

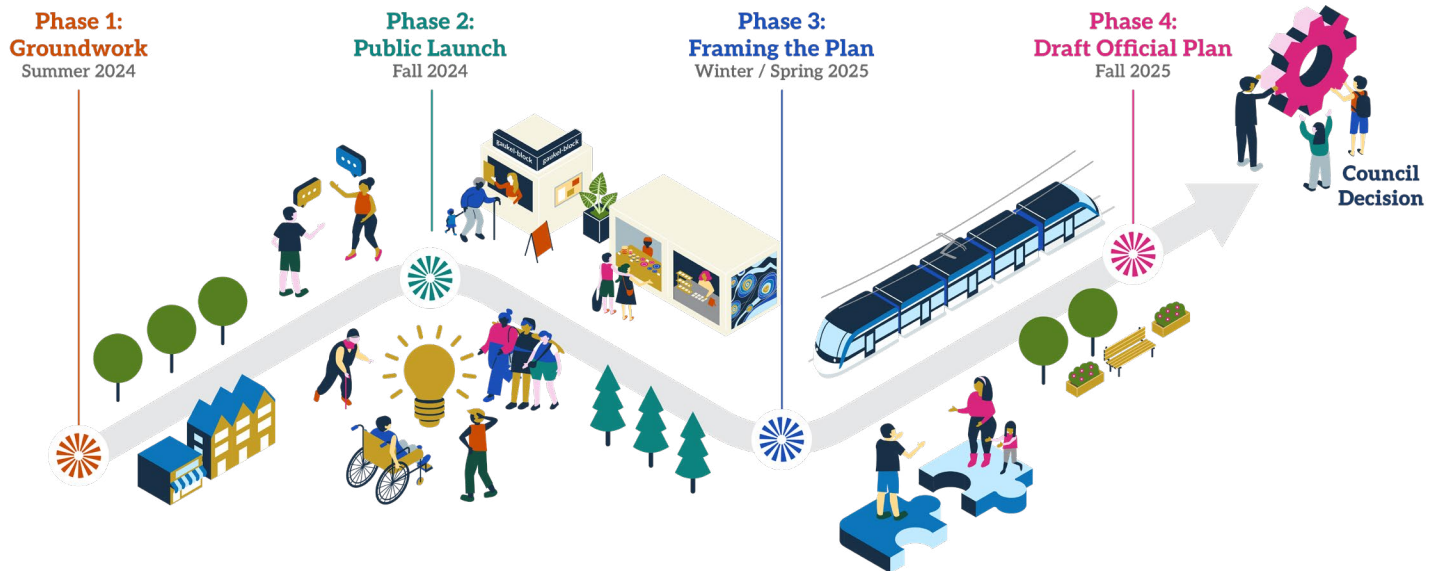
Spring 2025

Community Conversation Kits

Draft Big Ideas &
Emerging Directions



We have some big ideas for Kitchener's new Official Plan!



The City of Kitchener is writing a new Official Plan called Kitchener 2051 – and we need to hear from you!

Kitchener 2051 is about reflecting and implementing shared community priorities and directions. These priorities and directions will guide Kitchener's development over the next 25 years and beyond in support of our vision of *building a city for everyone where, together, we take care of the world around us and each other.*

Our Official Plan is a tool that contains policies and maps that guide where housing, jobs, and streets are built, protect our natural areas, and guide investments in community services and facilities. Kitchener's Official Plan has positively shaped growth and development across the city over the last decade. A new Official Plan is needed to respond to current and future conditions and trends.

Kitchener 2051 presents an opportunity to tackle these issues head-on, ask big questions, and prepare for the future. It will work together with other recently completed plans, such as Housing for All, Places & Spaces, and the Cycling and Trails Master Plan, to set out a forward-thinking and contemporary policy framework.

Since Fall 2024, we have had conversations with over 2,000 residents and collaborators as we launched Kitchener 2051 asking the question - how can the changes unfolding in our community over the next 25 years benefit everyone?

These conversations have been framed by four themes from our 2023-2026 Strategic Plan:

- **A Connected City:** how we move and how we grow.
- **A Thriving City:** how we live and ensure a prosperous future for all.
- **A Green City:** how we care for the earth and each other.
- **A Caring City:** how we come together to plan and build for individual and collective wellbeing.



