the public transportation and cycling infrastructure made safer and more user-friendly. This includes connected and continuous routes, protected bike lanes and clear signage.

Community members and DCWG members shared concerns over a lack of accessibility when moving downtown. A specific example noted was the lack of sidewalk snow clearing, which creates a significant barrier to movement for those with disabilities. There is a lack of accessible parking and drop-off spaces downtown. This prohibits many people from visiting downtown comfortably and safely. Other examples included uneven sidewalks, signage that is low hanging, poor lighting and grates or drains which obstruct walking.

To create stronger neighbourhoods and communities, many community members and DCWG members spoke about building a fifteen-minute community where they could walk or bike to basic amenities and services.

For many community members, a healthy street is designed for pedestrian safety over vehicle convenience. This includes widening sidewalks when they are reconstructed, separated bicycle lanes and speed barriers such as planters.

Business Recovery and Imagine Forward

Kitchener community members are proud of the changes the downtown area has seen over the past decade but feel there is still room for improvement. The pandemic had significant consequences for locally owned businesses. Many shut down, and some storefronts have remained empty, leaving many to feel as though the downtown could still be more vibrant with the return of businesses to these spaces. It was noted that restaurants and bars need to stay open late enough for people to visit after going to theatre or events.

Participants expressed concerns over the lack of thriving businesses and shared ideas on how to revitalize downtown Kitchener. Some DCWG members suggested that if the downtown had more people living in it, that increased foot traffic would enable more businesses to open. This would also impact existing businesses positively by allowing them to stay open longer and build a more substantial customer base.

Participants suggested that the city could support local businesses by offering grants or incubator loans. Many community members expressed a desire for a more extensive variety of businesses, especially ones encouraging community gatherings, such as bars, restaurants and cafes. Many noted that there is a need for a grocery store located downtown that is accessible by public transit. Concern was noted regarding the lack of accessibility ramps leading to small businesses.

The idea of closing King Street to vehicles is seen to build community and revitalize the downtown. At the same time, there is an understanding that solutions for deliveries and business operations are needed when considering full or partial closure.

To encourage people to shop and visit downtown, participants would like to see the downtown become more walkable, with safe sidewalks and road crossings. Participants would also like improvements in the public realm, including additional benches and greenery.

Climate Change and Environmental Leadership

Most participants agreed that climate resiliency and adaptation approaches should be considered when addressing all aspects of downtown. One of the most common interventions that community members would like to see is protected greenspace and tree planting, which supports climate mitigation, resiliency and community gathering. In meetings with Indigenous organizations, it was noted that issues such as climate change, clean water, and clean air urgently need to be addressed.

Community members spoke about a design for downtown that is climate focused. They offered suggestions that included guidelines for new buildings, green public spaces, improved waste management, active transportation routes, and green development standards as effective ways for the city to build climate change into new construction. DCWG members suggested moving towards new buildings that are energy efficient, have green roofs and have less concrete. Many community members spoke about re-purposing existing parking lots alongside green development standards. These parking lots could be used as green spaces to reduce the impact of heat islands.

Both community members and working group members want to see a downtown Kitchener designed to mitigate flooding risk. Examples of this provided include additional green space instead of parking lots, permeable pavement in the public realm, and pollinator gardens. Adding plants and trees downtown contributes to the overall feeling of a welcoming downtown.

Safety and Security

The theme of safety and security encompasses the communities need for welcoming, accessible, and equitable spaces. The notion of a lively downtown was heard many times, with participants expressing that the more people who frequent downtown, the safer it becomes. Community members would like to see specific challenges addressed, such as bike thefts, storefront vandalism, and graffiti, which makes the downtown look uncared for, and increases people's feelings of unsafety.

Given that there are times when there are few visitors downtown, particularly at night, several participants suggested they would feel safer if there were security patrols on foot. In that vein, many participants noted that increased security through policing may not be the best approach as different populations have different levels of comfort and experience with police, and many people do not feel safer with increased policing. Suggestions were made during the social service provider workshop that building and deploying a community response unit could be more effective.

Participants expressed the need for an immediate increase in mental health support. Mobile health units were suggested to be deployed to city areas, providing crisis mental health support and access to longer-term support. It was recognized by a few community members that access to both safe supply and safe injections is critical in supporting vulnerable populations. Other

support needs mentioned were access to housing, food, and hygiene facilities. These wrap-around supports allow people to meet their basic needs. With basic needs met, individuals can then focus on items like employment. Many noted that those individuals in crisis and the wider population would all be served with more significant support and intervention from the City.

During conversations with Indigenous organizations, it was noted that safe and accessible space needs to be created for Indigenous people to have ceremonies. This could be a way for the City to contribute to Reconciliation efforts.

While some community members differ on the methods to increase safety, the desired end goal is the same. With a vibrant downtown, including street life, businesses, public spaces and parks, greater safety and security can be actualized. DCWG members envision a safe downtown for everyone, with safety interpreted as a place that is welcoming for all. A few community members mentioned wanting to be able to walk the neighbourhood enjoying local shops, parks, and events safely. It is recognized by community members and DCWG members that safety for all includes those experiencing homelessness and that support services must be an integral part of a safe community.

Other

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a fundamental impact on how community members interact with each other. Community members want downtown Kitchener to rebuild its sense of community by being able to participate in events, hang out in parks and public spaces, and share experiences.

Priorities

In the online survey, participants ranked the importance of different elements when thinking about the future of Downtown Kitchener. The results are listed below in order of importance as ranked by participants, with the average ranking noted in parentheses.

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Local shops and new business (4.2) | 6. Housing (5.6) |
| 2. Public safety (4.5) | 7. Events (5.8) |
| 3. Green space (4.5) | 8. Accessibility (6.5) |
| 4. Sidewalks and active transportation (5.5) | 9. Climate change (6.8) |
| 5. Arts and culture (5.6) | 10. Equity (7.7) |
| | 11. Sport and leisure (8.1) |

Section 3: Who We Heard From

Survey participants were asked to complete several demographic questions (optional). Responses are summarized below.

Age Range

The figure below shows the age range of survey respondents. Outreach to lower response groups (e.g. those under 18) will be targeted during engagement on the draft vision and principles.

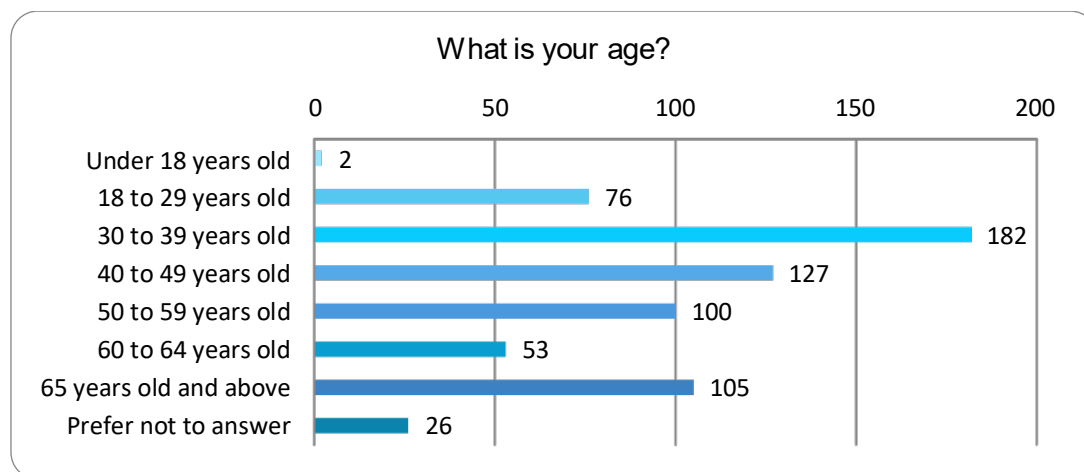


Figure 2: Survey Respondent Age (n=671)

Groups

The figure below shows if respondents identify themselves in the following groups.

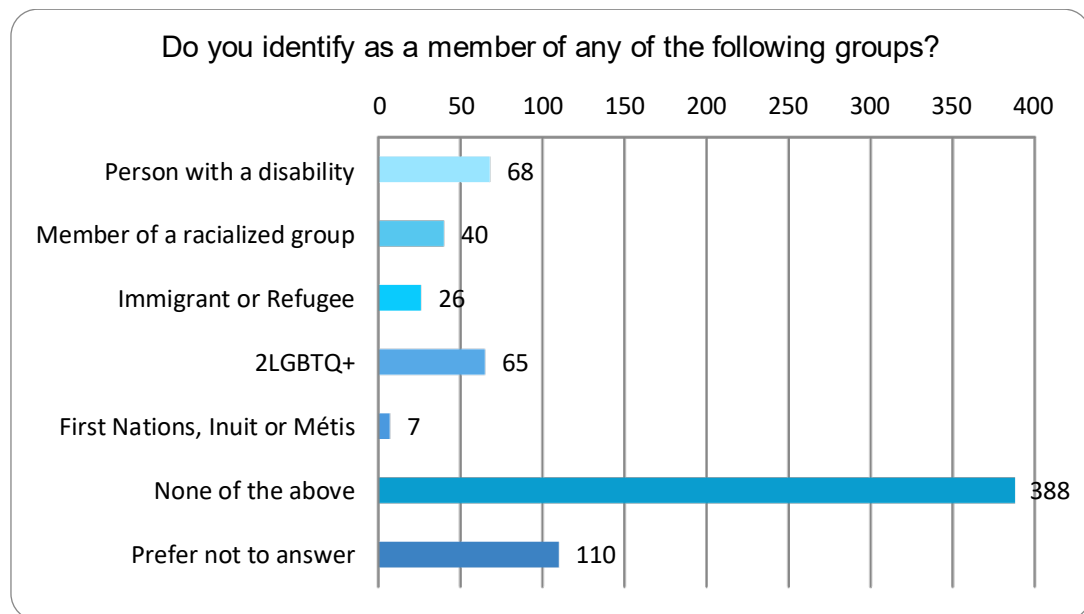


Figure 3: Survey Respondent Groups (n=680)

Gender

The figure below shows the gender identity of survey respondents.

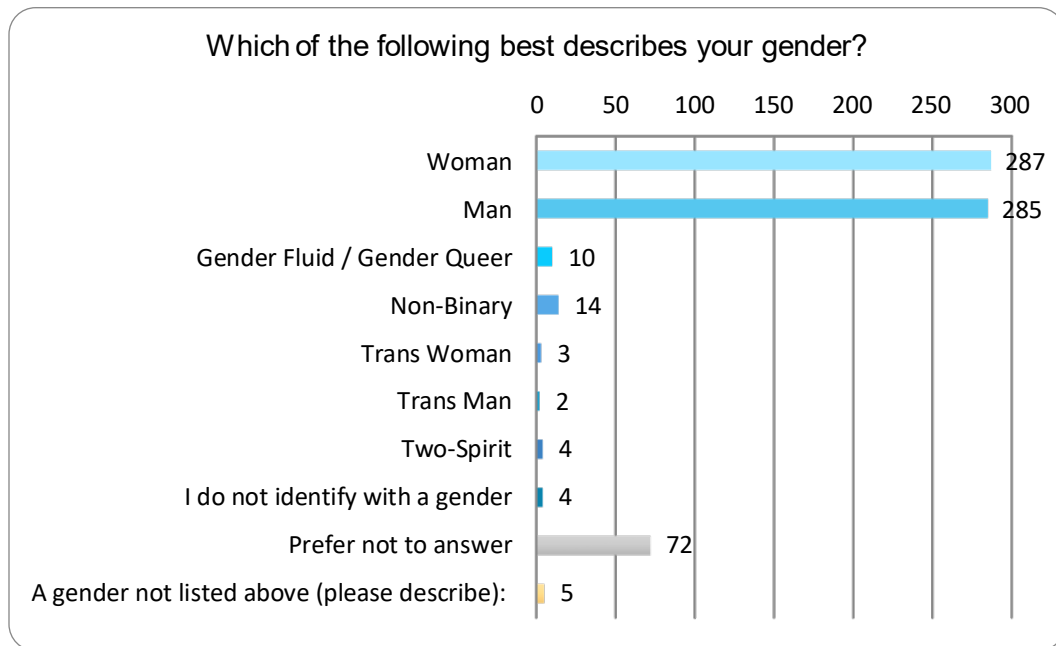


Figure 4: Survey Respondent Gender (n=680)

Location

The image below shows the postal codes of the survey participants.

