

Downtown Kitchener Vision and Principles

Phase Two Engagement Summary

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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.

The process included two engagement phases. In Phase One, the DCWG shaped and assisted in delivering a fulsome community engagement process to gather input from over 2,600 individuals on their hopes and aspirations for Downtown Kitchener. The DCWG then used input collected in Phase One to draft a vision and set of guiding principles. Phase Two of engagement focused on presenting the draft vision and principles to the community for feedback between June and August 2023.

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

Key Findings

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

- A human-centric lens is the correct approach to revitalizing downtown.
- Improved access to affordable housing is integral to the success of downtown.
- Access to clean and safe green space is a priority for most community members.
- Connections to downtown and within downtown, must be safe, affordable, and accessible.
- The vision and principles should be unique to downtown Kitchener.

Engagement Process

The figure below summarizes efforts to engage the DCWG, interested parties, and members of the public in this process. This engagement reflects efforts to gather input on the draft vision and principles, which were prepared based on input received in Phase One (June 2022 to March 2023) where over 2,600 individuals provided their input. A total of 332 individuals provided input throughout Phase Two from May to August 2023.

Downtown Kitchener Vision and Principles – Phase Two Engagement Summary

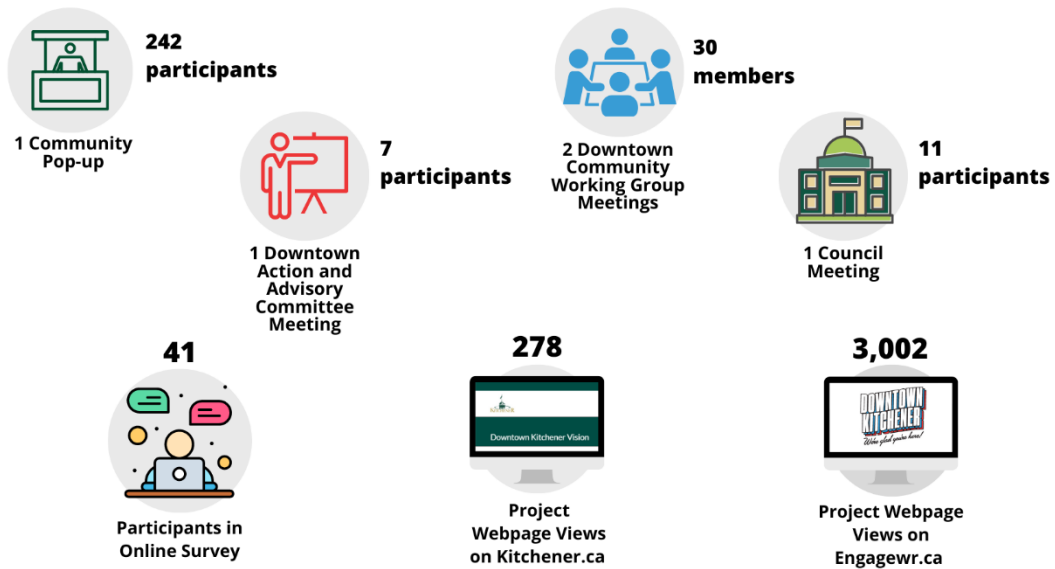


Figure 1: Engagement & Promotion Statistics

Next Steps

The input received in Phase Two of engagement will be used by the DCWG to assist them in developing a final vision and series of principles for Downtown Kitchener. It is anticipated that these will be presented to Council for a decision in Fall 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 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 shaped and assisted in delivering a fulsome community engagement process to gather input on the vision and guiding principles. Over 2,600 individuals provided input during Phase One.

During Phase Two of the project, the DCWG used input collected in Phase One to draft a vision and set of guiding principles. The draft vision and principles were presented to the community for feedback between June and August 2023 as part of Phase Two engagement through:

- Two DCWG meetings
- One community pop-up
- One meeting with the Downtown Action and Advisory Committee
- An online survey
- One meeting with Council through the Planning and Strategic Initiatives Committee

Summaries of each of these conversations can be found in the Appendices.

Section 2: What We Heard

Vision Feedback

The draft vision for Downtown Kitchener was presented as follows for feedback:

Downtown Kitchener is the inclusive, dynamic and energetic heart of the city. Together our community can thrive through vibrancy, connection and belonging.

Key themes emerging from the feedback on the vision included:

- The vision statement resonated with community members and how they view the future of downtown Kitchener.
- Some felt the statement could be applied to a number of cities, and it was suggested that the vision statement could be more bold, ambitious and distinctive.
- Community members related to the themes of connection and belonging more so than vibrancy.
- It was suggested that sustainability and/or resiliency should be added. Innovation was also suggested.
- Potentially missing an aspect of the downtown belonging to the entire city.
- The vision could be improved by being less abstract. Vibrancy, connection and belonging mean different things to different people.
- Community members wanted to see equity and inclusion as a stronger element of the vision.

Vibrancy Principle Feedback

The draft vibrancy principle was presented as follows for feedback:

The DTK community is vibrant. As our city's economic and employment hub, our streets bustle with entrepreneurs' unique shops, restaurants and experiences to explore. World-class cultural institutions, a burgeoning arts scene, unique places, and a diversity of lively festivals define our downtown's identity.

