
REPORT TO: Planning and Strategic Initiatives Committee

DATE OF MEETING: March 17, 2025

SUBMITTED BY: Rosa Bustamante, Director, Planning & Housing Policy/City Planner,
(519) 783-8929

PREPARED BY: John Zunic, Senior Planner, Policy & Research, 519- 783-8952
Tim Donegani, Senior Planner, Policy & Research, (519) 783-8932

WARD(S) INVOLVED: All Wards

DATE OF REPORT: March 7, 2025

REPORT NO.: DSD-2025-084

SUBJECT: Kitchener 2051 – Evaluating Approaches to Growth

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Community Parameters and Technical Evaluation Criteria as presented in Report DSD-2025-084 be used to inform continued community and collaborator engagement on Kitchener 2051 and approaches to growth.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to seek Council's endorsement of the draft Community Parameters and Evaluation Criteria which will be used to support upcoming community engagement and technical analysis.
- There are no financial implications arising from this report.
- Kitchener 2051 includes a robust 4-phase community engagement process that builds on the Strategic Plan. The Kitchener 2051 Community Working Group, alongside other Council, community, and collaborator input has helped to shape Community Parameters and Technical Evaluation Criteria which will form the basis of community engagement in Spring 2025 as part of evaluating different approaches to growth.
- This report supports **Building a Connected City Together: Focuses on neighbourhoods; housing and ensuring secure, affordable homes; getting around easily, sustainably and safely to the places and spaces that matter.**

BACKGROUND:

The History of Growth Management in Kitchener

Kitchener has a long history of responsible growth management dating back to the 1960s, when our population of 100,000 residents was forecasted to double in 20 years. The “Kitchener 2000 – A Regional Concept” was completed in 1964 to stage development in a “logical economic means” that would “closely relate to the financial ability for the City to provide infrastructure”. This set the stage for what was known as the “Staging of Development” process for coordinating new subdivision growth in Kitchener.

In the early 2000s, the Staging of Development process evolved to the “Kitchener Growth Management Strategy” to forecast growth to 2031, including strategies for managing growth within the existing built-up area of the City (i.e., infill and intensification). The Kitchener Growth Management Strategy remains in place today, and at regular intervals, a Growth Management Plan is created to prioritize and align development approvals with infrastructure and complete community objectives. Additionally, an annual growth management monitoring report has been prepared each year since 2010 that provides a snapshot of Kitchener’s growth and its achievements toward provincial growth targets, including the Annual Growth Monitoring Report for 2024 (DSD-2025-101) that is being presented to Council on March 17, 2025.

Looking Ahead

As Kitchener grows to become a city of up to 450,000 residents by 2051 (reflecting an average annual growth rate of 1.5 per cent), a new Official Plan is needed. A new Official Plan will guide where people live and work and shape the way that neighbourhoods evolve and change over time. It will be ambitious and intentional as we plan for the Kitchener of 2051 and set the stage for the next iteration of growth management planning in the City.

On February 10, 2025, a Council Strategic Session ([DSD-2025-061](#)) was held to present the Community Values and seek Council’s input on the draft Big Ideas and Focus Areas which will help shape Kitchener’s new Official Plan.

This Report is being brought forward to Council alongside “Engaging on Approaches to Growth (Kitchener 2051)” (DSD-2025-091).

REPORT:

Studying Approaches to Growth

Kitchener 2051 will inform where and how we grow from a range of perspectives, including the environment, the economy, infrastructure capacity, and fostering complete communities. Two technical studies will:

- **Confirm** the number of residents and jobs to plan for in 2051.
- **Inform Where and how** Kitchener will grow to accommodate the forecasted population and jobs.

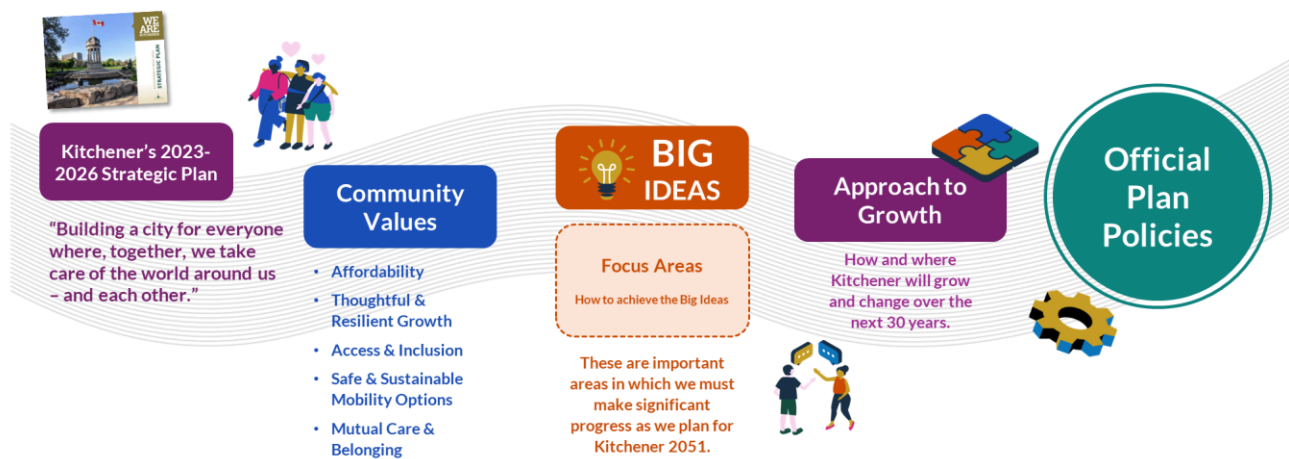
The “Population and Employment Forecast Study” prepared by Watson & Associates has confirmed the population and employment forecasts set out in the Regional Official Plan, finding that Kitchener is expected to grow to a population of 446,000 residents (reflecting an average annual growth rate of 1.5 per cent, much less than what has occurred on an annual basis in recent years).