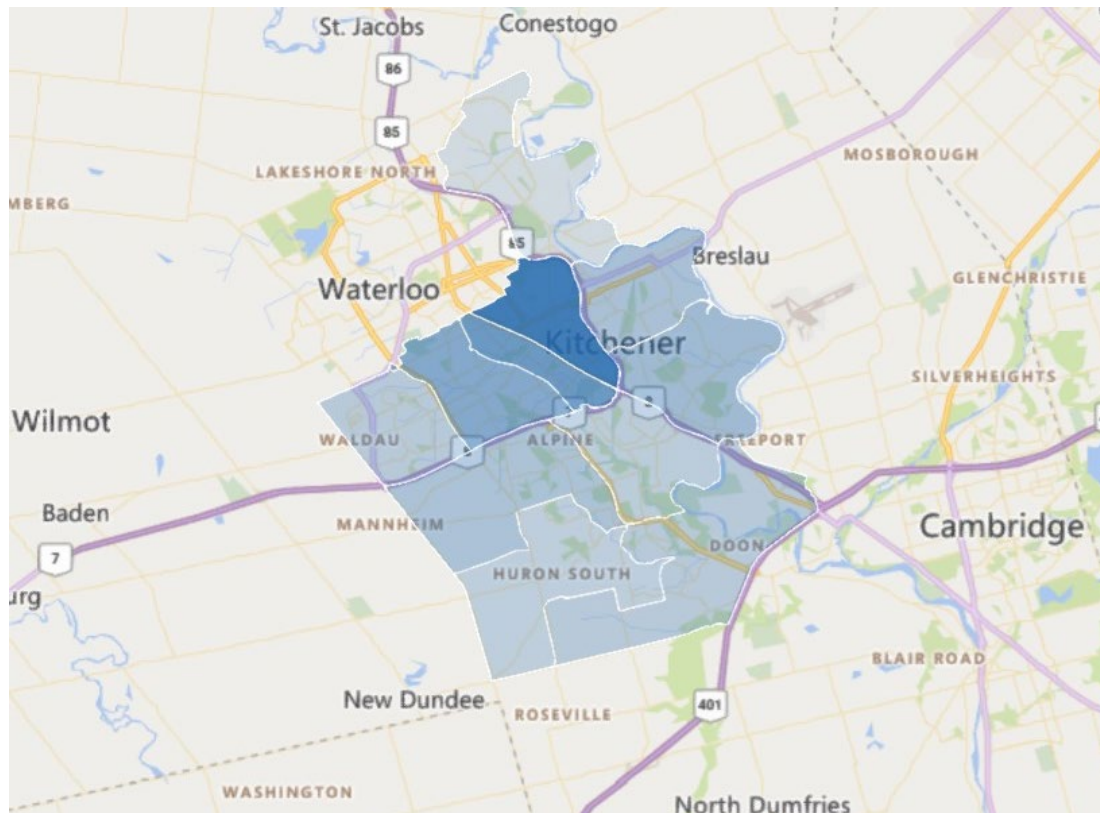


Figure 5: Survey Respondent Postal Codes (n=671)

The top five occurring postal codes among survey participants were:

1. N2H (174)
2. N2G (154)
3. N2M (75)
4. N2A (67)
5. N2E (46)

Section 4: Engagement and Communications Process

Phase One included a variety of engagement methods to seek broad input, described below.

Downtown Community Working Group

A Downtown Community Working Group (DCWG) was selected by a community selection committee through an application process in May/June 2022. The DCWG is guiding and developing the DTK vision and principles process with the support of City staff and LURA Consulting. Thirty (30) individuals comprise the DCWG, including members of the downtown and broader Kitchener community, each bringing unique and diverse perspectives to the process. The DCWG met eleven times during the first phase of the community visioning

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process. The table below includes details of the meeting focus and attendance. Meeting Summaries are available in Appendix A.

Date	Meeting Topic
June 22, 2022	Introduction to Project
September 6, 2022	Community Engagement Planning
October 4, 2022	Introduction to Theme-based Workshops
November 1, 2022	Guided Tour of DTK public spaces and parks
December 6, 2022	Public Spaces and Parks
January 10, 2023	Culture, Events and Street Life
January 24, 2023	Growth and Housing
February 7, 2023	Neighbourhoods and the Movement of People and Goods
February 21, 2023	Business Recovery and Imagine Forward
March 7, 2023	Climate Change and Environmental Leadership
March 21, 2023	Safety and Security

Service Provider Agencies

Service providers who operate in downtown Kitchener participated in a workshop on March 1, 2023. The conversation consisted of introducing the project to the agencies and listening to the experiences and input of agency staff. Four service provider organizations attended the discussion, as follows:

- Peregrine Outreach
- Sanguen Health Centre
- Tiny Home Takeout @ St. Mary's Church
- The Working Centre

The workshop summary is available in Appendix B.

Indigenous Organizations

The City of Kitchener invited local Indigenous organizations to individual meetings to listen to their experience and knowledge to inform Downtown Kitchener's future. Meeting summaries are available in Appendix C.

Organization(s)	Meeting Date	Number of Attendees
Anishnabeg Outreach	March 21, 2023	2
Healing of the Seven Generations and Crow Shield Lodge	March 24, 2023	2

Do-it-Yourself Facilitation Guide

A Do-it-Yourself (DIY) facilitation guide allowed members of the DCWG and members of the public to run their own workshops within their networks to gather input to help inform the development of the vision and guiding principles. The guide provided step-by-step instructions for facilitating workshops, which took approximately 90 minutes and focused on the same topic areas discussed by the DCWG. The DIY kit was shared directly with the DCWG members and advertised on the Engage webpage. The project team received ten completed kits, listed in the table below.

Completing Organization	Workshop Attendees
City of Kitchener Downtown Action and Advisory Committee	7

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Completing Organization	Workshop Attendees
Conestoga Downtown Campus Students	5
City of Kitchener Climate Change and Environment Committee	9
Kitchener Google Employees	9
Artists and Business Owners	4
Eastwood Seniors Community	5
Bread and Roses Cooperative Homes	5
Victoria Park Neighbourhood Association (x2)	24
Arts and Culture Organizations*	15
Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee	12
Total	95

*including TheMuseum, Centre In The Square, K-W Symphony, ArtsBuild Ontario, InterArts Matrix, Green Light Theatre, Registry Theatre, Grand Philharmonic Choir, the Kitchener Blues Festival, Schneider Haus, and four churches which frequently provide venue space for concerts and other art activities: St. Matthews Lutheran Church, the Anglican Church of St. John the Evangelist, Church of the Good Shepherd and St. Peter's Lutheran Church).

Community Pop-ups

The City of Kitchener held five community pop-ups to gather input on the vision and principles. The pop-up engagement included a vision board, map activity and children's visioning sheets. Images of these activities are available in Appendix D.

Location	Date	Participants
Kitchener Market	February 24, 2023, 8:30 am - 2:30 pm	595
Carl Zehr Square	February 25, 2023, 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm	66
Kitchener Market	March 18, 2023, 8:30 am - 2:30 pm	515
Carl Zehr Square	March 18, 2023, 3:00 pm - 6:00 pm	14
Kitchener Market	March 25, 2023, 8:30 am - 2:30 pm	425
Total		1,615

Engage Webpage

The Engage [webpage](#) launched on February 24, 2023, and was open for community input through March 31, 2023. All engagement events and opportunities were promoted on the project page, including the DIY kit and pop-up events. The Engage page used the following activities to gather input: ideas board, survey, and places (mapping) board.

The Downtown Kitchener Vision and Principles Engage webpage received 3,210 visitors. The following table provides the number of participants for each online engagement activity.

Engage Activity	Participants
Ideas	134
Map	87
Survey	678
Total	899

Council Workshop

City of Kitchener staff and LURA Consulting held a workshop on April 17, 2023, with the members of the City Council. All ten Councillors and the Mayor were in attendance. The workshop recapped highlights of the broad community engagement findings for members of Council, and asked them to reflect on their vision for Downtown Kitchener. A summary of this workshop is available in Appendix E.

Communications Methods

The city used the following methods to communicate the project, including its relevant engagement opportunities.

Project Webpage

The City of Kitchener hosted a project [webpage](#). This webpage details the project, the working group, and ways to stay involved. It also linked directly to the Engage webpage and encouraged participation in the survey and in-person opportunities. The project webpage received 1,313 visits.

Social Media Promotion

City of Kitchener's social media channels, Facebook and Twitter, were used to promote awareness of the project with posts linking to information about the study and highlighting public events. Social media ads achieved 60,216 impressions.

News Release

The City of Kitchener prepared and released a news release on February 28, 2023. The news release highlighted project information and a quote from the City of Kitchener Mayor and invited the community to engage online or in person.

E-mail Subscription

The Engage page allows community members in Kitchener to sign up for email subscriptions to leverage the subscription to provide updates and notices of events relating to the project.

Section 5: Next Steps

The DCWG review and analyze the inputs from all engagement activities to develop a draft vision and guiding principles that will encapsulate the work done since June 2022. This draft vision and principles will be presented to the public and Kitchener City Council for input commencing in June 2023.

Appendix A – Downtown Community Working Group Meeting Summaries

City of Kitchener Downtown Community Working Group Meeting #1 Summary

The first Downtown Community Working Group (DCWG) meeting was held on June 22, 2022, from 4:00 to 6:00 pm at Kitchener City Hall. 25 of 30 members were in attendance. Discussions at the meeting are summarized below.

Discussion – DCWG Working Values

DCWG members were asked to engage in small roundtable discussions to develop some of the values that will guide their collaboration as they work on a new vision statement and set of principles, as well as navigate a series of topic-based discussions for Kitchener's Downtown. The following questions guided the discussions:

1. What are the top three things that would make this project and experience work well for you?
2. What would make this a safe space to share ideas? What is/is not respectful to say?
3. There will be a chair selected for this group. What qualities would you like to see in them?

Responses to the questions are summarized below, sorted by theme areas across each roundtable. Individual responses from the roundtables are noted as bullet points within each theme.

What would make this project and experience work well for you?

Results-oriented

- Opportunity to see results and impact
- Real impact
- Inspired
- Knowing the end goal and the impact of the DCWG members individually and as a group
- Challenging and rewarding work
- Discussions impacting policy
- Concrete action
- Listen to our voice and execute ideas
- Producing concrete results
- We make a difference

Effective meetings

- Effective protocols
- Productive use of our time and energy
- Effective time management
- Consistent attendance
- Ability to send representatives on our behalf at times we are unable to join
- Politicians attend a meeting
- Snacks

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- Informal, social activities integrated into agendas

Agendas and discussion items

- Have room in the agenda for people to address things they would like to talk about
- Having a chance to speak to the group on topics I feel strongly about
- Have an opportunity for input and ideas after the meetings
- Self-selecting work
- Having end dates for goals and ideas to promote accountability
- Agendas and information ahead of time to enable time to think ahead of the meetings
- Exploring different means of idea-sharing to encourage all members to have an opportunity to share and bring ideas forward

Open-mindedness and new perspectives

- New perspectives
- Flexibility and responsiveness if the group wants to explore other options and ideas
- Interactive and collaborative setting
- Open to trying new things
- Open-mindedness to new or unique ideas
- Work collaboratively and get the best of diversity

What would make this a safe space to share ideas?

Acceptance

- No tolerance policy for hateful speech
- Referring to people as they would like to be referred to
- Acceptance of everyone
- Seeing where others are coming from
- No prioritization – make room for everyone
- Respect each other's needs and approaches
- Avoid generalizations and stereotypes
- Equity over equality
- Everyone feels welcome and able to contribute
- Respecting language and other barriers

Constructive

- Listen and understand other's thoughts and ideas
- Debate but do not argue
- Build on each other's ideas and creativity
- When you know better, do better
- Airtime equitably shared
- Do not be dismissive or too quick to reject/contradict

Polite

- Open and polite
- Be gracious
- Not putting down others' ideas
- Receptive to all views
- Speak up when upset or offended
- Do not be argumentative or combative

Downtown Kitchener Vision and Principles – Phase One Engagement Summary

Meeting space

- Venue with attention to accessibility
- A meeting space without disturbing noise
- Proper acoustics
- Setting up rooms to avoid accessibility barriers

What qualities would you like to see in a chair?

Creates a safe space

- Empathetic
- Making sure that if someone feels uncomfortable, they can come to them, and problems are addressed
- Able to be a safe space for someone to confide in if they are uncomfortable
- Willing to listen and respond

Facilitation and consensus-building

- Strong consensus-building
- Facilitation skills
- Mediator
- Facilitator
- Having discussions and working towards consensus
- Bring out differences for discussion
- Do not avoid difficult conversations and topics
- Gives everyone a chance for their ideas
- Good listener

Organized

- Organization
- Goal-oriented
- Organization skills
- Focused

Open-mindedness

- Empathetic and open-minded
- Open-minded
- Openness
- Approachable

Leadership

- Experience in managing groups
- Leadership
- People management
- Servant leadership
- Good judgement
- Confident
- Pleasant, kind and respectful
- Good understanding of and respect for protocols
- Willing to make difficult decisions
- Delivering constructive criticism in a positive way

Downtown Kitchener Vision and Principles – Phase One Engagement Summary

- Willingness to hear input and criticism
- Encouraging others
- Enthusiastic about people and the DCWG
- Lived experience

Communication skills

- Public speaking
- Excellent communication skills
- Good communication skills

Capacity

- Has the time and capacity to take this on
- Enough time and capacity to commit to time outside of the meetings

Moreover, the DCWG discussed the chair selection process and noted that they would like to get to know each other better before making any such decision. DCWG members also wanted an outline of the position and its work.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

Darren Becks and Natalie Goss from the City's project team reiterated the next steps for the DCWG, the potential for individual work and idea generation over the summer, and our next meeting as a group in September. The project team thanked the DCWG members for participating in the meeting and the process.