Key themes emerging from the feedback on the vibrancy principle included:

- The principle generally resonated with people.
- There is space in this principle for a more Kitchener-specific example and to focus more on small businesses.
- Some felt that the word vibrancy is overused and to consider a more descriptive word instead.
- The focus on arts and culture resonates with the community, and recreation would be a good addition.
- Could make mention of internally renowned employment and education centres. Acknowledge the great places and institutions where people work and go to school in the downtown.
- Would like to see innovation reflected in this principle.
- It is important that all word choices can be understood by everyone.
- Considering replacing 'burgeoning' with 'flourishing'.

Ideas for action related to this principle included:

- Improved walkability, as well as reliable and affordable transportation. Designate pedestrian only spaces.
- Encourage and support restaurants to have inviting patios.
- Provide support to the unhoused community.
- To encourage vibrancy, downtown should welcome and attract tourists and visitors.
- Support local artists and businesses by providing grants, closing streets for events and increasing art installations.
- Cleaning up the existing green space and adding more parkland.
- Ongoing events and festivals in the downtown.
- Focus on being a hub for tech companies.
- Recruit businesses to the downtown to get people into office spaces.

Connection Principle Feedback

The draft connection principle was presented as follows for feedback:

The DTK community builds meaningful connections. Diverse residents come together through a shared network of dynamic public places and community spaces. Our downtown prioritizes pedestrians while providing a full range of safe and accessible transportation choices within and beyond the core.

Key themes emerging from the feedback on the connection principle included:

- The theme of connection resonates with many community members, especially the idea of downtown as a destination.
- The principle could make explicit mention of public green spaces.
- Community members would like to see improved emphasis on accessibility for all.
- The interpersonal connection could be highlighted more.
- Consider saying people instead of residents, as the downtown is also for visitors, people coming to work, business owners, etc.
- There is room for this principle to be more Kitchener-specific.

Ideas for action related to this principle included:

- Improved safety for pedestrians, including traffic management.
- Strengthen cycling and pedestrian connections throughout the city.
- Continued conversations between the public and city staff regarding city planning.
- Explore potential road closures for pedestrian-focused events.
- Improved access to safe and clean public green spaces.
- Explore opportunities for further green spaces, such as parkettes.

Belonging Principle Feedback

The draft belonging principle was presented as follows for feedback:

The DTK community is a place where everyone belongs. Thoughtful planning, sustainability and exceptional design weave new growth into the history of DTK, where complete neighbourhoods offer diverse housing forms for people at all stages of life. Our collective decisions center on

inclusivity and empathy to build a welcoming, equitable and accessible downtown where everyone can thrive.

Key themes emerging from the feedback on the belonging principle included:

- The idea of belonging resonates with many community members, and this principle was generally supported.
- People from all walks of life should be able to live and work in downtown Kitchener.
- Housing affordability is a central aspect of belonging.
- Sustainability could be emphasized more.
- The principle could make mention of caring.

Ideas for action related to this principle included:

- Examine and alter existing zoning to allow for more diverse housing, including rent geared to income units.
- Lower barriers for newcomers and low-income individuals to participate in city events, recreation, etc.
- Ensure public transportation is accessible to all ages by adding benches at all bus stops.
- Address community safety from a human-centric perspective.
- Provide wellbeing support for all members of our community.

General Feedback

Overarching feedback related to the vision and principles in general included:

- Overall, the vision and principles resonate with community members.
- Kitchener-specific language throughout would improve the relatability of the statements. Put the focus on reaching the downtown's potential.
- Improved access to clean and safe green space is a priority.
- Supporting the entire community, including those who are unhoused, lifts downtown Kitchener as a whole.
- Downtown Kitchener should be a place that invites tourists and visitors.
- Additional greenspace and climate resiliency are fundamental to the sustainability of downtown.
- Community members look forward to seeing the actions that are associated with the vision.

Section 3: Who We Heard From

Survey participants were asked to complete several demographic questions (optional). Responses are summarized below. It should be noted that the 242 pop-up participants

represented a wide range of community members in Kitchener, however demographic data was not collected at this event.

Age Range

The figure below shows the age range of survey respondents.

