



Approaches to Growth Brief

Winter 2025

Policies in our new Official Plan will guide how Kitchener continues to grow into the future. The following brief summarizes the approaches to growth that have been tested to help us understand how best to accommodate the City's future population. The intent of this work is not to choose one approach over the other, but to understand the benefits and impacts of each, to help best evolve the City's plan for Kitchener in 2051.

The Opportunity

Just as they always have, Kitchener's neighbourhoods are growing to meet the changing needs of our community members, both existing and new. Responsible, equitable strategies to accommodate growth will lead to a more vibrant, sustainable Kitchener with more to offer to more people, including homes for all, and shops, services and community spaces that can meet all our needs.



Directing most of our future growth toward a mix of uses in already built-up areas of the city will help limit sprawl and protect farmland and natural areas, make public transit more accessible to more people, create more opportunities to shop locally, and allow people to spend more time in more vibrant spaces in all our neighbourhoods.

It will enable more housing choice, with the goal of providing a home within every neighbourhood that meets the needs of anyone or any family among our diverse and diversifying community.

Did you know?



The Kitchener 2051 Approaches to Growth build on the work of the Growing Together project for Kitchener's Major Transit Station Areas – the areas surrounding the ION Light Rail Transit line. Growing Together prioritizes housing supply and choice in low, mid and high-rise forms, with carefully designed regulations to ensure that all kinds of housing are viable. It also broadly enables a mix of uses in all zones to bring more shops and services to all neighbourhoods, helps boost new small businesses, and creates more opportunities for innovation. Kitchener 2051 is exploring ways to apply lessons learned through Growing Together to other areas of the city outside of our Major Transit Station Areas.



How will Kitchener accommodate projected growth?

Kitchener is forecasted to grow by approximately 150,000 residents and 57,000 new jobs by 2051.

Prior to the early 2000s, the city focused on growing outwards in new suburbs. Starting in the early 2000s, City Planners created the “Kitchener Growth Management Strategy” to shape growth within the existing built-up area. This informed the City of Kitchener’s 2014 Official Plan which focuses on new growth in “nodes” such as major intersections or commercial areas, and along “corridors” being streets served by transit. The City is exploring ways to complement this approach by allowing different types of housing growth and directing civic investment in other parts of the city. This will support more complete communities for current and future residents.


Through community engagement, we have heard about important **community values** such as affordability, thoughtful & resilient growth, and mutual care & belonging. Through our **technical analysis**, we have learned that there are changes that we need to make to how and where we grow to foster complete communities, where residents are never far from places to pick up groceries, grab a coffee, or meet up with friends.



The proposed approaches to growth

To enable us to assess different ways of distributing housing and job growth, the city undertook a modelling exercise to be able to evaluate three potential approaches to growth. Each approach includes the same core assumptions:

Core Assumptions	What does this mean?
Maintain Growth within the Existing Urban Area Boundary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Growth to 2051 is planned within our existing urban area boundary.• Plan for new and more compact greenfield development, primarily within Southwest Kitchener.• Direct at least 60% of new growth to already built-up areas.
Be Future Focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Accommodate a future population of 450,000 residents by 2051.
Plan for Change Across the City	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan for change across the city's neighbourhoods in ways that support current and future residents by dispersing 5,000 units of future residential growth broadly throughout Kitchener's existing low-rise neighbourhoods.
Greater Integration of Places, Systems, and Networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Plan for significant growth within our Major Transit Station Areas by carrying forward the Growing Together planning framework.• Connect more people and jobs to mobility networks such as transit and complete streets.
Conserve and Protect the Natural Heritage System	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protect and enhance our natural areas including greenspaces and waterways, by carrying forward the natural heritage and floodway mapping.
Support Kitchener's Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Protect existing and plan for new jobs by assuming 15% growth in jobs within Kitchener's employment areas.• Foster economic development by supporting job growth outside of employment areas.



The following describes how each approach to growth was developed and its key features that make it unique.

All three approaches would accommodate the same number of residents and jobs by 2051 and continue to protect important areas such as industrial parks, natural areas, and parks.