City of Kitchener Downtown Community Working Group Meeting #2 Summary

The second Downtown Community Working Group (DCWG) meeting was held on September 6, 2022, from 4:30 to 6:30 pm at the Downtown Community Centre. 20 of 29 members were in attendance. Discussions at the meeting are summarized below.

Discussion – Draft Engagement Strategy

DCWG members were asked to engage in small roundtable discussions to inform project planning and provide input into the draft engagement strategy. Discussions from each roundtable are summarized below.

Part 1 – Why We Care

Why does creating a vision and principles for Downtown Kitchener matter to you?

Group 1

- I live here and have lived here for more than 40 years, and I feel a deep commitment to the quality of life in DTK
- Have been involved in many City projects
- Interested in good design and the history of design
- Opportunity with ongoing development – currently more projects now than in the previous 25 years
 - Private-led development boom needs proper guidance
 - Development needs to benefit all
- Care about the needs of people who live here, including marginalized communities
- Want to be proud of DTK, and want it to be a place people come to
- Want it to be more than a transient and/or bedroom community – a great place to live and a place people stay

Group 2

- Help the homeless and other vulnerable populations
- Help influence what types of buildings will be in the downtown (mixed use)
- Would like to see a mixture of different businesses (i.e., less cannabis stores)
- A diverse view inclusive of ideas, with unique needs or perspectives considered
- Need something to aspire to
- Accessible transportation for those living downtown
- Mitigate noise issues

Group 3

- Want a DTK that caters to the community
- Want to help shape DTK now and in the future
- Create a bright future for DTK
- Want DTK to work for everyone
 - Accessible
 - Enjoyable
 - Livable
- Provide accountable
- Bring it together
- Coordinated approach to projects
- Inclusive development for everyone

Downtown Kitchener Vision and Principles – Phase One Engagement Summary

- Vision not at the expense of others who call DTK home

Group 4

- Values define community
- Provide a 'guiding light' - easier to move forward with a shared vision
- Have our own idea of where we are going
- Speaks to inclusion and voices being heard
- Opportunity for people to work together
- Opportunity for democracy
- Community-driven process
- Thing big and long-term – something to aspire too
- Everyone working toward a common goal

By having a shared vision and principles for the downtown, we will see what outcomes?

Group 1

- A lot of people in DTK
- A cultural hub
- An integrated vision with DTK and historic neighbourhoods (a relationship with the surrounding neighbourhoods)
- Pedestrian focus/pedestrian-only areas
- Centerpiece of the City
- An ambitious vision for the future
- New people and new businesses

Group 2

- Safer community
- High-quality environment
- Increased affordability
- Housing for everyone
 - More mid-rise buildings
 - Units for families
- Walkable communities
- Parks and recreational opportunities
- Building up, not out

Group 3

- Accessible
- Safe
- Diverse
- Livable
- Brighter future
- For all

Group 4

- Progress
- Accomplishment
- Vibrancy on the street – people, art, music, events, public space
- More inclusivity

Downtown Kitchener Vision and Principles – Phase One Engagement Summary

- Find commonality
- Technology and innovation
- Diversity of people, business and events
- Making everyone feel at home
- More people living downtown
- Street activity
- Safety
- World class mid-sized city
- Known for social policy
- Affordable homes for all
- Main street and pedestrian space

Part 2 – Who Should Care and be Engaged

Who is impacted or concerned about the outcomes and therefore should be engaged?

Group 1

- Social service agencies
- Community members/community groups
- The Weber Street group and the Victoria Park group
- Surrounding neighbourhoods
- Community groups and community members' groups
- First Nations
- Indigenous community members
- Businesses
- Arts organizations
- Multicultural groups
- Newcomers
- Lower income community members
- BIA
- Real estate organizations
- School boards
- Students (elementary, high school, post-secondary)

Group 2

- People who live downtown and in the broader city
- Business owners
- Staff/students from post-secondary schools
- Low-income community members
- Landlords
- Indigenous communities
- Chamber/BIA (but ensure to balance perspectives across different views)
- Sustainable Waterloo

Group 3

- All ages and background
- Vulnerable population
- Social agencies (and can reach people they serve)

Downtown Kitchener Vision and Principles – Phase One Engagement Summary

- Local/small businesses
- Use existing channels to reach and engage
- Community members

Group 4

- Newcomers
- Businesses/BIA
- Not for profit organizations
- Community groups
- Social agencies
- Unhoused people
- Developers
- Educational establishments
- Students

Who needs to stay informed about the project?

Group 1

- Politicians

Group 2

- Community members

Group 3

- Neighbourhoods
- Agencies/community groups
- Institutions
- Students
- Church community
- Property owners
- Sports/recreation groups
- Schools

Group 4

- Politicians
- Developers
- Neighbourhood associations

Part 3 – Equity and Inclusion / Evaluating Engagement

Are there other strategies to ensure the engagement is equitable and inclusive?

Group 1

- Provide people with something meaningful to engage on
- Use language people can understand and ensure information is accessible
- Be genuine in our engagement efforts, and use people's input to impact the project
 - Disingenuous engagement is easy to spot and will distance people from the project
- Make an effort to reach people where they are
- Meet with trusted community leaders and work with them to broaden outreach (build relationships)

Downtown Kitchener Vision and Principles – Phase One Engagement Summary

Group 2

- Clear goals for engagement
- Share impacts/change that have come about because of input received
- Track representation (and need to let people know why we are doing this)

Group 3

- Thematic workshops
- Virtual attendance options
- Multi-format engagement (i.e., virtual, surveys, workshops, etc.) – provide different options
- Meaningful engagement

Group 4

- Different approaches and tools – provide a variety of options
- Be online
- Go to people/different communities
- Translate materials
- Accommodate different needs
- Outreach through organizations/frontline workers

Are there other strategies you would recommend to evaluate the engagement process?

Group 1

- Numbers are not everything – look at the quality of engagement and the effort
- Do people feel heard and that they influenced outcomes?
- What is the depth of engagement?

Group 2

- Evaluate the tracking of representation
- Has everyone had their voice heard?

Group 3

- How to capture and analyze qualitative input
- Data needs to reflect quality of conversation and input – taking accurate notes
- Surveys about the consultation process

Group 4

- Gauging awareness and marketing efforts

Part 4 – Engagement Ideas

A list of potential engagement and communication tactics were shared with DCWG members, and they were asked to suggest any additional ideas beyond the list.

What additional strategies do you suggest to best engage the public?

Group 1

- Idea boards/suggestion boards
- Have a presence at local events

Group 2

- In-person and virtual workshops
- Surveys at pop-ups

Downtown Kitchener Vision and Principles – Phase One Engagement Summary

- Go to where people are
- Keep topics interesting
- Door knocking
- Make it fun for people
- Family-friendly opportunities
- Free parking
- Language/translation
- Mail outs/notices

Group 3

- Intentionally design/combine paper and online surveys
- Town halls and workshops
- Community organizations and agencies
- Smaller group discussions – make space for people
- Offer meetings at various times (afternoons, evenings, weekends)
- Various delivery methods

Group 4

- ‘selfie’ stand
- Representatives in post-secondary institutions
- Hashtags/social media campaigns
- Digital and mail
- Events and markets
- Coffee shops
- Community group outreach

What additional strategies do you suggest to best communicate engagement opportunities to the public?

Group 1

- Name/market the project something recognizable, interesting and well-designed
- Mail drops/fliers
- Condo lobby fliers

Group 2

- Local media
- Trusted community voices

Group 3

- Better link the City website and social media
- Neighbourhood associations – reach out to them to inform their members

Group 4

- Digital and mail
- Partnering with groups with established communications channels
- DCWG members promoting opportunities

Discussion – Chair Selection Process

A potential chair selection process was shared with DCWG members for their input and consideration. DCWG members suggested and agreed upon an alternative process, as follows:

Downtown Kitchener Vision and Principles – Phase One Engagement Summary

- Members can send nominations for co-chair to the project team
- Members may nominate other members or themselves
- If a member has been nominated by someone else, the project team will check with them first to see if they are interested in being co-chair
- Nominees will meet with Justin Readman from the City (co-chair) to further determine interest

Wrap Up and Next Steps

A follow-up survey will be sent to DCWG members to help determine topics of future meetings. The project team thanked the DCWG members for participating in the meeting and the process.

City of Kitchener Downtown Community Working Group Meeting #3 Summary

The second Downtown Community Working Group (DCWG) meeting was held on October 4, 2022, from 4:30 to 6:30 pm at the Downtown Community Centre. 16 of 30 of the Downtown Community Working Group members were in attendance. Discussions at the meeting are summarized below.

Discussion – Housing, Growth, Neighbourhood, Movement of People & Goods

As part of the process to develop a vision and principles, the theme-based workshops for these topics will explore the following key questions:

- **Growth** – where and how should more people and jobs be added in DTK?
- **Housing** - How can DTK be a home for all (e.g., housing supply, housing affordability)?
- **Neighbourhood** - How do we imagine DTK as a distinct neighborhood?
- **Movement of People and Goods** – How do we plan and maintain a transportation system that supports and prioritizes safety for all users and reduces automobile dependence while providing safe and efficient movement of people and goods in and through the downtown?

Working group members were asked to identify additional information, experts and knowledge that would support discussions about housing, growth, neighbourhoods, and movement of people & goods. Responses are below.

Housing

- Heights –what is included in the Official Plan for heights, what is being built, and what are the trade-offs.
- Trends in houselessness, and how that contextualizes historically.
- Housing affordability in the downtown areas
- Understanding a breakdown of housing types (i.e., single bedroom, two-bedroom, three bedroom, etc.)

Schools

- What properties exist, what programs and populations
- How children can get around town

Growth

- Policies and changes because of students coming from abroad
- Trends on newcomer populations

Mobility

- Pedestrian use now
- How people are moving around and where they are going (for all modes, not just cars)
- Complete streets that are designed for pedestrians and cyclists first
- Explore what it takes to make a pedestrian-focused downtown
- Bike sharing
- Safety considerations for pedestrians

Parking

- How can we leverage the excess parking
- Most developments do not include outdoor amenities or parkland, is there an opportunity to leverage these parking areas?
- Bicycle parking

Policies

- What is already in place? Frameworks and plans already in place
- What permissions existing in zoning and the current Official Plan and Regional Official Plan

Experts

- Strategies used in other cities, and stats on what changes this has produced in outcomes they are seeing
- Darren Kropf – Active Transportation
- Someone who can speak to 15-minute cities

Discussion – Existing Businesses and Recovery, Business Imagine Forward, Public Spaces and Events, Animation and Street Life

As part of the process to develop a vision and principles, the theme-based workshops for these topics will explore the following key questions:

- **Supporting Existing Businesses and Recovery** (1-4 years out) – How do we support businesses in recovering from the impacts of the pandemic?
- **Business Imagine Forward** (5-10 years out) - What does the retail, hospitality, service, and office sectors look like in the DTK?
- **Public spaces** - How do we plan and support engaging public spaces and places (e.g., parks and amenity spaces) that support a vibrant DTK neighbourhood and quality of life?
- **Events, Animation, and Street life** – How do we support a vibrant street life through festivals, programs, patios etc.?

Working group members were asked to identify additional information, experts and knowledge that would support discussions about business recovery, business forward, public spaces and amenities and events. Responses are below.

Business recovery and business imagine forward

- Loss of manufacturing jobs in downtown
- Linkage between employment and affordability of living, lifestyle and how changes in the employment mix impact the community
- Relationship between workplaces, income and expenditures for households
- Who is frequenting business downtown (whether people living downtown are using the businesses – who is shopping downtown as opposed to a mall or shopping centre)
- Gaps in retail – what is needed to justify bringing a business downtown and what are the drivers for a business to locate downtown
- Walkability and reasons for walking (such as distances between amenities)
- Historical context of businesses in Kitchener
- Trends in businesses in the future
- Conflict between active transportation versus parking needs for business

Public spaces

- View of leash-free dog areas
- What is the utilization of public spaces – are they at capacity?
- Libraries, community centres, and City Hall are important public spaces too and should be included in the discussion

Events, animation, and street life

- City staff – what is planned, what it takes to plan events
- What events exist and how well are they attended, and how has that changed over time
- Potential discussion question – what DCWG members wish existed

Experts

- BIA to speak on behalf of business owners, patio program, what they are looking to achieve
- Business owners who chose to move out of the downtown
- Hear from businesses themselves, what policies do they want to see implemented
- First Nations and Indigenous groups perspectives on land, use of public spaces and naming

Discussion – Climate and Environmental Leadership and Equity, Safety and Security

As part of the process to develop a vision and principles, the workshops for these topics will explore the following key questions:

- **Climate/Environmental Leadership** – How should Kitchener's commitments on climate change and sustainable development be considered and balanced with all other considerations in DTK's future?
- **Equity** - How do we create a downtown that meets the needs of all, is welcoming to all and provides opportunities for all? How do we support those most in need?
- **Safety and Security** - How can we construct and foster an empathetic, supportive community?

Working group members were asked to identify additional information, experts and knowledge that would support discussions about climate and environmental leadership, equity, and safety and security. Responses are below.

