



STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2026 REPORT CARD #1

Projects Completed in 2024
and Reflections on the
Development and Implementation of the
2023-2026 Strategic Plan

June 2025



Executive Summary

Table of Contents

<i>Executive Summary</i>	2
<i>Compass Kitchener</i>	4
<i>Evaluation Approach</i>	4
<i>2024 Project Evaluations</i>	7
CREATING AN ECONOMICALLY-THRIVING CITY TOGETHER	7
Accelerate Commercial Business Approvals	7
FOSTERING A CARING CITY TOGETHER	9
Advance Truth and Reconciliation	9
<i>Overall Observations and Looking Ahead</i>	10
<i>In Closing</i>	13

Compass Kitchener

Compass Kitchener

Compass Kitchener consists of community volunteers and serves as an advisory committee appointed by and reporting to Kitchener City Council. It creates and leads Strategic Plan public engagement processes, determines community concerns, and identifies priorities for action. The Committee also monitors and evaluates progress on implementation of the Strategic Plan and achievement of the community vision and reports to Council on the outcome of this evaluation.

This report has been prepared by the following members of the Compass Kitchener Advisory Committee:

Troy Glover (Chair)
James Young (Vice-Chair)
Carlos Abarca
Kim Brabazon
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Judy Stephens-Wells
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Evaluation Approach

Compass Kitchener approached this evaluation as interested community members and considered timing, impact, accountability, and budget criteria in its assessment. Compass Kitchener considered evaluation criteria for the strategic actions developed in consultation with Kitchener's Corporate Leadership Team. The following questions guided the evaluation:

1. Responsible Project Delivery:

This criterion focuses on how well project goals, budgets and timelines are managed. It emphasizes the importance of monitoring and tracking progress to ensure projects are completed efficiently and effectively, achieving goals within financial constraints and deadlines.

- Note: Given that the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan is intended to be adaptive, responsible project delivery also recognizes that timelines may shift due to shifting priorities and needs.

2. Impact/Public Value:

This criterion assesses how the impact of the project will be tracked and evaluated, and the extent to which a project (has the potential) to create positive outcomes for the community and contributes to the goal(s) of the Strategic Plan.

3. Transparency & Communication:

This criterion focuses on the dissemination of information through staff reports and other channels. It emphasizes the importance of relevant, clear, timely, and accessible communication to the community, ensuring that project goals, progress, challenges, and outcomes/impacts are openly shared.

4. Public Engagement:

This criterion evaluates how well a project involves the community and/or relevant parties in its planning and execution.

Equity Lens

Using the definition of equity outlined in Kitchener's Equity, Inclusion & Anti-Racism policy, Compass Kitchener will also incorporate an equity lens to underpin the evaluation of all projects.

"An equity approach creates the conditions for fair and equal access and opportunity for everyone, by addressing discriminations, exclusions and barriers experienced by distinct groups. Equity is not the same as equality, nor is it the same as inequality."

Evaluation Rating

Compass Kitchener will evaluate each project using the following rating scale: exceeds expectations, meets expectations, and does not meet expectations.

The evaluation rating will be determined based on the extent to which all applicable evaluation criteria are met, recognizing that some criteria may not be applicable to each project. Each individual criterion will be assigned a rating, and based on the ratings of all applicable criteria, Compass Kitchener members will determine an overall rating through a consensus vote.

The following chart explains the classification for the three rating categories:

		
<p>Exceeds Expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Set and met challenging Objectives and showed initiative in meeting them - Proactively planned, problem solved and initiated solutions - Stepped outside of existing responsibilities to add value - Puts the public at centre of work - Identifies breakthrough Concepts - Is regarded as a knowledgeable resource - Exhibits mastery - Impacts exceed specified criteria - Elevates strategic plan - Is an exceptional contributor to strategic 	<p>Meets Expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Models values of caring, innovation, and vibrancy - Achieves specified criteria - Meets the City's high-performance reputation - Contributes positively to the success of the City 	<p>Does Not Meet Expectations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Late delivery of deliverables without explanation or valid reasons - Poor quality of deliverables (lack of clarity) - Poor quantity of deliverables - Non-delivery of deliverables

2024 Project Evaluations

CREATING AN ECONOMICALLY-THRIVING CITY TOGETHER

We use our collective strengths to grow an agile and diverse local economy powered by talented entrepreneurs, workers, and artists. We work together to create opportunities for everyone and a resilient future that propels our city forward.