To read the "What We Heard" Report which summarizes community input to-date, scan the QR code or visit EngageWR.ca/Kitchener2051.

Developing Our Big Ideas and Emerging Directions

A first step in framing a new Official Plan for Kitchener was to develop the Big Ideas – the main aspirations for a new Official Plan. The Big Ideas reflect what we learned in Phases 1 and 2, as well as preliminary findings from the various Kitchener 2051 technical reports and direction from existing City plans and strategies. We have also developed a series of emerging directions. These are different paths we can take to bring our big ideas to life.



To read our Community Backgrounders on the technical reports, scan the QR code or visit EngageWR.ca/Kitchener2051.



How to run a Conversation Kit Session?

If you are the host:

1. Consider ordering some food for your group (first 50 kits to be submitted will be reimbursed up to \$30, see instructions below).
2. Host your conversation using the instructions and helpful tips provided throughout this kit.
3. Record the group's thoughts and feedback in this conversation kit as clearly as possible. It's ok to keep it to the main ideas, areas or agreement or points of tension. Don't try to capture every word.
4. Submit completed conversation kits anytime up to May 20, 2025 by:

Emailing it to kitchener2051@kitchener.ca

OR

Dropping it off in person at any of the following locations:

- Kitchener City Hall – 200 King Street West
- Any Community Centre
- Any Kitchener Public Library Branch

Please make sure that the Conversation Kit is in an envelope marked to:

**Attention: Planning and Housing Policy
Kitchener City Hall – 200 King Street West
6th Floor**



What is a Community Conversation Kit?

The Community Conversation Kit has been designed to understand your thoughts and priorities when it comes to these Big Ideas and Emerging Direction through an interactive discussion with people in your community. This could be your book club, softball team, co-workers, friends, faith community or neighbours – really any group that you would like to share ideas and have a conversation with. It works best in groups of 4-8. Your feedback on these will help shape the draft policies of the Official Plan.

Our DRAFT Big Ideas are on Page 4. Comments on the DRAFT Big Ideas are encouraged but do not need to be the focus of your group's discussion. They can be done independently and submitted as part of your conversation kit or sent individually to the City.

The **100 Points for Emerging Directions Exercise** starts on Page 6. Please use your time to work through this together.



Grab a Slice!

The first 50 Kit submissions will be reimbursed up to \$30 for food purchased by the host for the group. To be reimbursed, please submit a clear photo of your receipt along with your Conversation Kit.

Be sure to check the project website to see if we are still offering reimbursement before ordering.

DRAFT Big Ideas

What do we mean by Big Ideas?

Our big ideas are the north star guiding our desired future. They will shape the policies of our new Official Plan and preferred approach to planning for growth across our city. They reflect our Community Values, which were developed based on your input in Phase 1 and 2 of the process.



DRAFT Big Idea – Our Neighbourhoods

If you live in Kitchener or 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, will be able to make a home in any of Kitchener’s neighbourhoods. Our neighbourhoods will be places where the community can connect, where people of all ages can learn and play, and where shops and services are close by.

DRAFT 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 business across the city will create a more competitive, resilient economy.