Supporting Transit Approach

Approach

What if your local retail strip plaza could be transformed into a neighbourhood hub? This would mean new buildings with more housing and jobs, new restaurants and shops, and more of the things you need and want, closer to where you live. It also means new public spaces for you to spend your time outside of your home or job, connect with your neighbours, and attend local events and celebrations.

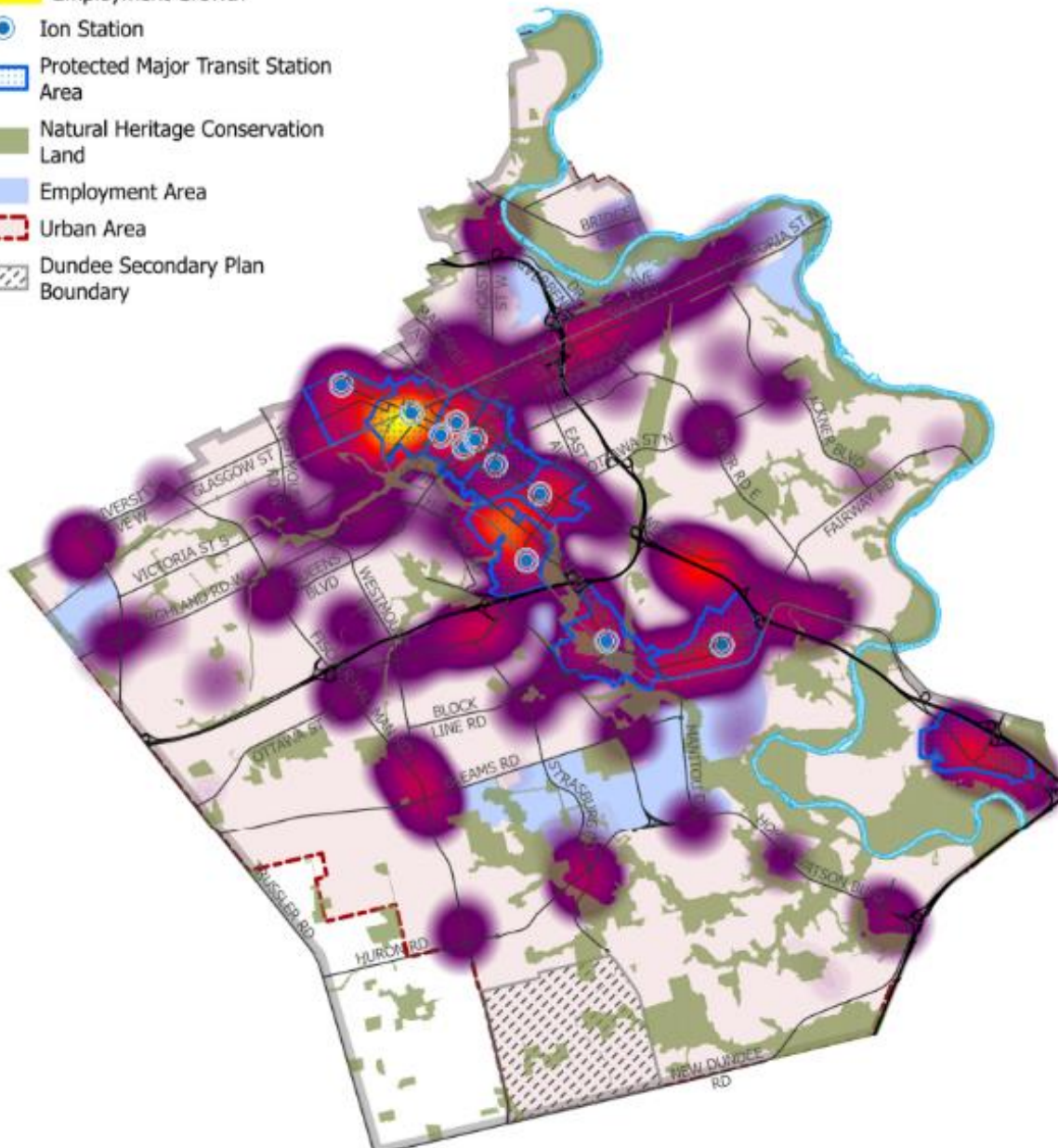
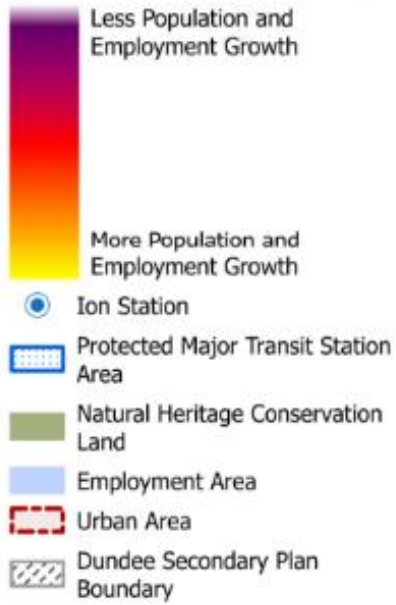
It means access to frequent and reliable public transit for new and existing residents that connects you to other neighbourhood hubs, downtown Kitchener, and beyond. You can easily connect to a network of bike routes and trails, for all ages and abilities.

