

**Kitchener 2051**

# A Connected City

**Summary of Background & Technical Data**

**April 2025**

*Prepared by Urban Strategies for the City of Kitchener*



# A Connected City

A connected city is also about the quality of our neighbourhoods and ensuring housing for all who want to call Kitchener home.

A Connected City is about connecting how we grow with how we move. It is about getting around easily, sustainably, and safely to the places and spaces that matter to us most. By 2051, current and new residents will need places to live, work, and play, and options to connect to these needs.

The distance between our everyday needs shapes the way we move between them. By bringing homes, jobs, and amenities closer together through intensification, we make it easier for people to travel sustainably—whether by walking, rolling, cycling, transit, or by car. Prioritizing safe connections between these places supports healthier, more vibrant neighbourhoods for everyone.



## Background & Technical Data Summary

To give us the tools and understanding we need to build a connected city, we are preparing a series of background and technical studies. The Transportation Master Plan and Official Plan are city-wide plans that guide how we move and grow, and they are outdated. This is why we are coordinating updates to both these plans to fully integrate the planning of growth, land use, and transportation infrastructure. These two plans will work together to guide future decision-making and city investments for years to come. We will have more to share about the Transportation Master Plan later in 2025!

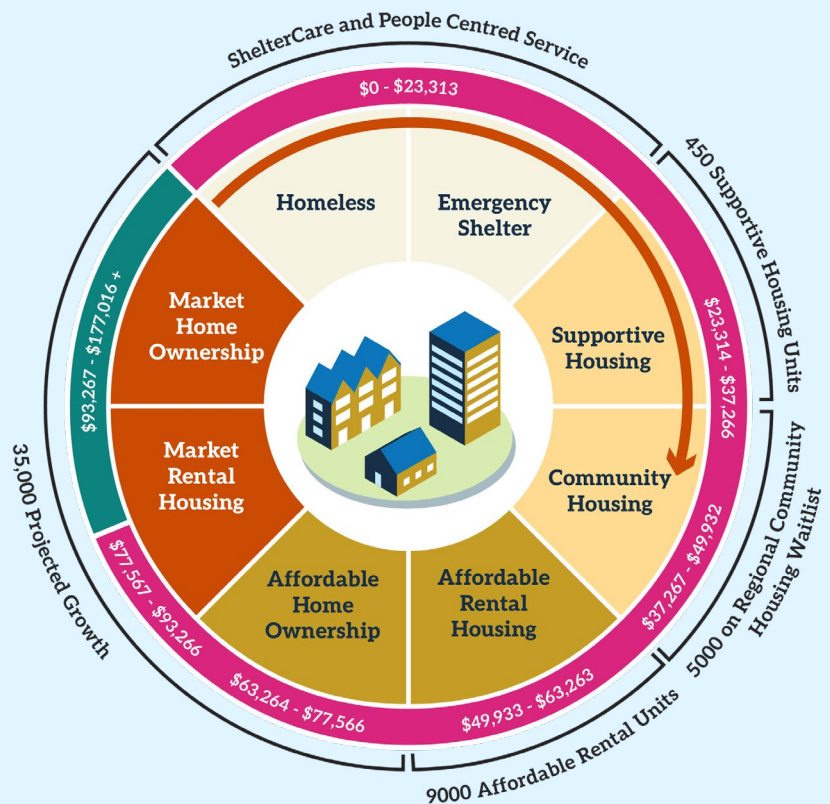
The Population and Employment Forecast and Housing Needs Assessment (Assessment) supporting Kitchener 2051 is looking at the economic, social and policy drivers to forecast the city's growth over 25 years. Based on the ages, forecasted incomes, and characteristics of the population, it makes recommendations on the number and types of homes we need so that everyone can find a home in Kitchener that meets their needs.

The Assessment uses a social lens to consider access to housing, and how it's affected by the systemic barriers that people face. It highlights the struggles faced by the increasing number of residents experiencing homelessness, for whom the challenges of getting back into stable housing are difficult to overcome.

## What is affordable housing and who does what?

Housing is said to be affordable when households spend less than 30% of their income on housing costs. Affordable housing is not just about subsidized apartments. It covers a wide continuum of housing types. The Housing Wheelhouse from Kitchener's Housing for All Strategy describes how Kitchener looks at this continuum. All orders of government, the non-profit and private sectors have important roles to play in the provision of housing that meets the needs of many people, each with different needs and different incomes.

Kitchener's role is to plan for and enable a broad range and mix of housing types across the housing continuum. Since approving the Housing for All Strategy in 2020, Kitchener has taken a more active role in affordable housing across the housing continuum. The Provincial and Federal governments provide much of the funding for new subsidized housing construction. Waterloo Region owns most local community housing and works closely with various non-profit housing providers.



# Preliminary Key Findings



## Housing Supply:

We need to plan for 55,000 new homes over the next 25 years—half rental, half ownership—to meet demand and fix the current housing shortfall.



