

Staff Report



Development Services Department

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REPORT TO: Planning and Strategic Initiatives Committee

DATE OF MEETING: April 7, 2025

SUBMITTED BY: Rosa Bustamante, Director of Planning and Housing Policy/City Planner, 519-783-8929

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WARD(S) INVOLVED: Ward 3

DATE OF REPORT: March 10, 2025

REPORT NO.: DSD-2025-083

SUBJECT: Growing Together East – Protected Major Transit Station Area Land Use and Zoning Framework

RECOMMENDATION:

That City-initiated Official Plan Amendment OPA24/010/COK/MR, for the purpose of implementing a land use planning framework for 3 of the City's Protected Major Transit Station Areas, including amendments to mapping and text, be adopted, in the form shown in the Official Plan Amendment attached to Report DSD-2025-083 as Attachment 'A', and accordingly forwarded to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for approval; and

That City-initiated Zoning By-law Amendment ZBA24/020/COK/MR to amend Zoning By-law 2019-051, for lands within 3 of the City's Protected Major Transit Station Areas, be approved in the form shown in the Proposed By-law attached to Report DSD-2025-083 as Attachment 'B'; and

That City-initiated Zoning By-law Amendment ZBA25/004/COK/MR to amend Zoning By-law 2019-051, for lands subject to Zoning By-law 85-1 and to be brought into Zoning By-law 2019-051, be approved in the form shown in the Proposed By-law attached to Report DSD-2025-083 as Attachment 'C'; and further,

That City-initiated Zoning By-law Amendment ZBA24/020/COK/MR to amend Zoning By-law 2019-051 shall have no force and effect until By-law 2024-065 (Growing Together PMTSAs) is in full force and effect.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to provide a planning recommendation for the Protected Major Transit Station Areas (PMTSAs) within the Growing Together East Study Area, which comprises the Block Line, Fairway, and Sportsworld PMTSAs.
- It is Planning Staff's recommendation that the Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendments be approved.
- Growing Together East is:
 - Transformative, enabling more than 35,000 new homes including as many as 1,700 affordable housing units acquired through inclusionary zoning and at least 2,000 units in "missing middle" forms.
 - Bold but balanced, removing floor-space-ratio-based density maximums and parking minimums and using built-form regulations to ensure the health, safety and quality of life of all community members.
 - The most ambitious plan for transit-oriented design in Canada, and;
 - Internationally recognized for its highly collaborative process, technical innovations and planning outcomes. Growing Together's 6-time award-winning process includes major international awards and the Ontario Professional Planners Institute's Project of the Year award.
- Growing Together East is a key component of Kitchener's Housing Accelerator Fund application, with a commitment for implementation in Q2 2025.
- There are no financial implications associated with this recommendation.
- Transportation, noise and market impacts were assessed through a Transportation Analysis Study, Noise Analysis Study and Market Analysis Study, attached to this report as Attachment 'F', Attachment 'G', and Attachment 'H', respectively.
- In Fairway and Sportsworld, there are unique challenges in meeting the City's parkland and public space objectives, as they transition over time from auto-oriented commercial uses to complete communities. City Staff continue to pursue all available tools and options to ensure that future residents will have access to high-quality public spaces while we plan responsibly for future growth within Kitchener's PMTSAs.
- Community engagement included:
 - 9 unique engagements involving more than 800 members of the community.
 - In-person workshops, canvassing, pop-ups and walk-ins as well as regular updates on the Growing Together EngageWR Page.
 - Notification to over 4,500 households and landowners through each of 4 postcard mailouts at various project milestones. A total of 3 newspaper ads were placed in the Waterloo Region Record. Multiple email notifications were also sent to members of the community, development industry and agencies.
- 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:

Building on Growing Together West

Growing Together East proposes a planning framework which includes the application of Strategic Growth Area (SGA) land uses and zones, for the 3 of Kitchener's 10 PMTSAs that were not included in Growing Together West – Block Line, Fairway, and Sportsworld.

A small number of properties adjacent to and contiguous with the PMTSAs are also being brought into Zoning By-law 2019-051 via direct, like-for-like conversion from Zoning By-law 85-1, as was also done in Growing Together West. These properties were not brought into Zoning By-law 2019-051 at the time of its initial implementation pending delineation of the PMTSAs, which has left them as “remnant” properties until now.