Key Features

This approach would:

- Emphasize growth generally within the City's existing Mixed-Use Nodes & Corridors structure from the 2014 Official Plan.
- Update development permissions within these Nodes & Corridors to promote more housing supply and choice, support a greater variety of uses, and better match what is being built today.
- Continue to encourage low-density commercial properties to evolve over time into higher-density neighbourhood focal points.

Supporting Transit (Nodes and Corridors)





New Urban Centres Approach

Approach

What if you could spend time on a new main street in Stanley Park? And another in Country Hills? And one in Forest Heights? This approach brings new urban centres to different areas of the city. It is similar to the 'Supporting Transit' approach but would concentrate more growth within a smaller number of specific locations.

It means adding more housing and jobs around important existing amenities such as community centres and parks, so that more people have more equitable access to parks, libraries and community centres. It would focus investment in these amenities, benefiting everyone who uses them. It would help unlock tools for new affordable housing opportunities in more areas of Kitchener.

Key Features

This approach focuses on growth within new urban centres, generally at the intersections of:

- Ottawa St. N. & River Rd. E.
- Strasburg Rd. & Block Line Rd.
- Highland Rd. W. & Fischer-Hallman Rd.

These areas were chosen based partially on their capacity to grow, as well as their proximity to important community features such as parks, trails, frequent transit (e.g., iXpress routes), schools, community centres and libraries.

This approach also examines growth in transit-supportive neighborhoods on the periphery of Kitchener's Major Transit Station Areas, generally within Kitchener's central neighbourhoods north and west of the expressway and in growing main streets already seeing new mixed-use development, such as near Weber St. E. and Franklin St. N.