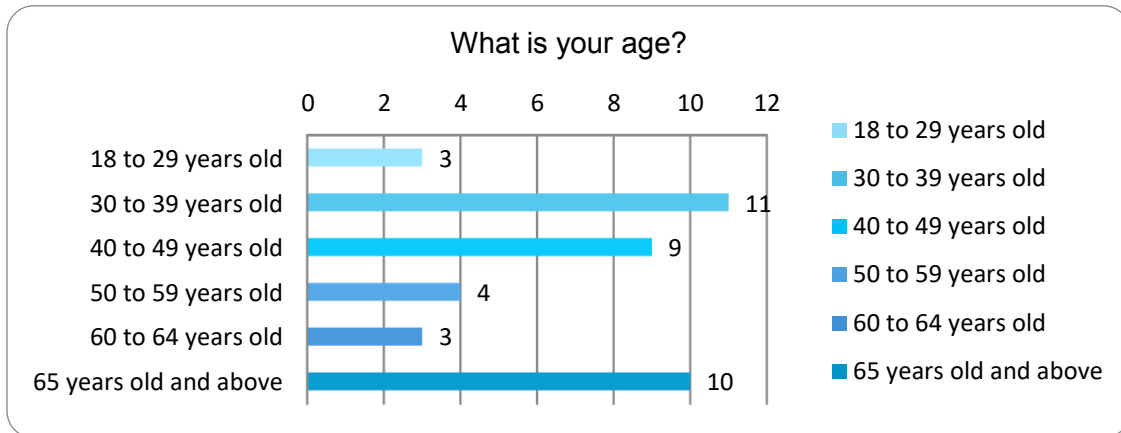


Figure 2: Survey Respondent Age (n=40)

Groups

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

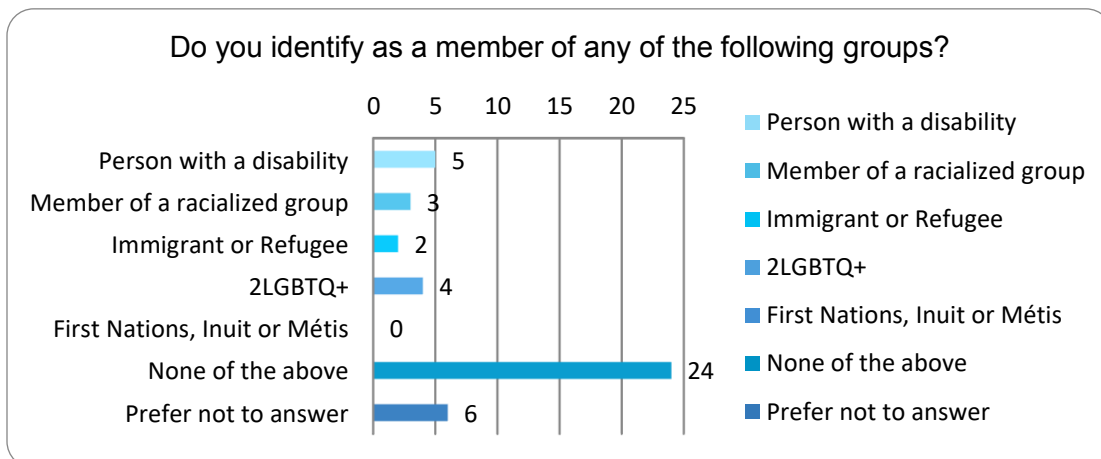


Figure 3: Survey Respondent Groups (n=40)

Gender

The figure below shows the gender identity of survey respondents.

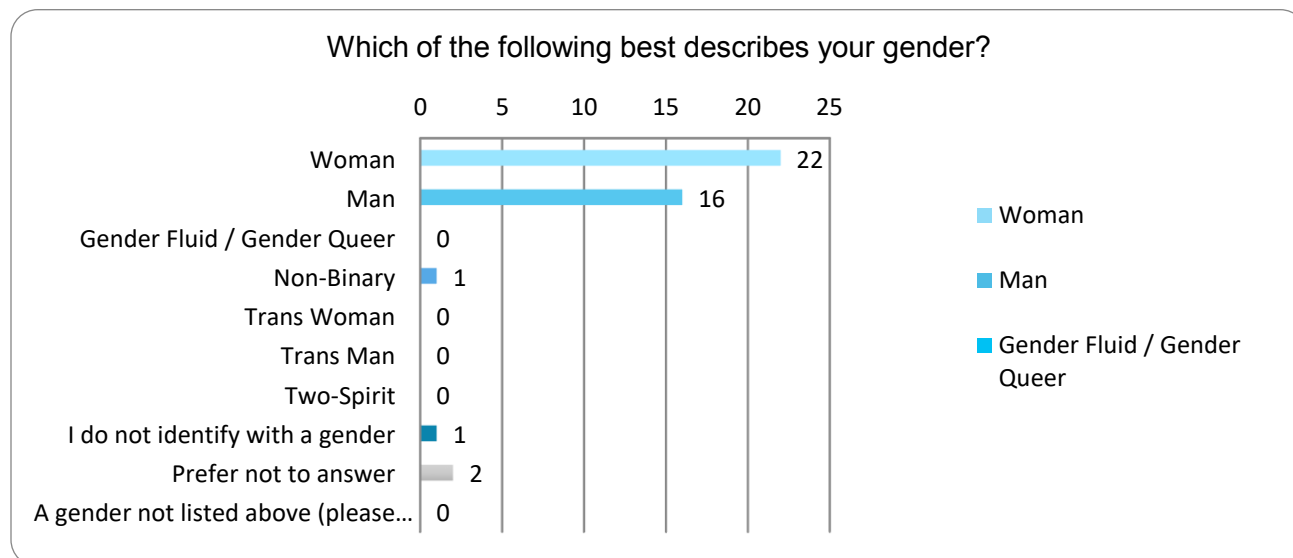


Figure 4: Survey Respondent Gender (n=40)

Location

The top three occurring postal codes among survey participants were:

1. N2G (16)
2. N2H (9)
3. N2M (5)

Section 4: Engagement and Communications Process

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

Downtown Community Working Group

A community selection committee selected a Downtown Community Working Group (DCWG) 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 process, and two times during the second phase of engagement. Meeting summaries for their two Phase Two meetings are available in Appendix A.