Growing Together East continues the equity-based and data-driven process started under the “Growing Together” initiative that began in 2023 and was approved by Council in March 2024, referred to in this report as Growing Together West. Land use scenarios for the Block Line, Fairway and Sportsworld PMTSAs have been tested, analyzed, and modelled – together with community, agency and industry input and formal submissions to capture a broad range of perspectives when guiding growth and change in these areas.

While the policy framework approved through Growing Together West (i.e., SGA land uses and zones) forms the foundation of Growing Together East, staff have evaluated the unique attributes and needs of the Block Line, Fairway and Sportsworld PMTSAs to inform specific policy recommendations or modifications as detailed in **Attachment ‘D’**. The Study Area also presents unique considerations, including:

- Redevelopment of existing large-format commercial buildings (such as retail plazas and malls) and very large sites.
- In the Block Line Station area, significant natural heritage, floodplain, and railway lands constraints which limit redevelopment opportunities.
- An emerging mixed-use development context and missing elements of complete communities and complete streets.
- Retention and creation of jobs which support population growth.
- Land use compatibility with nearby employment areas and major transportation facilities, including Regional Roads, Provincial Highways, and rail facilities.

Staff have held community, agency and industry engagements totalling well over 40 hours and have spoken in-person with more than 800 people through Growing Together East.

Through workshops, pop-ups, canvassing and office hours, staff have used industry-leading engagement materials to directly translate community feedback into the recommendations found in Growing Together East.

The name “Growing Together” represents staff's promise to embody that principle and deliver a plan that is representative of all of Kitchener's people, ambitions, and ideals. That it would be equitable. That it would be fair to existing, new and future residents alike. That it would enable more housing and more diverse housing to meet the needs of all. **This is that plan, as we continue to apply a consistent framework across Kitchener's Protected Major Transit Station Areas.**

REPORT:

A Tailored Land Use & Zoning Framework for Growing Together East

Growing Together East is primarily a project to implement the Strategic Growth Area land uses and zones within the Block Line, Fairway and Sportsworld PMTSAs. The land use policies and zoning regulations approved through Growing Together West were developed with all 10 of Kitchener's PMTSAs in mind, and continue to be appropriate, realistic, equitable and achievable. However, there are also unique conditions and opportunities here, informed by technical studies as well as our community and industry engagements.

Technical Studies

Market Analysis Study

The City of Kitchener retained Tate Research, Sajecki Planning Inc., metroeconomics and Divercities Advisory to prepare a Market Analysis Study. The Study evaluated existing conditions, future conditions, and potential policy recommendations related to commercial and employment uses, including consideration of existing independent businesses that support communities that have historically not had equitable access services.

The objectives of the Study are to ensure the current commercial function of these PMTSAs is maintained at an appropriate level and to address the challenges of maintaining commercial space and employment as growth and change occurs.

Transportation Analysis Study

The City of Kitchener retained LEA Consulting to prepare a Transportation Analysis Study. The purpose of this Study is to review existing transportation conditions from a multi-modal perspective and assess the compatibility of the proposed Strategic Growth Area land uses within future transportation conditions.

A number of the recommendations from this study—as well as agency comments on the study—will also be forwarded to and coordinated with the forthcoming 2026 Transportation and Mobility Plan project that is underway.

Noise Analysis Study

The City of Kitchener also retained LEA Consulting to prepare a Noise Analysis Study. The purpose of this Study is to review existing conditions and model the future noise emissions in 2041, with the intent to assess the compatibility of the proposed Strategic Growth Area land uses. Recommendations from the Study have informed area and site-specific policy and zoning updates and guide the implementation of future land uses as it relates to noise mitigation infrastructure improvements to meet future demand.

Other Considerations

Staff have also continued to work with internal and external collaborators and agencies on matters such as infrastructure servicing capacity, parkland acquisition, and updated interim height limits in consideration of ongoing Waterloo Region International Airport Master Plan and Airport Zoning Regulations work underway by the Region of Waterloo.

