

**Kitchener 2051**

# A Thriving City

**Summary of Background & Technical Data**

**April 2025**

*Prepared by Urban Strategies for the City of Kitchener*



# A Thriving City

## How We Create Vibrant Communities for All?

A Thriving City is about creating a city of vibrant, evolving, and livable neighbourhoods which provide housing opportunities for all. It is about growing an agile and diverse local economy, powered by talented entrepreneurs, workers, and artists.



### What do we mean by Complete communities?

Complete communities are neighborhoods where residents can live, work, play, and connect with each other in a short distance from their homes. These communities have a variety of housing options, job opportunities, shops, services, and recreational and cultural facilities, all within walking or biking distance. They contribute to thriving, connected, green and caring neighbourhoods.

## Background & Technical Data Summary

Our neighbourhoods are more than just homes – they include places to shop, work, play, and connect with neighbours. The Kitchener 2051 Non-Residential Technical Study is looking at all these pieces that make our city a great place to live to help us support and integrate these uses across all our neighbourhoods. The study includes three components:

### 1. Places to Shop & Work:

This part is looking at retail, service and office policies and future needs. It is also looking at mixed use buildings that usually have apartments on upper floors, and businesses or services on the ground floor.

### 2. Supporting our Economy and Industrial Lands:

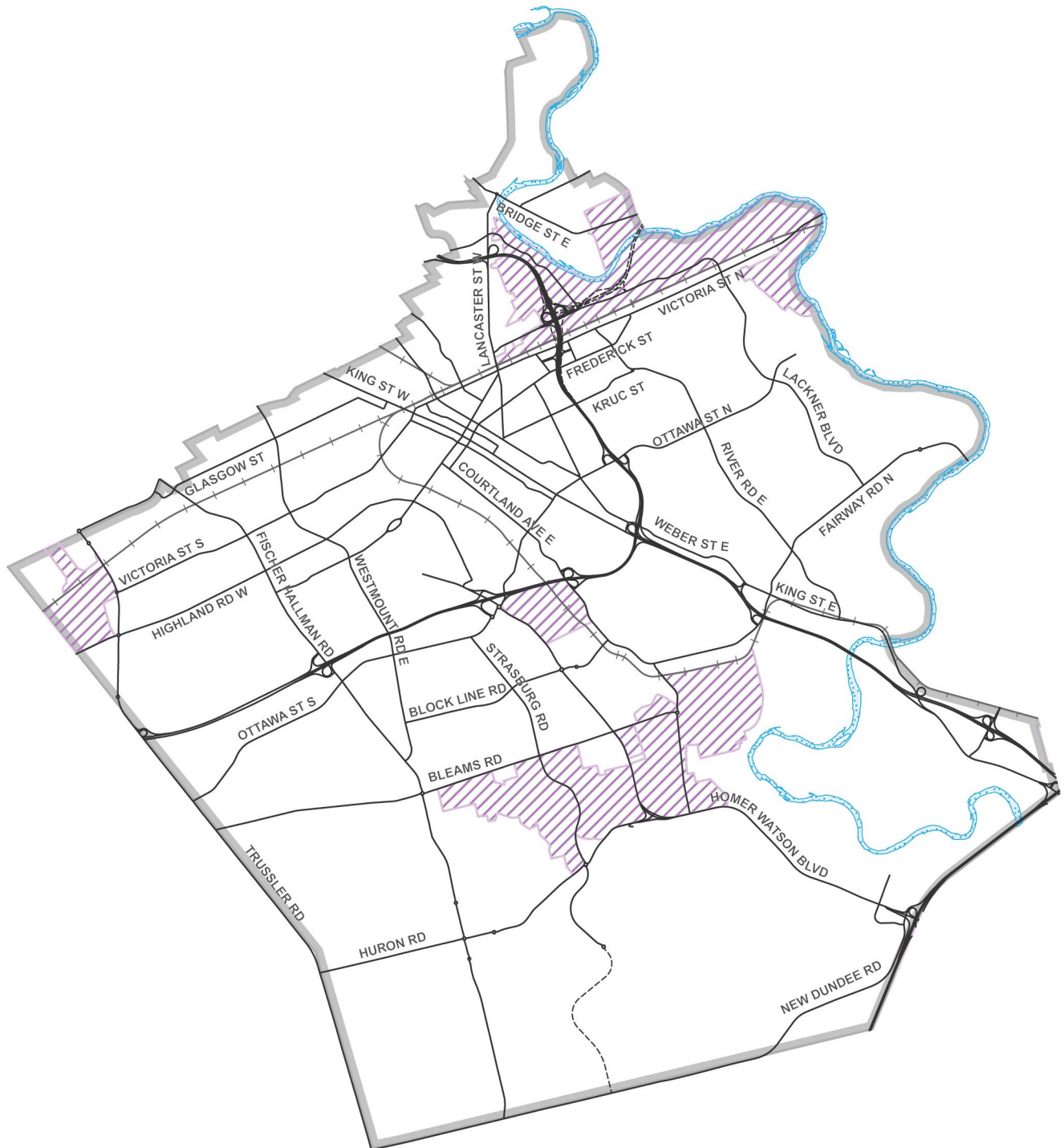
This part is looking at our industrial areas and business parks to plan for job growth in Kitchener and support the economy. It is also examining how to make sure people's homes aren't impacted from the nuisances of nearby industry.