Community Pop-up

The City of Kitchener held one community pop-up to gather input on the draft vision and principles. The pop-up was held at the Gaukel Block Launch Party on June 17, 2023. A total of 242 people spoke with project representatives at the event. A summary of feedback received is available in Appendix B.

Downtown Action and Advisory Committee Meeting

City of Kitchener staff shared the draft vision and principles with the Downtown Action and Advisory Committee at their June 22, 2023 meeting. Seven committee members were in attendance. The presentation recapped the community engagement process that informed the development of the draft vision and principles, which were presented for the Committee's feedback. A summary of the feedback received at this meeting is available in Appendix C.

Engage Webpage

A survey on the Engage [webpage](#) launched on July 6, 2023, and was open for community input through August 18, 2023. A total of 41 people completed the survey. The Downtown Kitchener Vision and Principles Engage webpage received 3,002 visitors during Phase Two of engagement.

Council Meeting

City of Kitchener staff presented to the Planning and Strategic Initiatives Committee on August 14, 2023. All Councillors and the Mayor were in attendance. The presentation recapped the community engagement process that informed the development of the draft vision and principles, which were presented for Council's feedback. A summary of this meeting is available in Appendix D.

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 278 visits during this phase and 1,591 throughout both phases.

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.

E-mail Subscription

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

Section 5: Next Steps

The DCWG will use the input received in Phase Two of engagement to assist them in developing a final vision and series of principles for Downtown Kitchener. It is anticipated that these will be presented to Council for a decision in Fall 2023.

Appendix A – Downtown Community Working Group Meeting Summaries

City of Kitchener Downtown Community Working Group Meeting #12 Summary

The twelfth Downtown Community Working Group (DCWG) meeting was held on May 2, 2023, from 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm at the Downtown Community Centre. 14 of 30 members were in attendance. Discussions of the meeting are summarized below.

Roundtable Discussions – Principle Statements

DCWG members were asked to participate in small roundtable discussions on the seven themes. They were asked to draft a principle statement for each of them based on their discussions in previous workshops and input from the public received during the broad community engagement. Members were invited to move through the themes at their discretion, contributing to each, and reviewing the statements prepared by others. Discussions from each roundtable are summarized below.

Public Spaces

- Public space is the substrate of urban life: every use and activity is situated in it; it ties people, communities, and places together; nourishes them; it welcomes everyone; and is equitably distributed.
- Public space is the life of the city.
- DTK has a rich variety of multi-use spaces connected via a year-round, accessible green web that forms the underlying connective tissue of urban life. Public space are inclusive; everyone belongs and has the right to the city.
- Other ideas:
 - Backbone
 - Connective tissue
 - A rich variety of multi-use spaces connected via a green web
 - Thread that forms the underlying system
 - Life in the city
 - Interconnected

Culture, Events and Street Life

- DTK becomes the heart of a layered, vibrant, inclusive community and tourist destination, with great cultural institutions, a consistent calendar of diverse, exciting and accessible arts programming.
- DTK is the destination
- DTK supports and nurtures music, art, and theatre.
- DTK will be the heart of our community.

Growth and Housing

- DTK is a well-designed, intensified core neighbourhood with a diversity of housing types and densities, where housing is intentionally integrated with commercial, retail, arts, culture, and green space, supported by a variety of transportation types.
- DTK is a growing and evolving complete community with space for everyone, businesses, and activity, supported by a variety of transportation types. The locus of activity in the city.
- Housing in DTK is intentional.

Neighbourhoods and the Movement of People and Goods

- DTK should be designed to provide a predominantly pedestrian environment that also provides a harmonious mix of other transportation types. A safe, accessible, and continuous transportation network.

Business Recovery and Imagine Forward

- The DTK experience should offer locals and tourists the opportunity to experience a variety of independent local businesses and well-known stores, to encourage them to stay to enjoy food, art, music in a vibrant, welcoming, and inclusive environment.
- A destination for shopping and dining that incorporates a variety of interesting businesses.
- DTK businesses should reflect our community's unique identity/character and extend into public life.
- The sum of the unique ideas, aspirations, and flavour of our city.
- DTK businesses should be diverse and unique to show how welcoming DTK really is.

Climate and Environmental Leadership

- DTK is an environmental leader.
- DTK is a pedestrian-focused space with a focus on human comfort for residents, visitors and business owners. It is easy to make climate-friendly and sustainable choices.
- DTK is a pioneering environmental leader, supporting innovative approaches to energy use, transportation and green spaces.
- Develop climate-friendly infrastructure for residents, businesses and visitors.
- Green by-laws for future condos.

Safety and Security

- A busy, vibrant area that respects marginalized communities and provides care before taking punitive action.
- The safest downtown is the liveliest. DTK should make people feel they belong and are welcome; a place that respects marginalized communities.