Parkland and Public Space

As evaluated through Places & Spaces, an update to the Parks Strategic Plan, new parkland is an integral component of growth planning, but acquiring parkland in PMTSAs—as well as in all other infill contexts, city-wide—is challenging. From Spaces (edited):

Through infill development the sites themselves are often not adequate for conveying land for park purposes. Location, orientation, elevation, connectivity and visibility are among other criteria that often cannot be met. The result is the City's taking of land in less than 1% of development applications.

City staff continue to use all tools and options available to meet parkland and open space objectives, including:

- Ensuring that parkland is a permitted use in all Strategic Growth Area land use designations, consistent with Official Plan policy 15.D.2.24.
- Zoning accurately for the types of development already occurring in Kitchener, so that as we grow, the City can better plan for where additional parkland is needed.
- Implementation of the Priority Streets framework within these PMTSAs.
- Implementation of amenity space requirements within these PMTSAs.
- Protecting existing parks by applying Open Space zoning within these PMTSAs.
- Prioritizing the acquisition of land within PMTSAs through the parkland dedication process, consistent with Official Plan policy 15.D.2.25.
- Continuing work on the Places & Spaces strategy, updates to the Transportation Master Plan and implementation of the Cycling and Trails Master Plan.

In support of these initiatives, creative, innovative solutions will be necessary to meet the unique needs of these evolving communities. Examples include:

- Consideration of city-owned lands for the development of new parks.
- Planning for ways to fund new parkland other than Parkland Dedication.
- Combining tools and resources from various divisions including Planning, Parks & Cemeteries and Transportation to develop options for more and better public spaces.
- Transforming key streets into better public spaces, including pedestrianizing portions of streets and redesigning complete streets for people.

All of this work is continuing as we plan for the growth that is already occurring in Kitchener.

By accurately planning for and anticipating the growth that will occur within PMTSAs, the City of Kitchener can also more accurately plan for parkland needs and other community infrastructure.

The Planning Analysis (Attachment 'D') contains a thorough assessment of the recommendations for implementation in policy/regulations of these technical matters.

Cultural Heritage

Two properties within the Growing Together East project area are listed as non-designated properties of cultural heritage interest or value on the City's Municipal Heritage Register (MHR), being 4336 King Street East (currently the Borealis Grille & Bar restaurant) and a

portion of 200 Fairway Road South (remaining original walls of the former Sears building). Both of these properties have been recently partially redeveloped. Heritage Planning staff have developed a work plan to pursue designation of listed properties by January 1, 2027, including the cultural attributes of 4336 King Street East and a portion of 200 Fairway Road South. Further, a portion of the Canadian National Railway Line Cultural Heritage Landscape (CHL) is also located within the Growing Together East project area, which is being identified on Map 9 of the Official Plan through the Growing Together East Official Plan Amendment.

Summary of Engagement and the Landowner Submissions Process

Growing Together East launched publicly in June 2024 with a postcard mailout to all landowners and residents of the project study area, totalling more than 4,500 people. A newspaper ad also appeared in the June 14th edition of the Waterloo Region Record. The postcard and ad both advertised the City's upcoming workshop engagements. The project webpage, engagewr.ca/growingtogether, was also launched at this time.

In total 8 unique community engagements were held. These are listed in **Table 1**.

Table 1 – Summary of Growing Together East Community Engagements

Date	Group/Event	Location	Participants
June 13 th 11am – 2pm	Student Workshop	St. Mary's High School	40
June 22 nd 12pm – 8pm	KW Multicultural Festival	Victoria Park	320
June 18 th and July 2 nd 12pm – 3pm	Retail Business Canvassing	Sportsworld PMTSA	45
July 9 th 3pm – 7pm	ION Users	Fairway Station ION	80
July 13 th 7am – 2pm	Community Wide	Kitchener Market	274
Aug. 6 th 7pm – 9pm	Community Centre Pop-Up	Kingsdale Community Centre	20
Aug. 7 th 9am – 4pm	STEAM Camp Youth	TheMuseum	11
Aug. 13 th 1pm – 2pm	Black Youth Impact	Kitchener City Hall	20
			Total 810

A second round of postcards was mailed to all landowners and residents in November 2024, alongside draft land use and zoning mapping on the project Engage page. Links to Official Plan policies and zoning by-law regulations were also provided, alongside detailed next steps that included a full explanation of landowner submission requirements. This process was identical to that used to finalize the recommendations in Growing Together West.