Accelerate Commercial Business Approvals

Accelerate Commercial Business Approvals Report Card
Project Description: Facilitate streamlined business process and approvals for brick-and-mortar retail business across the City.
Overall Evaluation: Meets Expectations
Highlights
<p>Responsible Project Delivery</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivered within the planned timeline (Sept 2023 - Mar 2024); Defined scope and methodology via a robust Terms of Reference and Lean process involving cross-departmental collaboration; and Appointed a dedicated internal Project Manager to oversee implementation. <p>Impact / Public Value</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identified 55 process improvements, 65% of which were classified as “quick wins” to streamline approvals and enhance customer service; Introduced practical tools such as a business roadmap guide, pre-application process, and digital permit review systems; and Implementation tracking and impact evaluation (e.g., satisfaction surveys and reduced processing times) are underway. Introduced coordinated onsite meetings where City staff from multiple departments visit business locations together to review the full scope of approvals, streamlining the process and improving clarity for business owners. Used the online language translation and interpretation services during onsite visits to ensure better accessibility and support for business owners whose first language is not English. <p>Transparency and Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provided project updates to Council through regular strategic plan reporting cycles; final report publicly available; and

- Sent closure emails with report links to participating business owners as a gesture of accountability and transparency.

Public Engagement

- Conducted 12 interviews with business owners and followed up with surveys and updates to maintain engagement; and
- Employed user-focused methods such as empathy mapping and process mapping in cross-departmental workshops.

Notes for the Future

- Consider expanding the project's scope beyond downtown Kitchener to assess applicability and effectiveness across the city.
- Revisit the project in a future evaluation cycle to assess long-term outcomes and public value, once more implementation and impact data are available.
- Continue to collect and share outcome data, including satisfaction rates, reduced approval timelines, and cost savings for businesses.
- Broaden communications efforts to publicly highlight improvements and promote awareness of new business-friendly tools and processes.
- Contemplate further engagement with underrepresented or equity-seeking business communities to ensure inclusive benefit from improvements.

FOSTERING A CARING CITY TOGETHER

We welcome residents of all ages, backgrounds and lived experiences. We work together on the decisions that matter to us and have a meaningful influence in our community. We're healthy and thriving as we easily access the diverse and inclusive programs and services we need to succeed.

Advance Truth and Reconciliation

Compass Kitchener recognizes that advancing Truth and Reconciliation (T&R) is not a conventional municipal project, but rather a foundational and ongoing commitment that must be embedded across the City's work. For this reason, and to be consistent with the equity lens the committee applied to this report, the committee has chosen a narrative format for this assessment, recognizing that traditional evaluation frameworks rooted in Western paradigms are often ill-suited to the complex, relational, and long-term nature of reconciliation work.

In reviewing the City's actions, Compass Kitchener was encouraged by the depth of the City's commitment and its evolving understanding of the respectful role it must play. This role was particularly evident in initiatives such as the Wiinjindamaan project, an Indigenous land stewardship initiative co-developed with Conestoga College and Indigenous-led organizations. The committee views this project not as a City-led undertaking, but as a community-led partnership in which the City is a respectful participant. In this and other initiatives, leadership is shared across partners, and success is measured not by deliverables alone, but by the depth of relationships, mutual trust, and shared purpose they cultivate.

Importantly, Compass Kitchener commends the City's humility in its communication approach, particularly its decision to resist the impulse to publicly spotlight its role in reconciliation projects where such visibility could overshadow Indigenous voices or compromise fragile trust. This restraint reflects a maturity of intent and a recognition that reconciliation requires shifting power, not seeking credit.

At the same time, the committee encourages the City to find appropriate, partner-informed ways of communicating progress to the broader public. Doing so can raise awareness, foster understanding, and encourage others in the community to engage meaningfully with reconciliation efforts, so long as the narrative elevates Indigenous leadership and maintains a focus on collective, rather than institutional achievement.