Equity and security

- Clearly define terminology – i.e., what is affordable housing? What is assisted housing? What is affordability?
- Identify properties the City of Kitchener owns/leases and how this could help fill the need for housing
- Resources for Additions
- Affordable housing – is it accessible for those experiencing houselessness
- Clarity on mixed housing terminology

Climate and environmental leadership

- What is needed to get district energy downtown?
- What would it take to have a retrofitting program downtown?
- Plan for waste collection (specifically organics) in multi-residential
- How can the individual/business owner help achieve climate goals and targets

Experts

- Experts from House of Friendships
- One Roof – why they moved and how it helps support their clients
 - Understanding of where the resources are to support houseless – opportunity to locate all in one area
- Expert from Unsheltered Campaign
- Experts – on children's needs for safety in the community
- Hearing from groups representing houseless individuals and/or lower income populations
- Sustainable Waterloo Region – what are the opportunities for small business
- Indigenous leader on environmental issues
- Mathew Day – to discuss building codes

All Topics

- Comparators from other cities for all
- How do the provincial policies impact here

Discussion – Workshop Formats

The following suggestions were received from DCWG members over the course of the meeting regarding workshop format:

- Use smaller group discussions
- Rotate groups, so DCWG members are working with different people
- Report back to the larger group on the small group discussions
- Use “turn and talk” techniques, where members consider response and/or questions in small groups before sharing with the larger group
- Use medium-sized circle discussions, where each person gets a chance to talk in subsequent order
- Non-verbal gestures to show agreement/support, without taking up talking time

Discussion – Topic-Based Workshop Survey Results

The group discussed the priorities that emerged from the survey asking their thoughts on the topic-based workshops, as follows:

- Housing is so important. It would affect everything else. It is a necessity. The fact that people cannot attain housing suggests something is fundamentally wrong.
- Housing needs to be clearly defined, so we understand what affordability means to the downtown, not overall affordability in general.
- These top five make sense to me, as drivers for people living and visiting downtown.
- Is it possible to start to focus on the top two? What are the main things we need to focus on and use the others as lens.

Proposed Combination of Topics

Regarding the proposed combination of topics for workshops, the DCWG had the following comments:

- Like that they are grouped into five key areas, can we consider narrowing down further? For example,, two key things?
- Can we consider at home, in public spaces and at work/businesses as the themes?

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- We do not want to lose sight of the complexity of the issues we are discussing.
- We need to be mindful of the intersectionality of issues.
- I do not want this group to duplicate the Housing for All groups' work at the City. We can draw out the downtown component of that work.
- Equity – worry about it as a separate item, as it is embedded in all others.
- Consider including a value-based question as a litmus test to the ideas to ensure overarching elements such as equity are not missed.
- Topics cannot be viewed as silos; each one affects the other.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

The project team thanked the DCWG members for participating in the meeting and the process, committing to the next steps:

- Slides with speaking notes will be shared on the shared Teams drive for members to review.
- Share potluck survey with DCWG (survey conducted under the My Main Street Program, specific to main street businesses/gaps in the business mix).
- Next meeting November 4, 2022

City of Kitchener Downtown Community Working Group Meeting #4 Summary

The fourth Downtown Community Working Group (DCWG) meeting was held on November 1, 2022, from 4:30 to 6:30 pm. The meeting began at the Downtown Community Centre followed by a guided bus tour of some DTK public spaces led by Niall Lobley, Director of Parks and Cemeteries. The following stops were made:

- Goudies Lane and Vogelsang Green
- Carl Zehr Square and Gaukel Street
- Francis Green
- Victoria Park
- Drive by Charles/Benton

19 of 30 of the Downtown Community Working Group members were in attendance. Discussions at the meeting are summarized below.

Welcoming Recap – Co-Chair, Timelines, Process

Justin Redman introduced the working group's new co-chair, Jyoti Mehta, to the group.

Natalie Goss provided an overview of the thematic discussions and timelines, which include the following (* note additional meetings):

- November 1 & December 6 - Public spaces, events, animation, street life
- January 10 & 24* - Housing, neighbourhoods, movement of people & goods
- February 7 – Climate and environmental leadership
- February 21* - Existing businesses and recovery & businesses imagine forward
- March 7 - Safety and security

Natalie noted an equity lens would apply to all workshops.

DCWG members noted the themes cover the major areas; however, they noted the importance of culture and that there should be an opportunity to discuss culture. There was a recommendation to look at leading cities when discussing each topic (i.e., Portland for transportation and Markham for district energy).

Susan Hall, LURA, reviewed the process of developing the vision and shared examples of vision statements from other locations to demonstrate the level of detail the final vision will include. There was a suggestion to include the historical context of the downtown as part of the final vision document.

Discussion – Parks and Public Spaces

As part of the tour, working group members were asked to consider the following questions:

- What do you value most about public spaces downtown?
- Thinking of the future, what kind of public spaces would you want for the next generation?
- What top three things stood out to you on the tour?
- Anything else you would like to share?

Responses are below.

Value of Public Spaces Downtown

Participants shared the following perspectives on the value of downtown public spaces, including parks:

Identity, multi-use and multi-purpose

- Multi-use for diverse audiences and purposes (children, pets, performances, dining, etc.)
- Multi-purpose, functionality
- That these spaces will function as someone yard or outdoor space
- People-oriented
- The diversity of space
- Have a strong sense of identity and capture the imagination of the city

Accessible, safe and inclusive

- Well-lit
- Accessibility (wheelchair/stroller/ etc. access)
- Kids and adults to play and meet friends
- Are both psychologically and physically accessible, places that all types of people want to spend time in and can spend time in.

Gathering, welcoming and relaxing

- Opportunity for different people and cultures to come together
- Comfortable seating
- A place to sit down and relax and enjoy the city
- Just wandering around and watching people

Active, arts, culture, events

- Event space
- Art space
- Interaction between festivals and community events
- Enjoying events
- Can accommodate a wide variety of grassroots programming while still maintaining a cohesive identity as a space

Aesthetic

- Beautiful
- Shade
- Greenery
- Great mix of old and new – historical and modern architecture
- Are architecturally or artistically interesting. This makes me want to visit those spaces and spend time there.

Walkable and connected

- Walkability (close to other amenities such as stores with longer hours, and bathrooms)
- They are all within walking distance of each other. No need to find parking or fight traffic
- both include and are surrounded by amenities and attractions that make them feel lively and vibrant.
- Play an intentional role within the broader network of public spaces and parks.

Public Spaces for the Future

Identity, multi-use and multi-purpose

- Pop-up activities which will allow flexible use of open spaces
- Active spaces for multiple usages

Accessible, safe and inclusive

- Easily accessible
- Places that are inclusive and think about who would be using it so that you feel welcome
- Safe places at all times

Gathering, welcoming and relaxing

- Green spaces to disconnect from the fast pace of life
- Welcoming

Active, arts, culture, events

- Space for arts and music
- Bring the arts to the public (visual, theatrical/plays, music, festivals, etc.)

Aesthetic

- Beautiful
- Historical
- Shade
- Greenery

Walkable and connected

- Closer to transit
- More walkable cities (i.e., 15-minute neighbourhoods)

Amenities

- Commercial (cafes and restaurants) right beside kids' play areas
- A dog forest would be great (see Brown County Dog Park in Wisconsin)
- A dedicated local food plaza with local food trucks, pop up restaurant cabins, and table spaces (possibly like the boardwalk in Halifax). This could be a destination space that would provide local food entrepreneurs with a chance to test and grow their business, it could serve as a revenue source for the city and would be an attraction for both community members and tourists.
- A designated green space where people can bring and consume their own alcoholic beverages after work or on weekends, similar spaces exist in Germany and other European countries.
- Downtown sports facilities: outdoor basketball courts, outdoor skatepark, road hockey rink
- Publicly accessible “re-wilded” space, forest or other, that collaborates and builds reconciliation with the indigenous communities
- Publicly accessible community garden plots that downtown community members can plant, and other community members can walk through and enjoy.

General

- More like what you are doing

Top Three Things

- Overlapping spaces
- Connecting spaces and intersecting (City Hall and Gaukel)
- Emphasis on multi-use space for the future
- The amount of thought in the design and aesthetic of the parks and public spaces
- That more people need to hear this information and plans!
- Planning for many uses of space
- The idea of “overuse” of space
- Lighting
- It feels like Kitchener is on the right track with its planning for public space, however, I think that it needs to be more ambitious in placemaking through public space. For example, the new City Hall Square is nice but quite conservative. The square would certainly benefit from more unique public art, sculpture, planter space, a more full-service bandshell, etc. It's not enough just to include subtle features (like the limestone wall), the goal should always be to create public spaces that are immediately recognizable as extraordinary.
- Physical connection between public spaces is important. For example, Gaukel should be pedestrian-oriented the full stretch from King to Joseph to connect City Hall Square to Victoria /Willow River Park. Public spaces within downtown should be part of a cohesive network, not a patchwork of isolated islands!
- We need more public spaces that add to our collective civic identity. This means intentionally including things for which the community can build emotional attachment to. This will increase and improve our civic connections and will turn “places” into “destinations” to be enjoyed by community members and visitors. As a possible example, the city could move the beloved (and hated) giant intestine sculpture to the City Hall Square. It would instantly become a quirky and Instagram-worthy destination.

Other

- Has the City thought of ongoing engagement, a sort of bus tour like this for the public, a “Jane’s Walk” thing?
- The information is online, but hard to read and piecemeal rather than this cohesive vision.
- Let’s stop naming buildings and public spaces after historical people. It can create unnecessary division among the community (as with Victoria Park or SJAM is not necessary. People can be commemorated and memorialized in museums or on informational plaques. Places should be named for their location, their intention, or a feature that defines them.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

The project team thanked the DCWG members for participating in the meeting and the process, committing to the next steps:

- Slides with speaking notes will be shared on the shared Teams drive for members to review.
- Next meeting December 6, 2022.

City of Kitchener Downtown Community Working Group Meeting #5 Summary

The fifth Downtown Community Working Group (DCWG) meeting was held on December 6, 2022, from 4:30 to 6:30 pm at the Downtown Community Centre. 16 of 29 members were in attendance. Discussions at the meeting are summarized below.

Examples of Great Public Spaces

Ahead of the meeting, DCWG members were asked to think about the great public spaces they have visited and what makes them great and to come prepared to share those at the meeting. The following is a summary of the examples that were shared, and other points raised:

- Highline Park in New York City includes principles of using forgotten spaces.
- Lux Gardens in Paris features bistro tables around a fountain to sit around water.
- Washington Square in New York City features trees, flowering shrubs, low-maintenance landscaping, lighting/lamps and fencing.
- Bensberg Castle in Germany has a public walk to the fortress; there is something to explore further. Features benches/water, play structures, a series of small gardens from sister cities, and a pagoda.
- Main City Square in Hamburg, Germany, has thousands of people sitting in the space, people were sitting enjoying picnics, etc. A place where people gather and be together. This is a good example of fluid uses.
- Belfast (downtown) has a sculpture in the centre that children can play on. A pedestrian-only space for leisure.
- Rathauspark in Vienna, Austria has pathways lined with benches very close together; there is a fountain and trees. There are always people there in part because there are places to sit.
- Museum's Quarter in Vienna, Austria, is a pedestrian-only courtyard space. There are interesting geometric shapes for people to sit on. Shops and cafes are close. It seemed to be used by different people at different times of the day.
- The "Rocky Stairs" in Philadelphia provide a space to go and sit, and people watch.
- New York City has little pockets or corners incorporating small micro spaces that people can enjoy.
- Sherbourne Common in Toronto has an abstract-style playground and across the street is seating - park benches/ Muskoka chairs. It is accessible and well-lit, and they have shows/concerts. A park where you forget you are in a city.
- The upper part of City Hall in Kitchener has stairs, benches and planters. This was a favourite place to go with kids. It is a space that could be used for children and is separated from cars.
- The University of Ottawa campus has little greenspaces between buildings adjacent to walking paths. It feels safe and well-travelled, with pockets of enclosure and protection.
- Older parts of Toronto often are a couple of blocks away from a major street, well-travelled, but big trees, a bit more programmed, small and contained. It has a bit of a mixed park feeling.
- Access along pathways and transit roads.
- There is a need for active transportation to link parks together.
- Chile/Argentina is investing in their public spaces as the densities increase. You cannot reduce the amount and quality of private space without increasing the amount and quality of public space.

- Savanna, Georgia, parks were part of designing the city in a very systematic and rigid way.
- Place des Vosges in Paris is another example of a memorable park space.
- We want to avoid the mistakes of Waterloo in the design of open spaces – that are not coordinated.
- Consider industrial lands as opportunities for public space. Examples worldwide from Europe, Asia and South America – where they have taken over these spaces to create parkland.
- Spur Line Trail, Iron Horse Trail, Victoria Park, and City Hall in Kitchener are great. We have these great elements, but they are not connected.
- Sidewalks are not the same as pedestrian paths. They end up being throw-away spaces. If we could find secondary threads to connect these areas, better connections, create even visual connections.
- Enjoying spaces that are free of cars. In Europe, spaces are developed before cars.
- Consider how the edge of public spaces is defined by the buildings abutting them.

Roundtable Discussions – Public Spaces

DCWG members were asked to engage in small roundtable discussions on public spaces in DTK. Discussions from each roundtable are summarized below.