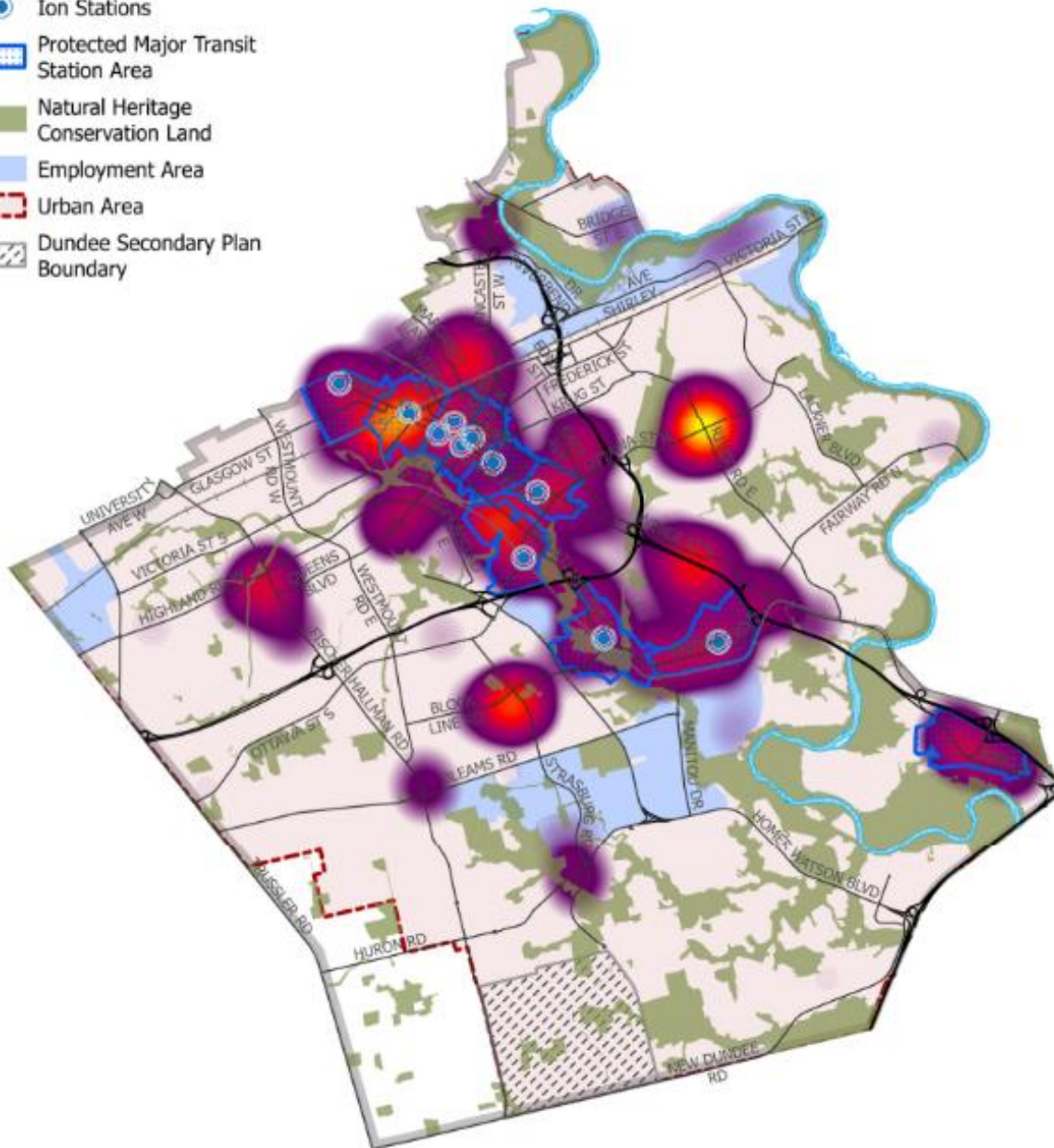
Did you know?



The City is also completing a separate project to plan for a new community in Southwest Kitchener, known as the Dundee Secondary Plan. The Secondary Plan will provide a road map for new urban uses over the long-term such as homes, parks, natural areas, shops, and schools – connected by trails, transit, streets, and sustainable infrastructure. As part of the Dundee Secondary Plan, an additional new urban centre is being envisioned to benefit this growing part of Kitchener.

New Urban Centres

- Less Population and Employment Growth
- More Population and Employment Growth
- Ion Stations
- Protected Major Transit Station Area
- Natural Heritage Conservation Land
- Employment Area
- Urban Area
- Dundee Secondary Plan Boundary





Evolving Neighbourhoods Approach

Approach

What if a diversity of homes, shops and services were found more evenly throughout Kitchener's neighbourhoods? This approach adds different types of homes, as well as jobs, shops and services to all areas of Kitchener, with rather than concentrating growth in specific centres or nodes.









It means that all of Kitchener's neighbourhoods will add some more housing options for all types of families and all stages of life, making it possible to meet their needs within any neighbourhood they choose, and to stay their neighbourhood long term. It means future generations will have more equitable access to more homes across all neighbourhoods, but also a greater number of existing parks, schools, and community resources.

Key Features

This approach enables growth on properties within neighbourhoods where it can fit comfortably from a built-form perspective and without the need to assemble too many lots to make a new building happen. Examples include:

- Allowing places of worship to develop with a mix of uses. These often have large surface parking lots and can offer opportunities to add affordable or supportive housing.
- Small commercial plazas.
- Wider and/or deeper residential lots that back onto parks, open spaces, natural areas, school grounds and other non-residential properties, which provide greater opportunities to achieve built-form transition.

Evolving Neighbourhoods

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-  More Population and Employment Growth
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-  Protected Major Transit Station Area
-  Natural Heritage Conservation Land
-  Employment Area
-  Urban Area
-  Dundee Secondary Plan Boundary