In sum, Compass Kitchener affirms the City's role as a committed, learning partner in the journey of reconciliation. The success of this work should not be assessed by traditional performance metrics, but by the strength of the relationships it fosters and the integrity with which the City walks alongside Indigenous communities. As the City continues this work, Compass Kitchener encourages it to remain guided by Indigenous leadership, to foster collective ownership of projects, and to communicate progress in ways that elevate Indigenous voices while preserving the trust and partnerships that have been so carefully built.

Overall Observations and Looking Ahead

DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE 2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

Compass Kitchener commends the City for adopting a thoughtful, adaptive, and resident-centred approach to the development and implementation of the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan. The process reflected important learnings from past cycles and demonstrated the City's commitment to broad engagement, responsible project delivery, and continuous improvement.

Public engagement reached new heights, with the Resident Panel standing out as a particularly innovative and inclusive initiative. Participants reported feeling heard and valued, and the variety of engagement formats—both online and in-person—helped diversify participation and strengthen legitimacy.

The plan's adaptive structure, which introduces actions in phases rather than all at once, represents a welcome shift. It enables flexibility to respond to changing community needs and allows for more realistic planning. As implementation proceeds, Compass Kitchener encourages the City to maintain transparency by clearly communicating changes and new project additions to the public.

The introduction of project charters, the assignment of dedicated project managers, and the inclusion of a midpoint check-in all suggest a maturing strategic planning culture. These changes support accountability, responsiveness, and better coordination across departments. The committee appreciated being included in the all-committees midpoint review and supports this practice continuing in future plans. The new Strategic Plan Indicators webpage enhances public transparency and offers a valuable tool for tracking progress. The committee encourages continued efforts to ensure this data remains accessible and user-friendly, particularly for non-technical audiences.

Recommendations for Future Planning

- Deepen engagement with equity-deserving communities and continue to innovate in participatory methods.
- Ensure clear public communication of new or revised actions under the adaptive model.
- Strengthen storytelling to help residents connect with the plan and see its relevance to daily life.
- Expand public education on how strategic indicators are used and what they reveal.

Overall, the 2023-2026 plan reflects a more agile and collaborative direction. Compass Kitchener encourages the City to carry this momentum forward as it begins to envision the next strategic planning process.

UPDATE ON PROJECTS FROM THE 2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

As part of its ongoing accountability and learning role, Compass Kitchener continues to monitor the progress of projects from the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan that remained incomplete at the time of its 2024 report to Council. The following provides an update on those projects, based on available information:

Protected Cycling Network

Original Target: 2022 (Completion noted in 2024 report as 2024)

Now completed. The network was opened in late 2024, with final touches on Duke Street scheduled for spring 2025. A public celebration is planned for June 7, 2025.

Incubator and Accelerator Project

Original Target: 2019-2021 (Reported as incomplete in 2024)

The Creative Hub at 44 Gaukel is fully leased. A food incubator business case will be submitted in Q3 2025. Build-out of the Small Business Centre in the Innovation Arena is expected by early 2026.

City-Owned Property Review

Original Target: 2020 (Reported as ongoing in 2024)

Now complete. The City has adopted a land disposition framework based on this review.

Downtown Innovation District (Bramm Yards) Vision

Original Target: 2021 (Reported as incomplete in 2024)

Delayed due to market conditions. Revised plans are in progress, with the Master Plan now expected in 2027. Environmental remediation and pre-design work are underway.

Rosenberg Community Centre Business Case

Original Target: 2021 (Reported as incomplete in 2024)

Now complete. Business case and design work have concluded. Construction of the joint school and community centre is underway as of fall 2024.

Open Space Strategy

Original Target: 2021 (Reported as incomplete in 2024)

Now complete. The final phase (“Places”) is scheduled to be presented to Council in May 2025 as part of the Places & Spaces strategy.

Arts and Culture Master Plan

Original Target: 2021 (Reported as incomplete in 2024)

Development of the plan (now retitled Arts and Creative Industries Action Plan) is underway, with completion targeted for 2025 and implementation to begin 2026-2028. This initiative is now included in the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan under Creating an Economically Thriving City Together.

Compass Kitchener appreciates the City’s continued transparency in reporting the status of these projects. In several cases, projects have been carried forward and integrated into the current strategic plan, illustrating the City’s adaptive approach. The committee encourages continued clear communication on revised timelines and evolving scopes as the City moves forward.



In Closing