At this time, an email was also sent to the nearly 600 addresses on the Growing Together West contact list, which includes numerous members of the development and consulting industry in addition to interested residents.

In February 2025, a third round of postcards was mailed, and a second newspaper ad was placed in the January 31st edition of the Waterloo Region Record. This update included new draft materials with additional proposed policies, alongside an engagement summary and phase 1 reports from the project's transportation, noise, and market studies.

At this time, staff also circulated commenting agencies as well as a coordinated list of more than 80 developers and consultants via email. In February, planning staff held 12 hours of "Office Hours" to meet with landowners and members of the development industry about site-specific comments. A public open house was held on February 26th to share information about the proposed Official Plan land uses and zoning. A total of 9 people attended.

In March 2025, a fourth round of postcards was mailed which included site-specific notice of the proposed zoning category being recommended for each property. A third newspaper ad appeared in the Record on March 21st. In total, planning staff;

- Mailed 4 different postcards at 4 different stages of the project to directly reach community members within the study area.
- Placed 3 ads in the Waterloo Region Record to advertise the project launch, the open house, and the statutory public meeting, to reach a broader city-wide audience.
- Held 9 total public engagements, most of which were designed for both residents of the Growing Together East PMTSAs and for a broad, city-wide audience so that people outside the study area could also participate fully. This included selecting high-traffic locations for most workshops (Kitchener Market, Multi-Cultural Festival, and the Fairway ION Stop) to reach as many people as possible.
- Provided numerous updates via Engage WR and email updates to key groups, including members of the development industry and Kitchener Development Liaison Committee, at key stages of the project.

Community Engagement

Following a similar but enhanced process to that of Growing Together West, staff once again held a series of workshops, developing scenarios for growth that are tied to real-world targets and needs. The Growing Together workshops were intentionally designed to be:

- **Equitable:** To reach a more diverse and representative set of community members.
- **Educational:** To create intuitive exercises using realistic buildings and parameters.
- **Measurable:** To collect community input that can be analyzed and quantified.

Participants were asked to place 12,000 new homes on a 3D-printed model of the area, representing a total of 21,600 new people and 4,200 new jobs. Buildings included low, mid and high-rise typologies. This number of new units aligns with Kitchener's housing pledge target for growth and Housing Accelerator Fund application, in forms that align with recent, under construction and planned developments in the area.

While working through the exercise, participants discussed their thought process around where they placed different building types, helping staff better understand their priorities.

More than 700 community members participated in the workshops.

Additionally, staff continued to evolve our engagement techniques to reach more people in different ways. This included canvassing local businesses in Sportsworld, to talk to

employees and business owners. Staff also developed a unique, day-long engagement for TheMuseum’s STEAM Youth Camp. Staff also presented alongside other City divisions during a Black Youth Impact event held at City Hall in August.

Finally, staff offered Office Hours to meet with developers, landowners and residents, and held a public open house on February 26th. This phase of the project included a landowner submissions process, identical to that created through Growing Together West, to allow planning staff to consider requested changes as part of staff’s recommendations to council.

Table 2 summarizes the requests made through the submissions process. Where a request was made for a site-specific change to land use and zoning the following submission criteria, consistent with Growing Together West, was required:

- Proof of lot ownership;
- A conceptual design that demonstrates compliance with the desired zone; and
- A scoped planning justification addressing Official Plan policy 15.D.2.5. demonstrating compatibility with the planned function of the lands and adjacent lands.

14 requests for changes were made through 4 submissions. Table 2 is colour coded where:

- **Green** indicates that a change has been made in direct response to the request. 57% of all submissions are in this category.
- **Yellow** indicates that a change was not necessary to address the request, or that a change cannot be made legally or because of scope/process limitations. 14% of all submissions are in this category; and
- **Red** indicates where a change has not been made due to insufficient justification or because a change would be inconsistent with the objectives of planning for growth within Kitchener’s PMTSAs. 30% of all submissions are in this category.

Despite not being able to support some of the requests, there continues to be multiple pathways that can be explored by property owners for site-specific applications, where they meet the intent of the Growing Together East planning framework.