Plenary Discussion

Principle Highlights

LURA facilitated a plenary discussion on the principle statements, asking working group members to identify the key aspects for each. The results of this conversation are listed below.

- Public Spaces
 - Connected system/network
 - Shared
 - Right to the city (democratic)
- Culture, Events and Street Life
 - Nurture
 - Living/alive
 - Destination
- Growth and Housing
 - Complete community
 - Locus
 - Variety of housing

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- Diverse
- Neighbourhoods and the Movement of People and Goods
 - Pedestrian
 - Safe
 - Accessible
 - Harmonious mix
- Business Recovery and Imagine Forward
 - Variety/choice
 - Unique
- Climate and Environmental Leadership
 - Leadership
 - Adaptive
 - Green choices
 - Easy
 - Green by design
- Safety and Security
 - Humanity
 - Caring/belonging
 - Empathy
 - Human-centred

Vision Ingredients

LURA staff also facilitated a plenary discussion on overarching themes/words that can be used in developing a vision statement for DTK, summarized in the list below.

- Unique and layered
- Heart of the city
- Focus on humanity
- Inclusive
- Reflective of the community
- Defining character/identity
- Inclusive
- Layered
- Vibrant/lively
- Intentionally planned
- Democratic civic space
- Accessible
- Pedestrian
- Network/connection
- Collective ownership

Patricia Kambitsch from Playthink was at the meeting to prepare a graphic visualization of the key elements emerging from the principles and visioning conversations, the result of which is shown below.

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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 May 23, 2023, where principle statements will be refined and a vision statement developed.

City of Kitchener Downtown Community Working Group Meeting #13 Summary

The thirteenth Downtown Community Working Group (DCWG) meeting was held on May 23, 2023, from 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm at the Downtown Community Centre. 15 of 30 members were in attendance. Discussions of the meeting are summarized below.

Roundtable Discussions – Principle Statements

DCWG members were asked to provide their input on the set of draft vision statements and draft guiding principles. Discussions from each conversation are summarized below.

Draft Vision Statements

A lively and dynamic place for people, where our collective energy creates a community in which we thrive.

- Encompasses the most – i.e. where we shop, work, go to school, etc.
- This one is the least passive voice, “our language”- the word creates is important, incites ownership- add inclusive, which we all thrive.
- Structure of this one is the best, active language.
- Want to add inclusivity (i.e. an inclusive community in which we all thrive).
- Could merge 1 and 2 – “A dynamic place for people to...”
- Like this one the best, lively is redundant.
- Inclusive over ‘lively’.
- Does this differentiate the core from other parts of the city? Is this one too generic?
- Can we add heart, core, etc.
- Is safe missing?
- Be less generic; be the place, the lively and dynamic place in DTK.
- ‘Which we can all thrive’- provides opportunity.
- In favour of keeping, people. Keeping it human centric, democratic aspect.
- Important to have it people-focused, not often seen in city bylaws.
- Central place for people, thrive is the evolution word here.
- Not a place, but the place, for the whole city, everyone shares it.
- People first language. Like open to possibility.
- Putting thrive closer to people, human-centric ‘us’ language.
- Commons, instead of place.
- Sense of/community of possibility to be added.

A dynamic place for people, where our collective energy is embodied in the qualities of excitement, liveliness, and inclusivity.

- Appreciate the inclusivity.
- Language is too passive.
- Do not like ‘embodied in qualities’ language, abstract.
- Does not describe everyday life.
- Excitement/liveliness feels the same.
- Embodies sounds abstract (not actually happening).

A dynamic hub of activity that embodies the qualities of excitement, liveliness, and inclusivity.

- Like hub of activity (better than the word ‘place’).

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- Hub may be too related to transit.
- Downtown is too big to be called a hub. Web of activity. Hive.
- Can find anything – what a hub means.
- Hub, connection, concentration.
- Hub means that everything revolves around it.
- This option is too passive.
- Human-oriented.

A hub of activity where people come to experience joy and excitement.

- Most people dislike this option.

A dynamic core of the city where people are inspired by possibility.

- The core aspect differentiates the downtown from the rest of the city.
- Like possibility language.
- Switch 'dynamic core' with 'heart of the city'.
- Forward and future thinking.
- Possibility, diversity, inclusion.
- Like that it is concise and punchy.
- Can find a lot in it when you dig.
- Needs more active voice.
- Like this one because it is shorter, however, inspired by possibility, it feels too generic, too much like a slogan.
- Sense of give and take, engage with community, reciprocal. Can we tie in inspiration and thriving?
- Needs to inspire action.

Items missing from all statements:

- Supporting each other, mutual care. Give and take.
- Missing neighbourhood, completeness.
- Downtown is the face and identity.

Draft Guiding Principles

DTK of tomorrow is home to a shared and connected system of public spaces - the canvas upon which urban life flourishes and fosters a sense of belonging.

- Replace canvas etc. with 'where.'
- Like canvas.
- Replace urban with civic (civic means more).
- Would need urban in there somewhere.