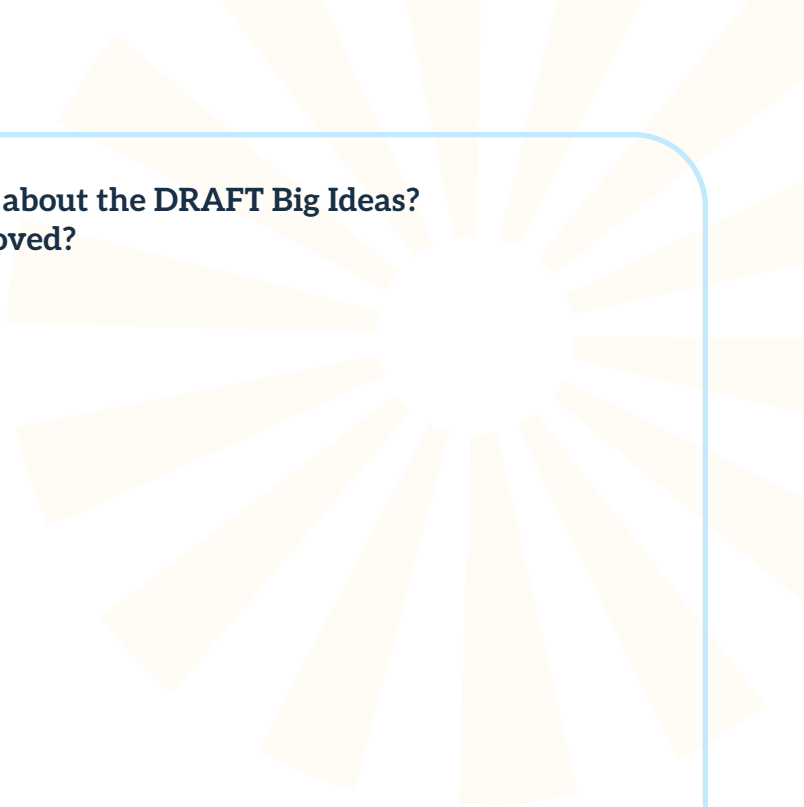
DRAFT Big Idea – Our Environment

We value, protect and conserve our natural environment so that Kitchener is a place where you and your family can be safe, healthy, and comfortable for generations to come. Kitchener will emit almost no greenhouse gases and our communities, built and natural environments will be ready for hotter days and more intense storms. We will learn from Indigenous land-based cultural practices and stewardship in the spirit of reconciliation to build a stronger community, based on a mutual understanding of each other and the environment.





**Is there anything you'd like to share about the DRAFT Big Ideas?
What did you like? Could it be improved?**





100 Points for Emerging Directions Exercise

Emerging directions are different paths we can take to shape our big ideas. They are NOT actions. Rather they help provide focus on specific areas so that as we work to implement our Official Plan they act as guideposts to develop detailed, concrete actions.

There are 18 emerging directions. This is not meant to be an exhaustive list but rather focused on areas that need further discussion. Through these community conversations, we want to understand how important and meaningful each one of these directions are to you.

As a group:

1. Read through the emerging directions.
2. Discuss what they mean and why they are important to you. You might find it helpful to use the conversation starters provided below each Emerging Direction to keep the conversation going. Other questions to consider are:
 - Why does this emerging direction resonate?
 - What would be an action that could come from it?
3. You have a total of 100 points to distribute amongst the 18 emerging directions. Working together, distribute a portion of your 100 points to each emerging direction. The more points you give to an emerging direction the more important/meaningful it is to you. It may be helpful to use physical items as counters, like paper dots, jelly beans, gaming tokens.
4. Take notes on your discussions and your reflections on the activity on Page 8 (following the table).
5. Don't forget to fill out the Demographic Survey and the Meal Reimbursement Form before sending back your package!

#	Emerging Direction	Points
1	Use all the tools that Kitchener has, and build on relationships with other orders of government and private sector collaborators, to continue to support the expansion, preservation, and creation of affordable homes to meet the needs of existing and future residents. <i>Think about – What are ways we can focus on housing affordability? How can we avoid a re-occurring housing affordability crisis?</i>	
2	Establish an affordable housing target. <i>Think about – How can we measure our progress on having affordable housing for everyone in our City? What might a target help us achieve or measure?</i>	
3	Allow housing choices in all neighbourhoods – from houses to apartments, rental and ownership, market and affordable – to meet the needs of existing and future residents. <i>Think about – What type of homes have you lived in already and what type of home may you need in the future? Maybe stairs are difficult. Maybe you need a home that fits your extended family.</i>	
4	Create strong neighbourhoods by promoting human connection. <i>Think about – What ways were you able to maintain connections with people during the COVID-19 pandemic? Where in your neighbourhood do you go to spend time with others (e.g., parks, libraries, a place of worship, your neighbours' backyard)?</i>	
5	Plan for more people in neighbourhoods to increase mobility choice, more shops, and more services closer to homes. <i>Think about – If you could have any shop or service closer to home what would it be?</i>	
6	Ensure that while new homes are added in neighbourhoods, displacement of lower income and marginalized households is minimized. <i>Think about – Do remember a time when you or a loved one had to leave your home sooner than you or they wanted? How did it affect affordability and/or connection to community?</i>	
7	Permit small-scale and compatible commercial and service uses in neighbourhoods. <i>Think about – How long does it take you to walk from your home to get a coffee? To the doctor's office?</i>	
8	Ensure that goods can move around Kitchener and get where they need to go easily and quickly. <i>Think about – Are there trips that you can make by walking, biking, or taking transit, instead of driving? Reducing car trips leaves more room on the roads for trucks to get around efficiently.</i>	
9	Creating conditions that attract the employers and industries of tomorrow and play to Kitchener's economic strengths. <i>Think about – What can the City do today to ensure good jobs and a vibrant economy 25 years from now?</i>	