Are public parks in downtown Kitchener important, and if so, why?

Group 1

- Yes. The focus has been on housing, but we need public spaces for people to go to accompany new housing. Both the City and developers should provide public spaces.
- People move downtown because they want to be around other people. Public spaces provide an element of community.
- Public spaces allow people to connect with nature and green spaces.
- If the goal is to provide equal access, people will go where they feel they belong.
- There have been tensions in Kitchener around encampments in public spaces, and equal access is an important term to use. How can we address it meaningfully?

Group 2

- Yes, parks are important. Provide casual, informal spaces.
- Victoria Park is a favourite.
- Food forest concept.
- Parks can provide teachable moments.
- Public space is important – need different types of spaces for different purposes.
- We will always need traditional park space.

Group 3

- Yes, but not in all areas.
- South of King – conserve greenspace.
- We need to be balanced in our approach.
- Public spaces need to be integrated.
- Spaces now are not intentional.
- Both amount and quality, are critical.
- People cannot live at density without the provision of public spaces.

Downtown Kitchener Vision and Principles – Phase One Engagement Summary

- Stitch together the fragments.
- Make connections between buildings and spaces.

Group 4

- Big buildings are increasingly surrounding us.
- Offices also need public spaces for people to unwind.
- Public spaces cultivate respect for where you live, to have spaces that you can use how you want.
- Create appeal in a place.
- Public spaces need to be usable year-round.

How important are parks compared to other priorities in the downtown?

Group 1

- All priorities depend on each other, and there is a need for balance.
- Parks are critical to the quality of life.
- We need to make space for leisure time.
- As living spaces get smaller with density, public spaces become even more important.
- When working with developers, be creative in providing public space: update guidelines and requirements for providing public spaces.

Group 2

- Parks are more important than vehicular space.
- Design DTK around public space.
- Housing should, however, be a top priority.
- Smaller parks are more community-minded.
- Vibrancy of community space.

Group 3

- Density necessitates public space.
- Investments in transit/cycling have not been the same for public space.
- The City alone cannot solve affordable housing but could invest in parks/public spaces.
- Public space is a very high priority.
- Public space is a catalyst for other work.
- Extend spaces – they are for everyone.
- Parks should help spur cultural investments.

Group 4

- Developers should be concerned about the streetscape to encourage people to live here.
- Competing interests need to work together – they need one another.
- Parks and residential need to be well-balanced and have equal priority.
- We need guidelines surrounding the private provision of public space through developments.
 - This will be the community members' backyard.
- Private amenities exist in some new developments, which takes the pressure off public spaces.

What should parks in the downtown environment look like?

Group 1

- Have something linking parks (like a theme or other unifying element).
- Greenspace is irreplaceable – we need to maintain what we have.
- Integrate new green spaces in development projects – ask developers to provide these spaces.
- Include interesting features/attractions (e.g., chess tables, giant Jenga, swings, water features, etc.).
- Quiet spaces are also important.

Group 2

- Trees are critical.
- Can integrate pocket park spaces.
- Using public spaces differently.
- Closing of roads – especially in the summer.
- Smaller.
- Interesting spaces that provide identity.
- Emotional connection to space.
- Beautiful public spaces need recycling/waste facilities.

Group 3

- Open space.
- Not an afterthought/not just leftover land.
- Designed with intention.
- Delineate spaces.
- Partially framed by the built environment.
- Trees, water, greenery.
- Designed landscapes.
- Lighting.

Group 4

- It can be simple – for example, some Muskoka chairs set out for public use.
- We are missing a sense of continuity currently.
- We need more variety of uses in our public spaces; more amenities.
- Buildings need to be well-designed—European examples of patios that spill into and connect with streets.
- “Use what you have” – enhance what is available.
- Multi-functional spaces.
- Games.
- Safety is important – parks should be accessible at any time of day.
- Provide shade.
- Pockets of amenities threaded together (benches).
- Accessible.
- Highline is a great example of taking an underutilized space.
- Toronto's example of reclaiming dead space (Underpass Park, the Brickworks) with art.

How should we adapt other public spaces we have?

Group 1

- Close streets at certain times of day to provide additional public spaces.
- Goudies Lane and Gaukel Street are great examples of public spaces being created.
- Parking garages can provide spaces for views.
- Each park/public space can serve different community needs (design and adapt to the demographics of DTK).

Group 2

- Can we turn corners into greenspaces?
- Make use of street space.
- Take a street that can be closed for five years and keep it closed to cars.
- Put play first and use spaces to create joy.
- Interactive spaces outside.

Group 3

- Reduce parking and provide more public spaces.
- Close King Street.
- Walking streets/pedestrian streets.
- Invest in attributes to enhance spaces.
- Use lanes for cultural zones.

Group 4

- Joseph has such potential, but it is barren.
- Opportunities along Duke to make it more welcoming to pedestrians.
- How could we use the right-of-way sections of streets and sidewalks?
- Car-free areas (even on specific days).
- Range of experiences.
- How can we utilize public spaces that are sitting empty? Music would be a great way to use these spaces.
- Night market in an empty parking lot.
- Transform dead industrial spaces with art.

Based on our discussion today, how would you summarize the future of park spaces in downtown Kitchener in a single statement?

Group 1

- Key elements:
 - Variety/unique elements/reasons to be there
 - Connecting thread between public spaces
 - Green and natural elements
 - Welcoming
 - Social
 - Places to relax and unwind
 - Year-round
- Future park spaces in DTK will be intentionally designed to meet the variety of needs of community members by offering year-round, welcoming, and social greenspaces.

Group 2

- DTK has public spaces for people that connect us to community and nature and prioritize people over cars. Public spaces are defined and cared for by their neighbours and are connected as part of a public ecosystem. Public spaces are welcoming to all.

Group 3

- Park spaces as the “High Street.” Streets are public spaces; public spaces are parks. We want parks to be filled with diverse people and uses and bordered by diverse and complementary uses as a destination that can meet many needs. These spaces that are the living rooms of the city, support people, cultures, and activities of all types, free from cars. Parks are not just grass, trees, and trails – they are intentionally designed.

Group 4

- Key elements:
 - Inclusive
 - Creative
 - Innovative
 - Accessible
 - Optimized
- Creative and innovative public spaces that make the most of what we have are accessible, part of a connected network, people-focused, and animated by diverse, inclusive programming.

Wrap-Up and Next Steps

The project team thanked the DCWG members for participating in the meeting and the process. Two workshops will take place in January (January 10 and 24) and February (February 7 and 21).

City of Kitchener Downtown Community Working Group Meeting #6 Summary

The sixth Downtown Community Working Group (DCWG) meeting was held on January 10, 2023, from 4:30 to 6:30 pm at the Downtown Community Centre. 21 of 29 members were in attendance. Discussions at the meeting are summarized below.

Question and Answer

Q: How much is housing development a factor in the success of a BIA and its businesses?

A: More density will improve foot traffic, encourage business and services to open within walking distance of the future developments.

Q: What is the attitude of businesses towards the King Street closure?

A: Opinions are mixed, some like to see it activated, some have concerns with deliveries, and food delivery has become key for restaurants.

Q: Don't laneways assist in the King Street closure issue?

A: Some businesses don't have laneway access.

Q: What ideas for improving the downtown have you learned from other BIAs you connect with?

A: Making downtown an art destination.

Q: Aside from people moving downtown, in the mind of the BIA, what would be the most important change that could be made?

A: The BIA is moving into a consultation process with the Economic Development division in the City and we will be asking this question.

Q: Part of the drive to remove encampments was from the BIA. Does the BIA contribute to the social issues happening downtown?

A: Approximately seven or eight years ago, the BIA created the Discovery Team to help make DTK safe and welcoming for all. Recently, the BIA has taken a step back because the issues are too complex and should be handled by the City and Region.

Q: What are rents like for businesses looking to locate DTK?

A: The market rate is comparable. We spend a lot of time and money doing business attraction.

Roundtable Discussions – Culture, Street Life and Events

DCWG members were asked to engage in small roundtable discussions on the topic of culture, street life, and events in DTK. Discussions from each roundtable are summarized below.

What does a vibrant downtown culture look and feel like to you? (Builds off homework question)

Group 1

- Diverse food and experiences, including art and music that are appealing to all ages.
- Authentic and connects with the history of the space.
- Space allows for people to connect with each other, and those who live nearby.
- Encourages community members to have experiences for themselves.

Group 2

- A layering of all the things that is culture.
- Beautiful buildings and spaces; history is celebrated.
- Allows for a mixture of institutions and human activity.
- Has an identity where people see themselves in the space.

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Group 3

- Builds on the neighbourhood feel of the surrounding areas and feels like a community.
- The space should be safe, walkable and include places to sit.
- Interesting art and installations that draw people, including festivals and events.

Group 4

- Diverse and inclusive space that is well lit and safe for everyone.
- There is a vibrancy around the clock, especially on weekends.
- Good quality business and restaurants, with multicultural food.
- Has a vibrant arts and music scene, with local artists.

Group 5

- Bright lighting which makes the space safe and accessible.
- It is animated and activated.
- Culturally diverse, lots of music and art.
- A space for everyone, all ages and accessible.

What does it take for downtown to be a cultural centre? What does that mean for street life and events?

Group 1

- Emphasis on what already exists and building connections, allowing it to grow naturally.
- It takes concentrated energy and animation.
- Intentional activity in all seasons.
- Integration between business and street life, events.

Group 2

- Needs to be a space where everyone feels welcome and is free to express themselves.
- Has a sense of ownership and pride in the space.
- Cultural activity that includes things to see, do, hear and eat.
- A place where special events are the norm.

Group 3

- There should be a bold vision and narrative for the space.
- The space is artist-driven.
- Intentional activity that is booked and scheduled.
- Includes spaces to sit with shade.

Group 4

- Celebrates all events and occasions, more than Canada Day.
- The space should be interactive, walking tours are a great example.
- Artists doing activations, making it a destination.
- Murals will not fix everything; social media can be utilized more.
- Free and accessible for everyone.

Group 5

- Need to define Kitchener identity more.
- Fosters diversity.
- A space that is accessible and easy.

Downtown Kitchener Vision and Principles – Phase One Engagement Summary

- A mix of produced events and attractions that bring people together.

In what ways could arts and culture be prioritized by municipalities?

Group 1

- Make it easier for festivals to be successful, road closures would help.
- Make events a normal part of downtown life.
- Grants, subsidies, incentives.

Group 2

- Free studio space for artists.
- Incubators and artist housing.
- Invest in the Centre in the Square or cut it loose.
- Community centre space with a daycare and classes for adults.

Group 3

- Great holistic thinking.
- Building on the existing assets of the downtown.
- Interconnectedness between physical spaces and the rest of the city.
- Help in keeping costs affordable for artists.
- Protection of artist space, utilizing spaces for play and music.

Group 4

- Prioritize art submissions by non-dominant groups.
- Elevate local musicians and artists.
- More thoughtful events, intentional, better logistics.
- Encourage diversity and accessibility.

Group 5

- Leverage what the city already has.
- Multi-purpose.
- Reduce barriers to visiting businesses.
- Use available space for public open spaces or parkettes.
- It takes the buy-in of the community and local businesses.

What words best describe the arts and culture scene?

Group 1

- Fledgling.
- Disconnected.
- Better than perceived, lack of awareness.

Group 2

- No responses received.

Group 3

- Intermittent and under the radar.
- Lack of cohesion.
- Culturally rich, high quality.

Group 4

- Quiet.

Downtown Kitchener Vision and Principles – Phase One Engagement Summary

- Lack of intention.
- Enjoy the current market Saturdays.

Group 5

- Pride in where you live and work.
- Accessible.
- Elimination of red tape to foster art installations.
- Engaging and unique.

Based on our discussion today, how would you summarize the future of the DTK culture in a single statement?

Group 1

- Downtown Kitchener will be a destination for events, where culture is an authentic part of everyday life.

Group 2

- Our city's living room.
 - A living room invites people in
 - DTK should feel like home
 - People can come and experience and participate
 - Ownership of creation

Group 3

- Alive with a heartbeat of events; always something going on.

Group 4

- Intentional
- Inclusive
- Diverse
- Quality
- Local/homey
- Accessible
- Continuous flow

Group 5

- Uniqueness creates the destination, vibrant and interactive.

Wrap Up and Next Steps

The project team thanked the DCWG members for participating in the meeting and the process. The next meeting will take place on January 24, 2023.

City of Kitchener Downtown Community Working Group Meeting #7 Summary

The seventh Downtown Community Working Group (DCWG) meeting was held on January 24, 2023, from 4:30 to 7:00 pm at the Downtown Community Centre. 19 of 29 members were in attendance. Discussions at the meeting are summarized below.

Growth and Housing Activity

The following input was collected during the activity as the group worked through two different considerations in a hands-on growth and housing activity:

1. Adding 18,000 units of housing to provide more housing choice.
2. Adding an additional 13,500 units to provide housing affordability.