DTK of tomorrow is the heart of the city; a destination that beckons locals and visitors to share in a symphony of culinary delights, shopping and lively arts and events programming.

- Do we need to say programming?
- Too buzzy.
- Casino vibes (i.e., people come/experience/consume).
- Missing everyday life.

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- Where locals and visitors can contribute to and experience.
- Like locals and visitors' aspect.
- Seems like people coming just to absorb. More a sense of participation/creating events.
- More concrete language – some of the current language may be off putting (too flowery).
- Semi colon should be a colon.
- A lot of overlap with 6 (should they be merged?).
- We have existing cultural institutions – refer to them somehow in this.
- Needs more aspiration.
- How can we encourage and accommodate new artistic and cultural spaces, non traditional.
- Cornerstones, urban fabric, destination for world class institutions, fostering a spirit of cultural production, everyone should be able to participate.
- Speak to fostering events etc. and cultural production.
- Everyone should be able to participate.

DTK of tomorrow is an intentionally planned, core community, where a mix of uses converge, providing daily needs for residents and businesses alike.

- Like the word intentional, but not intentionally planned.
- Thoughtfully designed.
- In favor of intentional, deliberate, designed.
- Each principle needs the same voice.
- Thoughtfully planned and intentionally designed.
- Like the idea of no wasted space.
- Holistic. Mixed use converges.
- Look at neighbourhood as a whole – holistically designed (as an option for above)
- "...so that a mix of uses..." (more active language)
- Reflect layers of development in our downtown that have happened over time.

DTK of tomorrow is home to a flourishing population with a diverse range of housing types and densities for people at all stages of life, allowing them to call downtown their home.

- 'Densities' will raise questions.
- Housing types and tenures.
- Everyone is preferred over them language.
- Will the word density cause confusion. Range of housing options, forms.
- Rent vs owner, accessibility, and affordability.
- Housing spectrum language.
- Layers of planning downtown, not about erasure.
- Include all ages.
- Housing sizes, styles, and tenure.
- Layered.

DTK of tomorrow is a pedestrian-focused neighbourhood where people and businesses connect with their surrounding through a safe, accessible, and harmonious mix of transportation options.

- Strength and variety
- Pedestrian focus is what we are aspiring to.

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- Connecting with outside of DTK, get downtown easily, and to get other places, including other cities.
- Do not like the word harmonious.

DTK of tomorrow is filled with opportunities for leisurely strolls along bustling, lively streets bursting with shops, eats and places to gather.

- Remove 'leisurely stroll'.
- Like the idea of walking downtown, on a bustling and busy street.
- Remove 'eats'.
- Concentrating on leisurely takes away emphasis of importance of being able to get to where your going, safety and in a timely manner (i.e. to work).
- Language should be aspirational, but not over-the-top.

DTK of tomorrow is a resilient community, having embraced a leadership role in emissions reduction and preparation for climate impacts.

- Easy to make sustainable choices.
- Like leadership role.
- Preparation for impacts – too harsh. Look for proactive language.
- Reference to vegetation/trees/greening the core.
- Environmental stewardship/taking care of our space.
- Connection to nature/environment.
- Respect for natural environment.

DTK of tomorrow is a convergence of safety, inclusivity, and compassion, where belonging and empathy are at the centre of decision-making.

- Majority of participants were in favor of this principle and the way it is worded.
- Change to safe, inclusive, and compassionate.

Updated Vision Statements

The project team presented an updated set of draft vision statements for further comment, noted below.

The heart of the city, where we collectively create a community in which we all can thrive.

- Preferred statement for several members.
- Sense of community.
- Thrive and inspire go together.
- Like collective nature of the statement.
- Implies action.
- The heart of the city, where through our collective energy we create a community in which we all can thrive.
- Heart, collectively, create, community, and thrive are the key concepts.
- The heart of the city, where we collectively create a thriving community.

The heart of the city, where we all can thrive.

- Like the brevity.

The heart of the city, where we inspire each other.

- Inspire each other to thrive.

A dynamic place for people, where we all can thrive.

- Like that it is brief.

Wrap-Up and Next Steps

The project team thanked the DCWG members for participating in the meeting and the process. The project team will circulate an updated set of draft vision statements and guiding principles for comment before the June 17, 2023 public engagement. The next DCWG meeting will take place on September 12, 2023 to review feedback received.

Appendix B – Pop-up Summary

On June 17, 2023, The City of Kitchener hosted a community pop-up engagement at the Gaukel Block Launch Party as part of Neighbours Day. During the pop-up engagements, participants were presented with the draft vision and principles for Downtown Kitchener and asked to provide their feedback. Additionally, they were also asked for ideas for action for how to make the principles a reality. A total of 242 people spoke with project representatives at the event.



Vision Feedback

Feedback on the vision included:

- Two thumbs up.

Vibrancy Principle Feedback

Feedback on the vibrancy principle included:

- We enjoy it when there are events downtown.
- Can it be more eco-focused?
- I really like this principle.
- I love spontaneously running into friends.

Ideas for action related to this principle included:

- Events such as this (Gaukel Street Launch) are great.
- Love the picnic table swings on Gaukel Street.
- Healthcare to meet the needs of the growing community.
- Increase accessibility for all events.
- More splash pads.