#	Emerging Direction	Points
10	Allow industrial uses that don't need to be located away from homes in more places throughout the city. <i>Think about – Where might there be opportunities to grow our local economy throughout Kitchener to provide more industrial-type jobs? What do we need to be mindful of?</i>	
11	Protect and grow existing employment areas for industries that needs lots of land or create noise, dust, vibrations, or odours. <i>Think about – Employment Lands with industrial uses can't be located close to where people live, as they can be noisy, produce odours, have lots of truck trips, or all of the above. How can the City improve getting to and from jobs in these areas since they're further from where people live?</i>	
12	Direct major offices close to ION station stops or other areas with frequent transit. <i>Think about – What are some benefits to having larger offices near ION stations?</i>	
13	Our transportation network includes safe, comfortable, and accessible active transportation routes. <i>Think about – Separated and protected facilities for walking, wheeling, and cycling.</i>	
14	As neighbourhoods change they should consider the impacts of a changing climate. <i>Think about – More trees to provide shade; areas within neighbourhoods to escape from extreme weather (e.g., spaces like libraries or community centers or treed parks).</i>	
15	Use data about climate risks and vulnerable neighbourhoods to inform decisions on city infrastructure to reduce urban heat and flood risk. <i>Think about – How can we prioritize investments over the next 25 years to help protect people and property from the worst impacts of climate change.</i>	
16	Continue to naturalize stormwater channels and ponds and integrate these spaces with recreation opportunities. <i>Think about – Henry Sturm Creek in Victoria Hills and Montgomery Creek near Wilson Park.</i>	
17	Prioritize the local food system by seeking opportunities for urban agriculture, low-barrier food production, processing and food retail. <i>Think about – If you've tried to 'localize' some of your food buying decisions over the last few months, how has the food system been able to accommodate that?</i>	
18	Recognize the value and significance of Kitchener's Natural Heritage System. <i>Think about – The Grand River valley and special places along Strasburg Creek such as Brigadoon and Wards Ponds and the Huron Natural Area.</i>	
Total Points		

Connecting back to our Big Ideas:

- Our Neighbourhood
- Our Economy
- Our Environment



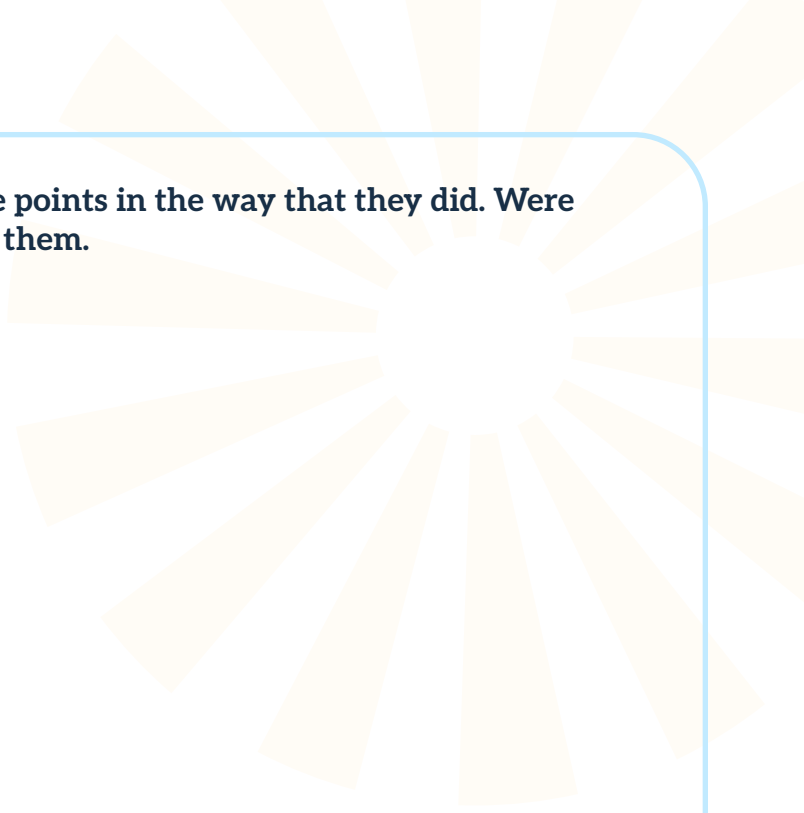
Overall, what were some thoughts shared on why specific emerging directions resonated?