The “Growth Scenarios Study” being undertaken collaboratively between City staff, with support from Dillon Consulting, CIMA+, and Watson & Associates, will determine where and how we will grow to accommodate this growth. This Study includes technical analyses related to transportation, water, wastewater, and financial implications to inform decisions about how and where we grow.

Evaluating Approaches to Growth

Determining the preferred approach to growth – which will be the key driver of the new Official Plan, will be shaped by multiple inputs, including:

- **Community Parameters** – informed by the Community Values, Kitchener 2051 Community Working Group input, and best / emerging practices, Community Parameters will help facilitate conversations with the community about trade-offs and opportunities about how and where Kitchener will grow in the future.
- **Technical Evaluation Criteria** – informed by the Kitchener 2051 technical studies and modelling, Technical Evaluation Criteria will enable analysis of each approach to growth and identification of opportunities or constraints needing to be addressed.
- **Council Direction & Cross-Divisional Staff Priorities** – informed by regular and ongoing engagement.



The evaluation process is anticipated to result in a preferred approach to growth which reflects a composite of all three of the approaches, refined based on the evaluation process. The evaluation process may also identify policy interventions which are required.

The approaches to growth which will be evaluated are introduced in “Engaging on Approaches to Growth (Kitchener 2051)” DSD-2025-091.

Engaging on Approaches to Growth

Community Parameters

Community Parameters will help facilitate conversations with the community about trade-offs and opportunities related to how and where Kitchener will grow in the future. The Community Parameters are not intended to be exhaustive or lead someone towards a 'preferred' approach to growth but rather to understand the community's priorities. Feedback from the community will be considered in the development of a preferred composite approach to growth.

They will serve as the basis for the upcoming Phase 3 community and collaborator engagement activities, including an interactive workshop and speaker series event (as detailed in DSD-2025-091). The activities will present information and gamify the Community Parameters in a manner that requires attendees to balance trade-offs in important city building decisions.

The Community Parameters have been prepared with direct input and collaboration with the Kitchener 2051 Community Working Group and informed by the Community Values. The Community Parameters are outlined below:

- It is important that I have access to shops and services that serve my neighbourhood, like places to buy groceries or grab a coffee, within a short walk, roll, or bike ride from home.
- It is important that I be able to live in my neighbourhood throughout different stages of life.
- It is important that I live near transit routes that come frequently enough to not have to check a schedule during the week.
- It is important that I live near trails with year-round access.
- It is important that I have park or natural area within a short walk from home.
- It is important that we find ways to add new trees as we grow.
- It is important that every neighbourhood include spaces to work, shop, gather, and build community.
- It is important that there are places throughout the city beyond Downtown where I can enjoy community events and local arts and culture.
- It is important that there are good job opportunities within a short walk, roll, bike, or transit ride from home.

Technical Evaluation Criteria

Concurrently, the Project Team and Consultants will be evaluating each approach to growth through a series of technical evaluation criteria (Attachment A). The technical evaluation criteria will include the following considerations:

- Climate Adaptation and Mitigation (e.g., tree canopy impacts)
- Social Planning (e.g., proximity to existing amenities and community facilities)
- Housing (e.g., support for a mix of housing types)
- Transportation (e.g., road network capacity, proximity to trails)

- Water and Wastewater Infrastructure (e.g., capacity in existing water and wastewater distribution networks)
- Financial Implications (e.g., costs to expand municipal infrastructure)
- Complete Communities & Economy (e.g., shops, jobs, non-residential uses, industry, institutional uses)
- Natural Heritage System (e.g., proximity of residents to natural areas)
- Parks and Open Space (e.g., access to parks, sports fields)

The Community Parameters and Technical Evaluation Criteria will be used to inform continued community and collaborator engagement on Kitchener 2051 and approaches to growth.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

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

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

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

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

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

INFORM – This report has been posted to the City’s website with the agenda in advance of the Council / Committee meeting. Regular project updates are posted to Engage Kitchener

CONSULT and COLLABORATE – Kitchener 2051 includes a robust 4-phase community engagement process that builds on the Strategic Plan. The Kitchener 2051 Community Working Group, alongside other Council, community, and collaborator input has helped to shape Community Parameters and Technical Evaluation Criteria which will form the basis of community engagement in Spring 2025 as part of evaluating approaches to growth.

Collaboration on Kitchener 2051 is occurring regularly with the Community Working Group (CWG). The CWG includes a diverse group of individuals that represent the demographics of Kitchener (and look like the Kitchener of tomorrow). The CWG is learning about what the City needs to consider through a new Official Plan and collaborating with staff and consultants to meaningfully shape all aspects of the plan.

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

- *Planning Act*
- Provincial Planning Statement, 2024
- [DSD-2024-077](#) – Building a Connected City Together: New Official Plan Launch
- [DSD-2025-061](#) – Council Strategic Session – Kitchener 2051

REVIEWED BY: Natalie Goss, Manager, Policy & Research

APPROVED BY: Justin Readman, General Manager, Development Services

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – Technical Evaluation Criteria