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- Year-round events
- More sidewalk life: cafes, plants, music.
- More garbage cans.
- Add compost bins, and more recycling.
- Bring seniors downtown, all generations coming together. No one left behind.
- More theatre and dance animations, music events.
- Downtown needs more trees.
- Add more streetscape, active streets.
- Nightlife and winter events.
- Want to live in a downtown where something is always happening.
- Downtown needs a ramp program for business, it is not accessible.
- Pedestrian-only blocks.
- More events like the Gaukel Street Launch.
- More events for young people.
- Better parking accommodation.
- Have local artists paint more murals and put-up installations downtown.
- Free events all year round.
- People came to Kitchener from different countries to know each other's culture. There should be more events and festivals so people can know each other and live in harmony, peace and love.
- More multicultural events throughout the year.
- Affordable artist space (galleries and studios) and marketing support.
- Make more streets like Gaukel permanent.
- Work hard at making spaces safe for everyone, so diverse groups can cooperate.
- More seating and garbage bins.
- Mailouts of summer events.
- More info about the events Downtown.

Connection Principle Feedback

Feedback on the connection principle included:

- The improved bike lanes have been great.
- Very excited about the idea of prioritizing pedestrians.
- This expresses how I feel about the downtown.
- Love that pedestrians are mentioned.
- Inclusivity is important.
- Love your neighbour.
- Really like this principle.

Ideas for action related to this principle included:

- Have more shops at the retail level in the new condos.
- More bike/scooter lanes.
- More green spaces to go with the new high rises.
- I would like King Street to be pedestrian-only.
- Encourage walking through wider sidewalks, lights at night, create interesting places.

Downtown Kitchener Vision and Principles – Phase Two Engagement Summary

- Continue to improve the cycling connections.
- Subsidized transit.
- Best part Downtown is when King Street is closed to cars.
- Options to gather indoors in the winter.
- Public spaces need to be accessible.
- There should be more transportation for people who are disabled so we can enjoy the community.
- Ensure public transportation is accessible for everyone.
- More spaces where people can sit and hang out.
- De-emphasize the car in decision-making.
- Free public transit.
- Pedestrians must be respected and able to go home safely.
- Design for people with disabilities, physical and hidden.
- We need more curb cuts.

Belonging Principle Feedback

Feedback on the belonging principle included:

- None received at the pop-up.

Ideas for action related to this principle included:

- How can the rent be kept low when adding city features.
- Limit parking with condos.
- Build up, not out, to protect farmland.
- Grow near transit.
- We need cooling and warming centres.
- Support for the vulnerable.
- Better social services, street community workers.
- Housing for those without and community centre at bus depot.
- Social/public housing.
- More social services/mental health supports.
- Build rental apartments for families and low-income people.
- Need a new community centre.
- Diverse housing, more family units.
- Victoria park is unavailable for many.
- We cannot only listen to homeowners when making plans for housing growth, need to make it a place where everyone belongs.
- Need to make sure people in different socio-economic groups feel welcome.
- Mixed-use development and mid/high rise density.
- Need more cooperative and multi-generational housing options.
- Family-friendly housing downtown.
- High rise units geared to OW and ODSP folks.
- Need a gay bar in Downtown Kitchener.

Appendix C – Downtown Action and Advisory Committee Meeting Summary

City of Kitchener staff shared the draft vision and principles with the Downtown Action and Advisory Committee at their June 22, 2023 meeting. Seven committee members were in attendance. The presentation recapped the community engagement process that informed the development of the draft vision and principles, which were presented for the Committee's feedback. Committee members shared the following thoughts:

Vision Feedback

Feedback on the vision included:

- Could replace Kitchener with many other cities. The vision is generic.
- It is not daring/bold enough. It is not striving for anything.
- What does it mean for Kitchener specifically? Those terms are tossed around in any City. This could also be a statement for hubs and different types of things.
- A vision has to be something that gets people to stop and reflect.
- How do we craft something more inspirational, distinctive and aspirational?
- A vision statement is something that you are not currently.
- Maybe the vision should be Downtown Kitchener will be the central downtown for all of Southwestern Ontario.
- London sought out a Unesco music destination – what do we want to seek out?
- Has to be lofty. Something to strive for.
- If you go bolder, you will not please everyone. If you try to please everyone, you don't please anyone.
- Better to go further, and be told it is too ambitious.
- How do we pull from all this content and roll it into an aspirational statement?
- This statement feels like something we could have just written on the first day.
- Metaphors are evocative. Downtown is a living room. That evokes specific feelings.
- What if a poet rewrote it?

Vibrancy Principle Feedback

Feedback on the vibrancy principle included:

- Vibrancy is an overused word. It is in the statements for Stratford, London, and Montreal.
- London's statement is a page long that encapsulates the principles and describes the what.
- It needs to evoke a feeling. This feels like a recipe for a scone. I want to eat the scone and experience and savour the scone, not just read the list of ingredients.
- It is head-centred when it needs to be heart-centred.
- Excitement is what vibrancy is. There is energy and electricity. A more descriptive word is needed.
- What if the principles were wild metaphors that evoke a feeling?
 - One challenge with metaphors is that things mean different things to different people. It is also important to keep an equity lens and be mindful of meanings for different cultural groups.
- Should be playful.