Table 2 – Summary of Growing Together East Submissions

Property	Request	Status
396, 402 Vanier Dr., 152 Siebert Ave.	To change the recommended zoning from SGA-1 to SGA-2.	Requested change made. Applicant submission met criteria and demonstrated that a mid-rise building could meet SGA-2 zoning regulations on the subject properties.
4438 King St. E. (Costco)	To permit uses including ‘gas station’ and ‘propane retail outlet’.	Change made. New OP policy 15.D.12.81 (a) permits a range of automotive repair and service uses, subject to the criteria of Policy 15.D.2.14.
	To not apply the Strategic Growth Area parking maximum.	Requested change not made. The proposed parking maximum is consistent with section 2.4 of the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024. Current parking supply on-site

Property	Request	Status
		can be maintained indefinitely to serve the existing use. A (different) maximum parking rate is already in place.
1050-1064 Courtland Ave. E. & 440-470 Shelley Dr.	To permit increased building height as part of a Regional affordable housing project.	Requested change made. Properties proposed to be designated to SGA-B and zoned SGA-3. Supporting affordable housing is a critical component of Growing Together East.
385 Fairway Rd. S. (Canadian Tire)	To permit interim development.	Change made. By exempting site over 2ha from min. FSR requirements, interim development can proceed.
	To change 'and' to 'or' in policy prioritizing development on surface parking lots and along street frontages.	Change not made. It is a shared priority to locate initial phases of development on both surface parking lots <i>and</i> along street frontages to ensure that redevelopment occurs in a way that meets our public realm and complete community objectives.
	To clarify when a Commercial Justification Study is required.	Change made. Policy clarified to apply to the entirety of the lot.
	To facilitate expansion of existing uses.	Depending on use this is achieved through either min. FSR exemption or OP policy 15.D.12.81 (a)
	Add specific uses, Automotive Repair Operation and Garden Centre.	Change made. New OP policy 15.D.12.81 (a) permits a range of automotive repair and service uses, subject to the criteria of Policy 15.D.2.14.
	Revise down the minimum floor space ratio requirement.	Change made. A minimum FSR is no longer proposed to apply to properties over 2ha within the Fairway or Sportsworld PMTSAs. This will allow interim development on large parcels without unnecessary process.
	Revise building length requirement for low-rise buildings.	No change required. There is no building length limit for the first 6-storeys of buildings in the SGA-2, 3 or 4 zones.
	Exempt street line façade minimum opening requirement of 20% (40% along priority streets)	Change not made. A 20%/40% requirement is an easily attainable threshold to help meet our objectives for more people-friendly streets, real and perceived safety and comfort, and urban design. The primary façade of common retail typologies typically achieves 40%-50%. With the significant uplift in development permissions on these lands, there is a reasonable expectation that new buildings contribute toward a higher-quality public realm.

Property	Request	Status
	Exemption from Priority Streets regulations.	Change not made. See previous note above.
	Exemption from amenity space requirements for commercial buildings.	No change required, there is no amenity space requirement for commercial buildings proposed in the by-law. Requirements are applied per residential unit.

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.

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

- *Municipal Act*, 2001
- *Planning Act*, R.S.O. 1990, c. P.13
- Provincial Planning Statement, 2024
- Regional Official Plan
- City of Kitchener Official Plan, 2014
- City of Kitchener Zoning By-law 2019-051
- Growing Together East (Major Transit Station Area Land Use and Zoning Framework) – Project Launch ([DSD-2024-237](#))
- Growing Together – Protected Major Transit Station Area Land Use and Zoning Framework ([DSD-2024-005](#) and [DSD-2024-128](#))

APPROVED BY: Justin Readman, General Manager, Development Services

ATTACHMENTS:

- Attachment A – Proposed Official Plan Amendment (PMTSA Lands)
- Attachment B – Proposed Zoning Bylaw Amendment (PMTSA Lands)
- Attachment C – Proposed Zoning Bylaw Amendment (non-PMTSA Lands)
- Attachment D – Planning Analysis
- Attachment E – Engagement Summary
- Attachment F – Transportation Analysis Study – Phase 1 and Phase 2 Reports
- Attachment G – Noise Analysis Study – Phase 1 and Phase 2 Reports
- Attachment H – Market Analysis Study – Phase 1 and Phase 2 Reports
- Attachment I – Waterloo Region Record Statutory Public Meeting Notice
- Attachment J – Public Comments