## Housing Diversity:

As the demographics of our community change, we should plan for more types of housing to meet our changing needs. About half of the homes in Kitchener today are single detached, while the other half are in higher-density forms such as apartments, townhouses, backyard tiny homes, and retirement homes. We should plan for a 40/60 split by 2051. The need for this shift is primarily driven by large and fast-growing young adult and 75+ age groups, who are more likely to choose higher-density homes. Accessible homes will also become more crucial as the population ages.



## Affordability:

The rising costs of rent and homeownership and the limited supply of non-market (all but the dark blue sections of the housing wheelhouse) housing are all driving significant affordability challenges, especially for low to moderate-income households. Over 10% of Kitchener households are in homes that are unaffordable, overcrowded and/or in need of major repair, and they cannot find an appropriate alternative in our community.



## Equity:

Vulnerable populations like single-parent households and Indigenous people are more likely to face housing challenges. Inequity and challenges in accessing housing and supporting services are not experienced equally across the city. Central neighbourhoods have the most affordable homes, the best supporting services and, as a result, some of our city's most marginalized people. In suburban neighbourhoods there is still significant need and inequity, but access to social services is more challenging.



## Displacement & Housing Insecurity:

Evictions, hidden homelessness, and encampments are consequences of the current housing crisis.



## Social Services:

There is a lack of integrated services for people experiencing mental health and addiction challenges.

# How can an official plan respond?

**As the City develops a forward-thinking and action-oriented Official Plan, several key questions must be considered.**

- Do our policies align with best practices and housing needs?
- How can we ensure that housing policies reflect diverse experiences of diverse residents?
- How can we make sure everyone sees a home for themselves in the new Official Plan?
- How should the city support more housing that is affordable to people with low income, and non-market housing solutions?
- How can we help prevent displacement and keep the City's existing affordable housing?
- How can we continue to collaborate across the governments, non-profits and the for profit housing providers? Some of these ideas go beyond the traditional scope of an Official Plan. How do we make this official plan innovative? And what's better left to other city policies and strategies, or is best done by others?

**The preliminary recommendations in the Assessment are categorized under the following key focus areas:**

- Municipal Leadership
- Non-Market & Deeply Affordable Housing
- Tenant Protections & Housing Stability
- Inclusive & Accessible Housing
- Preventing Displacement & Housing Speculation
- Supporting People Experiencing Homelessness
- Monitoring & Measuring Progress

**Some preliminary key recommendations include:**

- Establish a target for the number of new affordable units we create every year and monitor progress. The Current target is for 30% of new housing to be affordable to low and moderate income households.
- Review policies and regulations that can add costs and time to the development of new housing.
- Plan for more homes everywhere, but especially in areas that are well served by transit, neighbourhood services and job opportunities.
- Look for ways to protect existing affordable housing and minimize displacement of the folks that live there.
- The city should help deliver more non-market housing. For example, by continuing to use city-owned land, providing financial incentives, speeding up approvals, and helping to make connections and build capacity in the not-for profit sector.



# A Connected City

## - DRAFT Big Idea and Focus Areas



### Big Idea: Our Neighbourhoods

If you live in Kitchener, or if you would like to live here, if you rent or own, if you live alone or with others, if you need care or assistance, there will always be a home for you here. You and your family – however you define it, are able to make your home in any of Kitchener’s thriving neighbourhoods. Our neighbourhoods will be places where neighbours can connect, where people of all ages can learn and play, and where shops and services are close by.

### We’re focusing on:

- Building affordable homes using all the tools we have and working with others, including other orders of government, builders, and organizations.
- Adding homes of all kinds to all neighbourhoods, particularly for those who need it most.
- Making sure our homes and neighbourhoods meet all of our needs.
- Evolving our neighbourhoods to be more diverse, inclusive, and human. Making sure our neighbourhoods have places to connect with neighbours, family, play, learn, and access shops and services for your everyday needs.

## Related Initiatives & Policy

As part of its commitment to addressing housing challenges, the City of Kitchener is helping build affordable homes using all the tools we have and working with others, including other orders of government, builders, and organizations.

- [Kitchener's Affordable Housing Incentive Programs](#)  
The City continues to implement financial tools such as development charge waivers, grants, and streamlined approvals to facilitate the creation of affordable and non-market housing.
- [Inclusionary Zoning](#) and [Rental Replacement By-law](#)  
Policies to ensure affordability in high-growth areas and protect existing affordable rental housing.
- [Housing Accelerator Fund](#)  
The City is administering \$42.4 million in federal funding over the next several years to fast-track housing development, including affordable and supportive housing.
- [City-Owned Land for Affordable Housing](#)  
Three affordable housing projects on City lands are in development, with construction anticipated by 2026.
- [Lived Expertise Working Group \(LEWG\)](#)  
Extending and strengthening the City's partnership with individuals with lived experience of housing precarity to shape policies and programs.
- [Lodging homes](#)  
Established as-of-right permissions for lodging homes across the city where other residential uses are allowed.