Downtown Kitchener Vision and Principles – Phase Two Engagement Summary

- This is situational not transformational.
- We are the actual ambitious city (not Hamilton).
- Suggestions for better words?
 - Grandma's kitchen
 - But it sounds old and traditional. I want to try something new.
 - Kitchener is both the traditional and the cutting edge. You can have both things in DTK in the same day.
- This is not a policy we are writing, it is a vision statement.
- It can be longer. It is missing important elements.

Connection Principle Feedback

Feedback on the connection principle included:

- None received at this meeting.

Belonging Principle Feedback

Feedback on the belonging principle included:

- The last sentence of this principle is good.
- There is interesting history to draw on in DTK.

General Feedback

DAAC provided the following unanimous input:

- Hire a local poet/artist/writer to work through it and write something interesting.
- The vision must conjure feelings.
- The vision must be more ambitious/aspirational.
- The vision must be more specific to Downtown Kitchener.

Appendix D – Council Meeting Summary

City of Kitchener staff presented to the Planning and Strategic Initiatives Committee on August 14, 2023. All ten Councillors and the Mayor were in attendance. The presentation recapped the community engagement process that informed the development of the draft vision and principles, which were presented for Council’s feedback. Members of Council shared the following thoughts:

Vision Feedback

Feedback on the vision included:

- Generally like it, but potentially missing an aspect of the downtown belonging to the entire city. It would be good if the second line reflects this.
- Like it, but would say “Downtown Kitchener is the heart of the city” then say the other inclusive, dynamic and energetic aspects.
- Some will disagree that we are an inclusive city.
- We are becoming more dynamic and energetic, but we are not there yet.
- Hoping to find something with more punch that does not sound like vision statements from other cities. We are trying to be bold with the vision, and I would like to see something more memorable than thrive or vibrancy. Could we be bolder and more ambitious?
- Wording needs to be aspirational and sets the direction we are heading and where the work needs to happen.
- Would like to see innovation incorporated and downtown a part of our major employment centre of a changing and dynamic economy.
- Do not know if we are being specific enough, and how do we achieve this?
- Like the words dynamic, energetic, inclusive and vibrancy, but need to speak more to how we can achieve these.
- We had a similar conversation several years ago. The draft vision is what you build on to energize the core and have it become what we want it to be. And that is why it is called our vision. We want it to be this, so we have to say what we want.

Vibrancy Principle Feedback

Feedback on the vibrancy principle included:

- This something that we are starting to see and a direction we are going. This is the right word, and helps us start thinking about what else we could be doing.
- Love this word. We want a vibrant community and have that, but there is more to attain.
- Innovation is what we do in this community, and would like to see this reflected.

Ideas for action related to this principle included:

- From July 1 to August 31 we could close down King Street to traffic and have festivals and vendors there to bring people downtown.
- How can we engage students who go to school downtown to stay here and help contribute to our vibrancy? How can we keep people here?
- Rejuvenation of our downtown coming out of the pandemic.
- Understanding what the market is for office space and being aggressive in our business recruitment for strategy for the downtown, getting people back into office spaces.

Connection Principle Feedback

Feedback on the connection principle included:

- Connection is also good, and can lead to people having a sense of belonging.
- The 'full range of accessible transportation' feels more like an action.

Ideas for action related to this principle included:

- How do we get people to connect and get to know each other better? When people connect and talk, we create a sense of belonging. Events that bring people together and spur connection is an idea.
- Ensuring that spaces are accessible for all and consult with people with mobility needs to ensure this.
- Diverse events and other opportunities to help create connections and belonging.

Belonging Principle Feedback

Feedback on the belonging principle included:

- We are such a diverse city that you are bound to find a group that feels they are not being reflected. A bit hesitant about the word belonging.
- Reference the notion of a place where all ages belong.
- Rethink the word belonging, perhaps by using the word equity or equitable.
- People and businesses are being pushed out of downtown because of costs, which is worrisome. We need to reflect the need for affordability.

Ideas for action related to this principle included:

- Provide well-being support for all members of our community to reach their potential.

General Feedback

Overarching feedback related to the vision and principles in general included:

- Like the direction and words that are here.
- Agree with going with three different principles. Connection and belonging are similar and could be combined. Is the economic aspect of vibrancy reflected enough here? Could this be the third principle? We want a booming downtown with thriving businesses and people, events and activity. A place where people can succeed.
- This is good, but a lot of what we have had before. We need a little more than this.
- Like the three words; they are the right ones. Placemaking, however may be missing.
- Put the focus on reaching our potential.
- Reflect marginalized community members.
- Look for ideas for actions from the work of the residents panel for the Strategic Plan.
- We need to be proud of the resiliency of our downtown. Our downtown faces challenges and people continue to make our city a great city.
- We may be overlooking living downtown and being part of downtown.
- This is about improving the downtown for the benefit and enjoyment of the entire city.