Consideration 1

Input following the first consideration included the following:

- Important to have low-rise units to make it feel like a neighbourhood – to allow for a transition from existing lower density neighbourhoods to higher density development.
- Want to see additional housing units near transit stations.
- Want to see mid-rise units over the old police station and other business.
- Add low-rise units to support the population of people experiencing homelessness, near to where they are staying now.
- Use former industrial lands for housing.
- Develop housing on the parking lot at Charles and Water Streets.
- There is underutilized land near the square.

Consideration 2

Input following the second consideration included the following:

- Density can be a good thing if done in a mixed way.
- This is a good visual reminder that density does not mean the entire city gets demolished; we can intensify but still retain our identity.
- It is really amazing that we can add this much density and the city remains vibrant.
- If there is this much density, there needs to be schools and other supports in place.
- Need to include how traffic will work with and around this new growth.
- The corridors can handle the density we need to add.

Roundtable Discussions – Growth and Housing

Following the activity, DCWG members were asked to engage in small roundtable discussions on growth and housing in DTK. Discussions from each roundtable are summarized below.

What locations are suitable for low, medium or high-density growth? Why?

Group 1

- It is important for all areas to have a mix of density and types of housing.
- Density should be concentrated near the LRT line.
- Medium and higher density areas need supports and amenities such as schools, shops, and parks.
- All areas need to include green space.

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Group 2

- Medium and high density should be concentrated along transit lines.
- Important to examine opportunities for additional units in laneways, backyards etc.
- Need to disperse density across the City of Kitchener and not just downtown.
- Necessary to protect green space and build around it.

Group 3

- Proximity to the LRT should determine the density.
- Growth should occur in corridors such as Queen and Ottawa.
- Have low and medium density as buffer areas for established neighbourhoods.
- Use underutilized land like parking lots; avoid demolition for environmental reasons.
- Important to protect green space.

Group 4

- Limit sprawl of growth outside of the city.
- Distribute the higher density, have transition zones, options for families.
- Ensure higher density is livable i.e.: people, excitement, parks and green space.
- Medium and high density along the corridors.

How would you organize and distribute intensification?

Group 1

- Close to ION stations and other transit, across from hospital.
- Creation of destinations near amenities.
- Clustering in a way that makes sense.
- Mixed use is important.

Group 2

- Ensure that space is left for businesses, arts and culture.
- Integrate the new construction into the existing fabric of the city.
- Proximity to shops, restaurants and groceries.
- Organize in an integrated fashion, services need to be present before density.

Group 3

- Intensification near the transit routes.
- Understand what is enticing people to move to Kitchener.
- Mixed use is important.
- We need to encourage the public's understanding of this topic.

Group 4

- Organized alongside schools, parks, daycares and businesses.
- Mixed use and distributed, not all in the same spot.
- Development that works across socio-economic spectrum.
- Growth should be across the city.

How important are housing choice and affordability to you and is this reflected in this exercise?

Group 1

- Diversity in housing choice and supply mix i.e.: deeply affordable units.
- Rent control should be considered.

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- Variety of housing types is very important.
- Expansion of housing types, not just single units.

Group 2

- Housing choice and affordability are incredibly important.
- Supply is not enough to drive affordability.
- City needs to look at other options to encourage affordability and housing type diversity.
- Encourage people to move through the housing spectrum.

Group 3

- Variety of housing is very important, mix needs to include the missing middle.
- Need to have more medium sized dwelling units.
- Encouragement of co-op housing.
- Density can be achieved without relying on high rises (i.e.: multigenerational housing).

Group 4

- Encourage affordable housing across the city; this is currently lacking.
- Choice of housing form is important, range of unit sizes.
- City could incentivize missing housing types.
- Important to destigmatize rental units.

Based on our discussion today, how would you summarize the future of growth and housing in downtown Kitchener in a single statement?

Group 1

- Intentionally planned neighbourhoods with a diversity of housing types and densities including affordable and accessible housing. Welcoming to everyone and a diversity of transportation types.

Group 2

- Intentional, thoughtful, livable, diverse and unique.
- Communities should feel unique and 'not cookie cutter'.

Group 3

- Well designed, intentional, integrated.
- Livable, transit-oriented, mix of housing types.
- Downtown Kitchener is well designed, intensified core neighbourhood, where housing is integrated with commercial retail, arts, culture and green space.

Group 4

- Livable, variety, mixed income.
- The future of growth and housing in DTK offers well thought out, livable housing, with a variety of choices and walkable amenities.

Growth and Housing Activity Input

The group also provided input on the growth and housing activity, summarized below:

- Low density foam blocks do not stay in place.
- A delight to be in an optimistic attitude in the group – exciting to envision more buildings.

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- Having the ability to make some of the housing unit pieces modular, so that they can be stacked.
- Label more streets, trails and green spaces.
- Show the rail lines more clearly.
- Addition of transit terminals would be good.
- The model shows that there is still a lot of white space – the city has not been erased even when we add the density.
- Actively encourage participants to be creative and to dive into the exercise.

Wrap-Up and Next Steps

The project team thanked the DCWG members for participating in the meeting and the process. The next meeting will take place on February 7, 2023.

City of Kitchener Downtown Community Working Group Meeting #8 Summary

The eighth Downtown Community Working Group (DCWG) meeting was held on February 7, 2023, from 4:30 to 6:30 pm at the Downtown Community Centre. Ten of the 29 members were in attendance. Discussions at the meeting are summarized below.

15-minute Neighbourhoods Activity

Working group members were encouraged to explore how downtown Kitchener aligns with the principles of a 15-minute neighbourhood or community. Participants placed pieces of string, representing 750 metres, on the map to explore what is walkable throughout downtown and identify areas for better connection. The string length represents the average distance for a 15-minute walk, based on the City of Kitchener data. The following input was collected during the activity as the group worked through the activity:

- Important to increase the amount of mid-block crossings and connections.
- It is currently challenging to walk to some of the downtown public schools safely and efficiently.
- Victoria Street is one of the most challenging streets for pedestrians.
- With the addition of density, neighbourhood connections need to be considered, particularly connections to schools and amenities.
- Add amenities to the Mill Street area. The crossing to Cortland Street is challenging.
- There is a lack of pedestrian connections to the downtown library.
- There are no easy connections to the Via Rail Station.
- Many streets in DTK are not safe for those with accessibility needs including:
 - Signage on pedestrian streets hangs down and poses a danger to hit pedestrians.
 - During construction, there are many hazards for pedestrians, and there need to be more protective barriers to construction obstacles.
 - Many streets are narrow and full of objects that can pose hazards to accessibility. For example, sandwich board signage, benches, and planters all use part of the walkable area on sidewalks.
 - There are curbs at intersections with gradual slopes into the intersection, but often there are drains or grates in the sidewalk that have little or no warning.

Roundtable Discussions – Neighbourhoods and the Movement of Goods and People

DCWG members were asked to engage in small roundtable discussions on neighbourhoods and the movement of goods and people in DTK. Discussions from each roundtable are summarized below.

What makes a great neighbourhood? What makes it complete?

Group 1

- Includes third spaces (i.e., outside work and home where people can meet).
- Has an anchor that roots the community, i.e., a library.
- Includes accessible services and retail.
- Includes lively spaces in and around homes, such as porches and lawns.
- Has parking available for visitors, which can be used to slow traffic.
- Has diverse community services and amenities.
- Includes distribution of social housing and related services.
- Has a strong transportation infrastructure.

Group 2

- Vibrant community members and people.
- Neighbourhood activities and programming such as Artwalk.
- A central space for people to gather, such as a park.
- Includes a variety of amenities (retail, restaurants, grocery).
- Infrastructure should include wide sidewalks and boulevards to accommodate all users.
- Includes thoughtful design for all needs and abilities.

What barriers/challenges exist that limit movement in and around DTK? How could these be addressed?

Group 1

- Snow clearing for local roads that is properly done includes bike lanes, transit stops and residential sidewalks.
- Sidewalks and roads need better barriers to protect pedestrians.
- A decrease in the turning radius for vehicles at intersections.
- Monitoring and repairing catch basins which get flooded at crosswalks.

Group 2

- The current bike lane network lacks connectivity.
- Lack of direct routes for pedestrians due to train tracks.
- Main road speed limits are too high.
- Speed limits should be reduced, introduce traffic calming measures, widen the boulevards and introduce protected mid-block crossings.
- The Iron Horse Trail and Victoria intersection should have a signalized intersection.

What does a healthy street look like in DTK? (Consider accessibility, mobility, different users, children, seniors, business activity etc.).

Group 1

- Has plenty of shade and shelter.
- Sidewalks which are wide enough and free of obstructions.
- Clear guidelines and grade separation for cyclists.
- Increased continuity for pedestrian and cyclist networks.
- Infrastructure, which is purpose-built for pedestrians and cyclists, not vehicles.

Group 2

- A healthy street has wide sidewalks, proper lighting, benches, shade and planters.
- King Street is a great example of a pedestrian-friendly street.
- Ontario Street could be designed more like King Street.
- Need to consider accessibility, including urban braille and audible indicators.
- Introduce mid-block connections and traffic calming.
- Move away from vehicle-centric design and towards a more pedestrian focus.
- Introduce designated times for different users.
- Victoria Street will need to improve with the introduction of more transit stations.

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If DTK is more pedestrian-focused, what impact does that have on the existing functions of downtown streets?

Group 1

- DTK can be more pedestrian-focused without negatively impacting vehicle infrastructure.
- Improved connections to parking and delivery spaces for businesses are accounted for.

Group 2

- Delivery services and waste collection may be impacted.
- Fewer people on the street may impact safety.
- A balance needs to be struck between various needs.
- The more pedestrian-focused and designed, the lesser the impact.

Based on our discussion today, how would you summarize the future of mobility in downtown Kitchener in a single statement?

Group 1

- Continuous and consistent transportation infrastructure that values pedestrians, cyclists and rollers as much as vehicles in terms of safety, accessibility and choice.

Group 2

- The future of mobility in DTK is a thoughtfully considered, accessible, inclusive and dynamic transportation system that puts pedestrians first.

Wrap-Up and Next Steps

At the end of the meeting, Emily Summers from LURA Consulting introduced the DIY Facilitation Kit. A supplementary e-mail has been sent to all DCWG members.

The project team thanked the DCWG members for participating in the meeting and the process. The next DCWG meeting will be held on February 21, 2023.

City of Kitchener Downtown Community Working Group Meeting #9 Summary

The ninth Downtown Community Working Group (DCWG) meeting was held on February 21, 2023, from 4:30 to 6:30pm at the Downtown Community Centre. 14 of 29 members were in attendance. Discussions at the meeting are summarized below.

Roundtable Discussions – Business Reflections

Ahead of a panel presentation/discussion, working group members in breakout discussions regarding their shopping habits, patterns and desires. Discussions from each group are summarized below.

Reflecting on the past four months, what businesses have you frequented the most?

Group 1

- Various restaurants for dining in
- Bakeries
- Cinema
- Matter of Taste
- Post Office
- Drug Store
- Bookstores
- Vegan grocery store
- Bank

Group 2

- Various bars and restaurants
- Dollarama
- Kitchener Market and food court
- Hasty Market
- Vietnamese Sub
- Mi Tienda Latina
- Golden Heart Bakery
- Portuguese Baker
- Pharmacies
- Bank
- Marks Caribbean Kitchen

Reflecting on the past four months, what types of businesses did you wish were downtown that you would have visited?

Group 1

- Kids clothing and gift store
- Dog grooming
- Instrument stores
- Night life lounge
- Chain pet store
- Music venue
- Dry Cleaners
- Cinema
- Arts and craft supplies

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- Gym

Group 2

- Home goods
- Hardware store
- Shoe store
- Housewares
- Furniture
- Supermarket
- Art Gallery
- Clothing
- Musical Instruments

Based on the group's input on questions 1 and 2, describe the ideal business mix you'd like to see Downtown in the next 10 years.

Group 1

- A mix of everyday essentials and niche items.
- Stores which attract tourism and visitors.
- A variety of price points.
- A mix of independent and chain stores.

Group 2

- A mix of offerings in each area.
- Day to day needs mixed with niche destination shops.
- Hybrid stores with online capacity.
- Emphasis on culture, food, clubs, cafes and entertainment.
- High quality retail.

Panel Discussion

Three members of the DCWG (Linda Jutzi, Phong Tran, and Craig Beattie) participated in a business panel hosted by Cory Bluhm from the City of Kitchener. Following the discussion, working group members asked the following questions:

Q: Is there interest from big businesses at the mall to move downtown?

A: Not at this time. There is no incentive in terms of foot traffic to support such a move.

Q: Why is the Distillery District in Toronto so popular?

A: It is a unique enclave with popular restaurants and bars.

Q: What success did the holiday season pop-up shops have in DTK?

A: They were very popular; pop-ups help by avoiding the initial business cost start up.

Roundtable Discussions – Business Recovery and Imagine Forward

DCWG members were asked to engage in small roundtable discussions regarding the path forward for downtown businesses. Discussions from each roundtable are summarized below.

Reflecting on the panel's insights, what are the key challenges to realizing your ideal business mix? What would you change?

Group 1

- Necessary to have the right space for the businesses.
- Need to have entrepreneurs to open the businesses.
- Lack of a downtown reputation to attract outside businesses.
- Lack of density to achieve foot traffic.
- Ease of plazas and parking in suburban areas.
- Perceptions of a lack of vibrancy.
- Chains provide ease of shopping.
- Financial burden of starting a business.