### 3. Creating Places to Gather, Learn, and Play:

The final part is looking at our institutional and community facilities, such as schools, community centres, and libraries, to support these facilities across the city. As our community grows and changes, the demand for these facilities continues to evolve and the locations where they can be built become more limited as we look to build and grow in already built-up areas.



## Employment Lands



# Preliminary Key Findings



**Retail follows rooftops:** Shops and services thrive when there are many people living nearby.



## **Complete communities:**

Updating neighbourhoods to achieve this will be harder in some places than others because of street and lot layouts.



**Office Buildings** are focused Downtown and new ones should be focused there too. Despite high office vacancy (22%) and work from home trends, robust long term economic growth in our region means we should plan to increase the amount of office space in Kitchener by about 50%.



**Industrial areas:** Preserving lands in our employment lands for growth of existing and new industries are crucial to our economy.



**Retail and Services:** The development of new buildings for retail and services has slowed in the last several years. Considering the rapid change and uncertainty in the retail landscape, Kitchener should plan to grow its total retail space over the next 25 years, but not as fast as population growth.



**Community hubs** clustering institutional and community uses together in one place as a community hub is highly valuable, but can be difficult to coordinate among different stakeholders and funders.



**Institutional uses** like schools, hospital and community centres will need to be planned for to support population growth. This means building more on existing institutional sites as well as allowing institutional uses to be part of new mixed-use buildings. The City should plan to increase the amount of land dedicated to institutions by about 10% over the next 25 years.



**Food Stores** within walking distance of residents is key to a great neighbourhood, but most don't have a food store within a 15 minute walk.

# How can an Official Plan Respond?

**To help ensure shops and places to work are part of complete communities, the preliminary recommendations from the study suggest:**

- Enabling small-scale, shops, and amenities inside existing neighbourhoods to make it possible to buy a coffee, get a haircut, or meet up with friends close to home.
- Prioritizing retaining existing food stores especially those in underserved neighbourhoods.
- Thinking about what food system policies can support the production and sale of food more easily.
- Considering how we can ensure the shopping needs of the local community continues to be met when older plazas and shopping centres are redeveloped.
- Providing a flexible approach to mixed-use development sites.

**To help ensure there are good places to establish and grow industrial and manufacturing business, the preliminary recommendations from the study suggest:**

- Protection of our industrial lands for manufacturers that really need them, while making sure we are adaptable to changing economic realities.
- Maintaining and adapting the business-focused function of older industrial areas that are interspersed within residential neighbourhoods.
- Protection of the office uses within Kitchener's suburban office parks.

**To help create more places to gather, learn, and play across Kitchener, the preliminary recommendations of the study suggest:**

- The conservation and protection of lands that currently have institutional land uses. The city should protect institutional lands and facilitate their evolution to new institutions as needs change and be careful about permitting conversion to a more financially attractive land uses like residential.
- Better connections between school growth, community and recreational planning with institutional land needs in both new and existing neighbourhoods.
- Supporting the implementation of Places and Spaces and the Leisure Facilities master plan.
- Adopting a flexible approach to the supporting of community hubs where a wide range of institutional uses and community infrastructure are clustered together.



# A Thriving City

## - DRAFT Big Idea and Focus Areas



### Big Idea: Our Economy

Our economy will be built on businesses of all types in neighbourhoods across the city, from shops and services to industry, innovation hubs, and offices. Residents and goods will get where they need to go quickly, efficiently and sustainably. Coordinated energy and infrastructure investments in businesses across the city will create a more competitive, resilient economy.

### We're focusing on:

- Growing Kitchener's economy by adding more shops and services in all neighbourhoods, making it easier to get groceries, a cup of coffee, a haircut, or to your job.
- Creating more options to get people and goods where they need to go, including walking, biking, public transit, and driving.
- Creating conditions that attract the employers and industries of tomorrow, and play to Kitchener's economic strengths.
- Protecting and preserving industrial employment lands for uses that need to be there, and making sure that offices are easy to access and located close to transit.

## Related Initiatives & Policy

- [Make it Kitchener 2.0](#), the 2020 economic development strategy supports economic recovery and propels our economy and community forward by investing in catalytic growth opportunities and creating a resilient future.
- [Places and Spaces](#) is Kitchener's strategic plan for parks, it looks at the quantity of parks and takes an equity lens prioritize areas of greatest need. It also guides the quality of our parks and emphasis for placemaking and creating diverse and functional spaces.
- [Leisure Facilities Master Plan \(2019\)](#) guides our investment in things like arenas, rinks, baseball fields and community centers.