Group 2

- Lack of foot traffic.
- Downtown lacks critical mass.
- Existing property owners who won't lease their space.

Group 3

- Lack of foot traffic.
- Lack of clarity about when/if offices will return.
- Need to be able to walk to more destinations.
- Rent and start-up costs are high.
- Car dependence.

What solutions could be considered to enable the type of downtown business mix your group aspires to see as an immediate response to the pandemic; and over the next 10 years?

Group 1

- Shared and hybrid spaces.
- Business grants.
- Grants and programs for small business owners.
- Investment in tourism marketing for the downtown.
- Downtown infrastructure and public realm improvements.

Group 2

- Need to have businesses with name recognition.
- Need a good mix of businesses.
- Need to make downtown an appealing destination.
- Build brand loyalty for local business.
- Rent reduction and small business grants.
- Making it more pedestrian friendly and less reliant on cars.
- Become a destination that needs street access and parking to accommodate.

Group 3

- Needs to feel good to go downtown, visually appealing.
- Events to bring foot traffic, consistently.
- Increase in density.
- Restaurants and entertainment to draw people.

Downtown Kitchener Vision and Principles – Phase One Engagement Summary

- Investment from City and Region.
- Business attraction and retention with BIA guidance.

Based on our discussion today, how would you summarize the future of business downtown? (e.g.: We imagine a downtown business experience that is _____. To achieve this, the downtown needs _____).

Group 1

- Fun to browse.
- Consistent.
- Alluring public realm and store fronts.
- Complete mix.
- Pedestrian friendly

Group 2

We imagine a downtown business experience that is:

- Family focused.
- Attractive.
- Diverse.
- Sufficient for basic needs.
- Magical

To achieve this, downtown needs:

- Awareness that experience starts from the moment you leave the car/transit to within businesses.
- City programming.
- Walkable.
- Colorful.

Group 3

- We imagine a downtown experience that is interesting, safe, vibrant and inviting. To achieve this, the downtown needs landmarks, unique infrastructure, housing, and public investment.

Wrap-Up and Next Steps

The project team thanked the DCWG members for participating in the meeting and the process. The next DCWG meeting will be held on March 7, 2023.

City of Kitchener Downtown Community Working Group Meeting #10 Summary

The tenth Downtown Community Working Group (DCWG) meeting was held on March 7, 2023, from 4:30 to 6:30 pm at the Downtown Community Centre. 13 of the 29 members were in attendance. Discussions at the meeting are summarized below.

Staff Presentation and Question and Answer

City of Kitchener staff introduced the topic of climate change and environmental leadership. Staff presented on Waterloo Region Climate Action, Green Development Standards and District Energy. The following summarizes a brief question and answer period.

Q: Understanding that we are in a development boom, are buildings in the proposal phase being considered for green development standards?

A: There are items that can be implemented during the design phase, such as allowances for district energy connection, without additional cost.

Q: What can Green Development Standards include?

A: This depends on which approach is taken. For example, the City of Toronto uses the planning application process, and looks at design standards related to energy and greenhouse gases.

Q: Do the Green Development Standards include green roofs?

A: Some cities do have this standard. We are not that far along yet but it will be considered.

Q: Why is district energy being considered?

A: District energy is more reliable, and redundancy is built into the system.

Roundtable Discussions – Climate Issues and Environmental Leadership

DCWG members were asked to engage in small roundtable discussions on climate issues and environmental leadership in DTK. Discussions from each roundtable are summarized below.

What role can DTK play to help Waterloo Region address each aspect of climate change?

Transportation

Group 1

- The City of Kitchener should look at fleet emissions.
- Encourage the use of public transit and build stronger transit connections.
- Need to open roads to pedestrians, active transportation and all rollers.
- Build stronger active transportation networks that connect to transit.
- Introduce heated and covered transit stops.
- Have buses run more frequently to encourage usage.
- Municipal approval of e-scooters and micro mobility.
- Need cyclist education, most effective with children.
- Continuous and consistent infrastructure for all users.

Group 2

- Downtown is a hub, needs to be connected to encourage different users.
- Need for better cycling connections from downtown to the surrounding areas.
- Commit to opening the roads for pedestrians, high quality pedestrian environment.
- Cycling infrastructure should be more connected and consistent.

Downtown Kitchener Vision and Principles – Phase One Engagement Summary

- Increase urban forest coverage, which mitigates heat islands and enhances walkability.
- Increase shade and trees in the right of way.
- Want to see continuous sidewalk crossings.
- Discourage personal trips to lessen congestion.
- Increase the usability and ease of active transportation routes.
- Prepare for maintenance changes with frost and thaw cycles.

Buildings

Group 1

- Opportunity to utilize district energy to heat and cool transit hubs.
- Introduce solar panels in public spaces.
- Excited about the introduction of Green Development Standards.
- Building up, not out, is part of our climate responsibility.

Group 2

- District energy and green building initiatives through site planning.
- Green roofs.
- Storm water management.
- Wood construction.
- Buildings are huge polluters; developers need to be pushed to change.
- Energy usage during extremes means potential brown outs; plan for this.
- Transition away from in house fossil fuel use.
- Encourage sustainable construction materials.

Production, consumption and waste

Group 1

- Introduction of a grading system which helps customers understand what is local on a restaurant's menu.
- Want clear guidelines for recycling in residential buildings.
- Support local good production process.
- Encourage employment in local farms and food production.
- BIA could play a role in advertising restaurants that use local food.

Group 2

- Compost program for multi-unit dwellings.
- Provide waste services for multi-unit dwellings.
- Green roofs for local food production.
- District energy to heat small greenhouses.
- Re-purpose buildings slated for demolition, re-use building materials.
- Introduce a demolition tax, to make it harder to demolish.
- Textile recycling.
- Encourage re-use, at events and festivals.
- More recycling receptacles in public spaces.

Wellbeing and prosperity

Group 1

- How we address extreme weather (flooding, drainage) impacts people differently.

Downtown Kitchener Vision and Principles – Phase One Engagement Summary

- There is a connection between climate and accessibility.
- Sidewalks need to be cleared more quickly, snow clearing policies are not equitable.
- Need to push politicians for a change in priorities.

Group 2

- Housing and supports.
- More warming and cooling shelters.
- Need to support people close to where they live.
- Climate disproportionately impacts people.
- Residential development in downtown Kitchener needs balance, to encourage walkability.
- Open minded about uses of mixed-use buildings.

Based on our discussion today, how would you summarize the future of climate leadership in downtown Kitchener in a single statement?

Group 1

- Push for policies on district energy and green development standards.
- Continuous and connected active transportation and pedestrian focused spaces.
- Encouragement of walkability.
- Frontier of progress.
- Build a better future for our children.

Group 2

- Practical interventions that support hyper-local activities, that are sustainable, with a focus on human comfort. Make it easy to make climate friendly choices.

Wrap-Up and Next Steps

The project team thanked the DCWG members for participating in the meeting and the process. The next DCWG meeting will be held on March 21, 2023.

City of Kitchener Downtown Community Working Group Meeting #11 Summary

The eleventh Downtown Community Working Group (DCWG) meeting was held on March 21, 2023, from 4:30 to 6:30pm at the Downtown Community Centre. 14 of 29 members were in attendance. Discussions at the meeting are summarized below.

Staff Presentation – Question and Answer

At the outset of the meeting, Gloria MacNeil, Director, Bylaw Enforcement, City of Kitchener presented on bylaw enforcement in the city. Following the presentation, working group members asked the following questions:

Q: Understanding that your department has implemented a new approach to bylaw enforcement, have you received any input from those you have interacted with?

A: The input has been positive. It is very important for our department to communicate proactively, and not just respond to issues when they arise.

Q: With many new condos being developed downtown, are you anticipating any changes to enforcement requests?

A: When people move downtown, they are not always aware of the noise levels, or street festivals. We will outreach to condo boards ahead of time to communicate what they might experience and how we can support them.

Q: Which environmental issues does bylaw interact with?

A: We implemented a no idling bylaw. Further, we now have a new position for staff to consider other environmental aspects of the city.

Q: How does bylaw prioritize calls/complaints?

A: Safety issues always take priority, and after that it is complaint based. We aim to respond initially within 48 hours.

Q: How do you integrate an equity perspective into the complaint-based system?

A: Council policy allows for our discretion. If we see a specific population or area of the city being reported without adequate justification, we can disregard the call.

Q: What is the process for zoning violations?

A: We work with the planning department closely on these issues. We will meet with people to discuss how they apply for a variance or bring the issue into compliance.

Q: What is the highest number of complaints you receive? What poses the biggest risk?

A: The highest number of calls is about parking, and people not paying for parking. The biggest risk is unsecure, empty buildings.

Roundtable Discussions – Safety and Security

DCWG members were asked to engage in small roundtable discussions regarding safety and security in downtown Kitchener. Discussions from each roundtable are summarized below.

What contributes to a safe, vibrant and healthy downtown?

Group 1

- Everyone has their needs met.
- A lively street means a safe street.
- Feelings of belonging.
- A variety of passive spaces.
- Lights, people and spaces for people to gather.
- People taking ownership over their space.

Group 2

- People looking out for each other, helping each other, and being kind.
- Having people around and eyes on the street leads to feelings of safety.
- Well-lit spaces.
- Compassionate approaches to enforcement.
- Financial investment in solutions.
- Outreach is important, and needs community services that support marginalized populations.
- Outreach through mobile vehicles, nursing staff, etc.

What support do you think vulnerable communities need downtown?

Group 1

- Supportive and appropriate housing for everyone.
- Community space for vulnerable groups.
- Mobile community health care.
- Support for sex workers.
- Support for the queer community.
- Safe consumption and supply sites.
- Mental health support.

Group 2

- Funded resources and outreach into the community.
- Connect people with the existing services they need.
- One-on-one support and human interaction.
- Personalized, holistic support addressing upstream issues.
- Supporting specific people with their specific needs.
- Mobile supports.

How can we make everyone responsible for safety and well-being in DTK?

Group 1

- Deconstruct the enforcement process.
- The system is intrinsically biased towards those with power and privilege.
- Encourage humanity.
- Conflict resolution over enforcement.

Downtown Kitchener Vision and Principles – Phase One Engagement Summary

Group 2

- BIA is often asked to focus on safety but has no jurisdiction in this space (in the past they ran the Discovery Team).
- In some circumstances, people may not request bylaw enforcement if they are worried about unintended consequences (e.g., reporting a rooming house and the impacts enforcement may have on tenants).
- Need a human-centred approach and thought to how bylaws impact people when they are enforced.
- Use technology to increase the efficiency of enforcement.

How can safety, empathy, and application of bylaws contribute to an inclusive and accepting DTK community?

Group 1

- Build relationships with neighbours.
- Social events that invite people to gather.
- Creation of community spaces for informal events.
- People taking ownership over their communities.

Group 2

- More awareness and presence of existing supports so people know who to reach out to when needed.
- Signage for reporting and calling issues and concerns.
- Build relationships and reduce barriers.
- The concept of adaptation and mitigation applies here too. For example, do we want to expend resources to adapt and respond to an issue, or resources to mitigate and prevent an issue?

Based on our discussion today, how would you summarize the future of safety and security in downtown Kitchener in a single statement?

Group 1

The safest downtown is the liveliest, where people feel like they belong and are welcome. Where people feel empowered to claim space for themselves, as if it were their own living room.

Group 2

- Make wise investments to find solutions.
- If you have a downtown that people want to come to, you have a safe downtown.
- Human-centered enforcement; not punitive.

Wrap-Up and Next Steps

The project team thanked the DCWG members for participating in the meeting and the process. The next DCWG meeting will be held on May 2, 2023.

Appendix B – Service Provider Workshop Summary

City of Kitchener staff and members of the Consulting Team met with downtown Kitchener service provider agencies on March 1, 2023, at the Downtown Community Centre. Present were representatives from Peregrine Outreach Waterloo Region, Sanguen Health Centre, St. Mary's Church, and The Working Centre. The purpose of the workshop was to:

- Introduce the DTK vision and principles project;
- Listen to the experiences of service providers in Downtown Kitchener;
- Understand the needs and risk factors of clients in Downtown Kitchener;
- Discuss a future, inclusive Downtown Kitchener; and,
- Develop draft vision statements for Downtown Kitchener.

Discussion

Darren Beck, City of Kitchener, provided an overview of the DTK vision and principles project. LURA Consulting led a round table discussion with attendees. The summary below provides key themes and input from the participants.

Current needs of clients you support in the DTK

- The main need is for housing, and specifically geared to income housing. There is a lack of appropriate and affordable housing available.
- When people are housed, and basic needs are met, individuals can focus on other aspects. Their choices and decisions for themselves (e.g., employment, family, health etc.) are different.
- Guaranteed income would support the need for housing and alleviate stress for individuals.
- Mental health support. Many individuals need support and avenues to seek support that are non-police led. There needs to be upstream support for basic needs, that support mental wellbeing. There is a need for de-escalation training and approaches as well as healthcare outside of hospitals and systems which many people are fearful of.
- Non-police trained mental health crisis intervention that is available for the public to call for assistance. A mobile bus would be a way to put this into action.
- There is a need to create connections between people. Individuals need to feel valued, belonging, and build relationships.
- Space needs to be created for the sharing of stories and experiences.
- Active community building is necessary to address this risk.
- Front line workers are not being adequately supported, which burdens the organization and the individuals they are serving. Training and support should be provided to front-line workers.
- Community members, including clients of service providers, fear moving around the community, staying in shelters, finding a warm place or seeking help.
- Basic needs such as housing, healthcare and employment need to be met to ensure that all individuals are taken care of and that no one is left behind.
- Employment needs to allow for alternative hours to be inclusive.

A future DTK that is supportive is...

- Understands and recognizes our history, stories, positive and negative approaches so we can continue to learn and evolve
- Centered on humanity and empathy.
- Breaks down barriers and silos.
- Works together to build a strong and inclusive community.
- Includes supportive housing for every individual who needs it.
- Policy that supports building housing for all.
- Introduces the inclusionary zoning policy at the municipal level.
- Introduces creative solutions (e.g., porch light counselling).
- Creates safe spaces that are available during crisis (e.g., pandemic when shelters are overcrowded).
- Accessible.
- Responsive to individual needs, focused on empathy.
- Acknowledges the good work that has been done and achievements
- Well-funded to supports positive wellbeing outcomes

An inclusive and safe DTK includes...

- Trained and supported front line and outreach workers, including trauma informed approaches.
- Solutions like the mobile bus that bring mental health support to communities in need.
- Welcoming and safe community spaces and centres.
- Right sized housing.
- Continued conversations around community and connection, sharing of stories.
- Support or inclusionary zoning.
- Creative solutions to arrive at best outcomes.
- Encouraging neighbours taking care of each other, building towards a neighbourhood communities.
- Policies and advocacy for funding.

Vision and Principles

At the conclusion of the meeting, attendees were asked to consider core elements of a safe and equitable downtown Kitchener. Responses are provided below.

- We are a neighbourhood of communities.
- We are a strong community.
- Act as good neighbours, take care of ourselves and each other.
- This is a together problem.
- Accessible and empathetic.
- Service providers are funded, trained and supported.
- Committed to doing better every year.

Appendix C – Indigenous Organization Meeting Summaries

Anishnabeg Outreach Meeting Summary

City of Kitchener staff and members of the LURA Consulting Team met with Stephen Jackson and Caitlyn McComb of Anishnabeg Outreach on March 21, 2023. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the Downtown Kitchener Vision and Principles project to Anishnabeg Outreach and listen to their input and perspectives.

Discussion

The notes below provide a record of input received from Anishnabeg Outreach.

- Design delivers outcomes.
- Indigenous people do not trust and will not use colonial solutions. Fostering trust is key.
 - Build trust through design, function, and form (e.g., use of natural materials).
 - Create safe spaces through partnerships with Indigenous organizations and use their brand (as opposed to City branding).
- Reconciliation is misunderstood by many and defined as justice and healing.
 - However, justice alone will never lead to healing, and instead only offers just enough compromise to move people forward.
 - Justice was incorporated by the federal government to define compensation. However, people will not properly heal and will focus on what has been lost.
 - Truth and Reconciliation action items are checkboxes that will not lead to proper healing, and the focus needs to be on healing outcomes.
 - Reconciliation can be defined by three pillars:
 - Rebuilding language, culture, community, belonging, and family.
 - Offer pathways to engage and train in Reconciliation (i.e., train people in how to embrace the Indigenous talent pool and provide employment opportunities).
 - Raise awareness on matters related to Reconciliation. The City has a platform on which it can do this.
 - Solutions to issues need to look at the root cause of an issue and address that, and people need to be healed (and trauma addressed) to address a root issue.
- Highlights of Anishnabeg Outreach's locations and programs include:
 - A Reconciliation Garden in Breslau that provides land-based healing opportunities and a place for people to learn about Reconciliation.
 - The Spirit Bundle program, which distributed approximately \$1,000,000 in goods (primarily food and clothing) in 2022.
 - An online repository of knowledge and history, including language and artefacts, that will ultimately be used to inform future STEM curriculums and achieve broad awareness.
 - Online tools and resources to provide people access to mental health care and healing opportunities.
 - Have the ability to help people develop life skills, provide opportunities for self-healing, provide opportunities to train and upskill, train organizations on accepting people.
 - EarlyON centre.
 - Pollinator gardens, food gardens, medicinal gardens.

Downtown Kitchener Vision and Principles – Phase One Engagement Summary

- The City can help through:
 - Funding.
 - Building safe spaces (not done for, but with, Indigenous people).
 - Raising awareness of Reconciliation (Reconciliation walks, Grandfather Teachings, plaques/QR codes, etc.) in partnership with trusted Indigenous organizations.

The Healing of the Seven Generations and Crow Shield Lodge Meeting Summary

City of Kitchener staff and members of the LURA Consulting Team met with Donna Dubie of The Healing of the Seven Generations and Clarence Cachagee of Crow Shield Lodge on March 24, 2023. The purpose of the meeting was to introduce the Downtown Kitchener Vision and Principles project to The Healing of the Seven Generations and listen to their input and perspectives.

Discussion

The notes below provide a record of input received from The Healing of the Seven Generations and Crow Shield Lodge.

- Crow Shield Lodge focuses on the four pillars of healing, education, land stewardship, and reconciliation.
 - There is a need in the community for a healing lodge, and Crow Shield Lodge needs land (donated or through a \$1 sale) to make this happen. A commitment to help with land could be a step towards reconciliation.
- What does reconciliation with the City look like? Currently there is no relationship with the City and The Healing of the Seven Generations (which has been doing work in the community for 22 years).
 - Work needs to be done by the City to build relationships and advance reconciliation.
 - For example, Toronto has the Medicine Wheel at City Hall.
 - Orange-wrapped transit vehicles (bus, ION, etc.)
 - Community needs to feel any reconciliation efforts from the City are acceptable to them.
- There is a need for funding for Indigenous organizations.
 - Need to make investments for the original people of this land.
 - The Indigenous community is the fastest growing, and the needs of the community need to be met.
- The Healing of the Seven Generations serves approximately 10,000 people per year.
- There is a need for accessible and safe spaces for Indigenous people to do ceremonies.
 - Welcoming
 - Designed by Indigenous people
 - Feature a fire pit, moving water, covering, medicine gardens.
- Need to learn from our past to chart the best path forward.
 - Colonialism is ingrained.
 - Talk about past mistakes and move forward as equals.
 - Indigenous people need a spot at the decision-making table and need voices present.
 - It is about people, community, and belonging – need a commitment and accountability to do the right thing.
- Working to advance the wellbeing of future generations and making it easier for them.
 - Making heart-based decisions for the next generations.
 - By the seventh generation from now, it is the intention that people will be healed, and the organization will no longer need to exist.
 - A lot of people do not have the strength to advocate, and the organization advocates on their behalf.

Downtown Kitchener Vision and Principles – Phase One Engagement Summary

- Issues such as climate change, clean water, and clean air urgently need to be addressed.
- Homelessness is a problem that needs to be addressed.
 - Locations for housing need to be near support services that are required.

Appendix D – Pop-ups Summary

Between February and March 2023, the City of Kitchener hosted five pop-up engagements in downtown Kitchener to share information and gather input about the Downtown Kitchener (DTK) Vision and Principles project. The purpose of the in-person pop-up engagement was to:

- Introduce the project to the public.
- Gather input to inform the development of the DTK vision.
- Spread excitement about the project within the City of Kitchener.
- Direct participants to the project webpage and the City's online engagement platform to learn more about the project, register for the contact list and learn about future engagement opportunities.

During the pop-up engagements, participants were presented with two project boards. The first board was a downtown Kitchener vision board, which invited community members to identify key priorities in the evolution of the downtown. The second board was a map of downtown Kitchener which provided context for the project and allowed community members to pinpoint specific areas of interest or concern. In addition, the pop-up had a children's colouring sheet, allowing young children to draw their ideas for the future of DTK.



In total, 1,615 community members were engaged in the pop-up engagements. The following table summarizes the level of participation at each pop-up engagement.

Location	Date	Participants
Kitchener Market	February 24, 2023, 8:30 am - 2:30 pm	595
Carl Zehr Square	February 25, 2023, 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm	66
Kitchener Market	March 18, 2023, 8:30 am - 2:30 pm	515
Carl Zehr Square	March 18, 2023, 3:00 pm - 6:00 pm	14
Kitchener Market	March 25, 2023, 8:30 am - 2:30 pm	425
Total		1,615

Key Themes

At the outset of the process, the DCWG established seven key themes/focus areas to examine and contextualize the conditions in the downtown area. These themes served as the context for broader community engagement. The input received during the pop-up engagements has been organized under the seven themes below.

Public Spaces and Parks

Community members were adamant about the need for more green space. Public space was highlighted as necessary for community wellbeing, both for individuals and the collective. It was noted numerous times that public spaces, especially parks, allow community members to socialize, run events and spend time with their families and pets. Community members would like the spaces to be accessible by public transportation and cycling.

Culture, Events and Street Life

Community members would like to see greater investment in downtown activation by having more festivals and events. Many community members noted the multicultural festival as an example of a well-done and fun event. Community members would like to see the recognition of downtown's history and architecture, which would contribute to the downtown culture. A few community members expressed the need for Indigenous placemaking. Specific mention was made about the need for more restaurants and bars and street patios. Overall, community members were generally positive about wanting to attend and contribute to a brighter and more vibrant downtown culture and street life.

Growth and Housing

Community members engaged in the pop-up activities had varying opinions on downtown Kitchener's growth and housing. Many community members would like to see more housing added downtown, especially along the LRT. Specific comments around the relationship between more housing/more people, and a more vibrant downtown were often made. Community members would like to see affordable housing being built, including more housing for larger households and a growth of missing middle housing forms. It was noted that there is a lack of supportive housing and that the unhoused crisis needs to be addressed immediately. Some community members expressed concern about downtown growth, with worries around existing resources and green spaces being inadequate.

Neighbourhoods and the Movement of People and Goods

When discussing neighbourhoods and movement, many community members discussed an opportunity for greater connectivity between public transportation and active transportation routes. Many community members would like to see an improved bus system, and safe bicycle lanes. It was noted that transit stops are not accessible year-round, as they are not cleared of snow. For many, this makes using public transportation impossible. Community members also spoke about wanting to see traffic slowed down, and King Street closed to pedestrians.

Business Recovery and Imagine Forward

Community members are excited to see a more vibrant downtown, including restaurants and businesses. Community members would like to spend the day downtown, eating and shopping and enjoying events. It is widely recognized that downtown continues to recover from the impacts of the pandemic. Numerous community members noted the need for a grocery store

that is within walking distance of downtown. Community members were generally in favour of mixed-use buildings, with retail on the ground level and housing above.

Climate Change and Environmental Leadership

Community members spoke about wanting the City to implement green building standards for the downtown. With a lot of growth happening downtown, community members would like to see them using sustainable building materials, green roofs and energy efficient heating and cooling systems. Across the city, community members would like to see an investment in urban forestry and tree canopy.

Safety and Security

Due to the lack of foot traffic downtown, especially in the evenings, many community members have concerns about safety and security. It was noted that many downtown buildings look abandoned, which contributes to the concern. Community members made suggestions for a non-police model of community intervention, including training downtown businesses in de-escalation. Specific mention was made about improving street lighting and installing emergency buttons. Many community members would also like to see those who are currently unhoused receive assistance, including mental health support. Overall, community members believe safety, equity and inclusion should be priorities for the City.

Appendix E – Council Workshop Summary

City of Kitchener staff and LURA Consulting held a workshop on April 17, 2023, with the members of the City Council. All ten Councillors and the Mayor were in attendance. The workshop recapped highlights of the broad community engagement findings for members of Council, and asked them to reflect on their vision for Downtown Kitchener.

Vision

At the outset of the workshop, LURA Consulting invited the Mayor and Council to share what words they would like to use to describe the future of downtown Kitchener. This input was collected using an online tool called Mentimeter. Below is the word cloud displaying the results of this exercise.



Following the Mentimeter activity, members of Council shared the following thoughts:

- Many of these words are already part of the work we are doing or aiming for. Council is aiming for a lively and active downtown – a vibrant place to live.
- The words are aspirational and represent what we see when we are out in the community.
- The words are connected and overlapping.
- There is a desire for everyone who lives downtown to be able to walk to amenities.
- It is important that the downtown vision continues to be meaningful for people who live in the suburbs. We want to ensure that the voices of people in the suburbs are represented and engaged in this process.
- Regarding the word safe in the public responses – would like to assume that it is more about the perception of safety than reality.
- The word safe is likely connected to the unhoused community who need our support.
- There may be a formula for building a vibrant downtown. It would be great to see the AUD move downtown.
- Foot traffic downtown builds vibrancy; we need more people downtown.
- Need to be thinking long-term about this work and the connected policies.
- We are blessed with green space in our community.
- Many of the words are interconnected and overlap with each other.
- Want a joyful experience downtown for everyone – vibrant, with amenities, sustainable, friendly, engaging.