What were some actions that were discussed?



Describe why the group assigned the points in the way that they did. Were there areas of debate? If so, describe them.



Create A Refund Vendor

Please note that * indicates that the field is mandatory.

Please provide the reason for the refund * :

Community Engagement: Kitchener 2051 Conversation Kit - Food Reimbursement

Company/Vendor * : _____

Contact Name : _____

Address * : _____

City * : _____

Province/State * : _____

Postal Code * : _____

Telephone : _____ **EXT :** _____

Mobile : _____

Email * : _____

Please provide payment address, if different than the address above :

Company Code : 1000 City of Kitchener - Default

Currency : CAD - Default

Incoterms : FOB DESTINATION - Default

Terms of Payment : Net 0 - Zero

Submitted By : Elyssa Pompa

Date * : _____

Demographic Survey

Tell us about yourself!

We are asking these demographic questions to better understand who takes our online surveys and who might be missing. This is important when assessing equity, diversity and inclusion in the decision-making process. Your answers will be kept confidential and are available only to City of Kitchener. The survey results will be reported all together in one large group (aggregated) and in such a way that no one person can be identified.

Answering the questions below is voluntary. You do not have to answer if you do not want to.

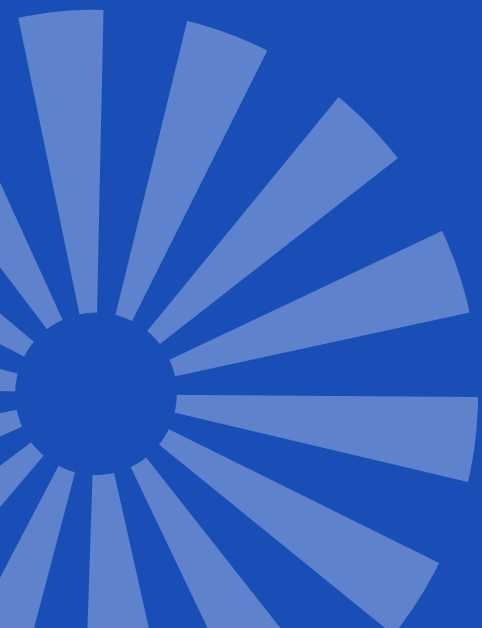
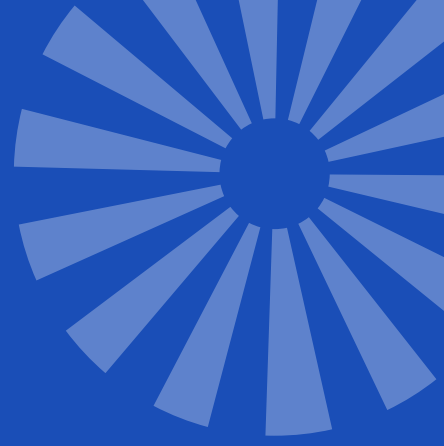
The personal information is collected according to s. 28(2) of Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA) and will be used by the City of Kitchener to inform policy decisions. If you have questions about this notice of collection, please contact Sue Weare, sue.weare@kitchener.ca, 519-741-2200 ext. 7058.

1. Indicate the number of people participated in the conversation for each age group.

Under 18 years old : _____
18-29 years old : _____
30-39 years old : _____
40-49 years old : _____
50-59 years old : _____
60-64 years old : _____
65 years old and above : _____
Prefer not to answer : _____

2. What are the first three digits of your postal code?

N2A
N2B
N2C
N2E
N2G
N2H
N2M
N2N
N2P
N2R
Other : _____



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!

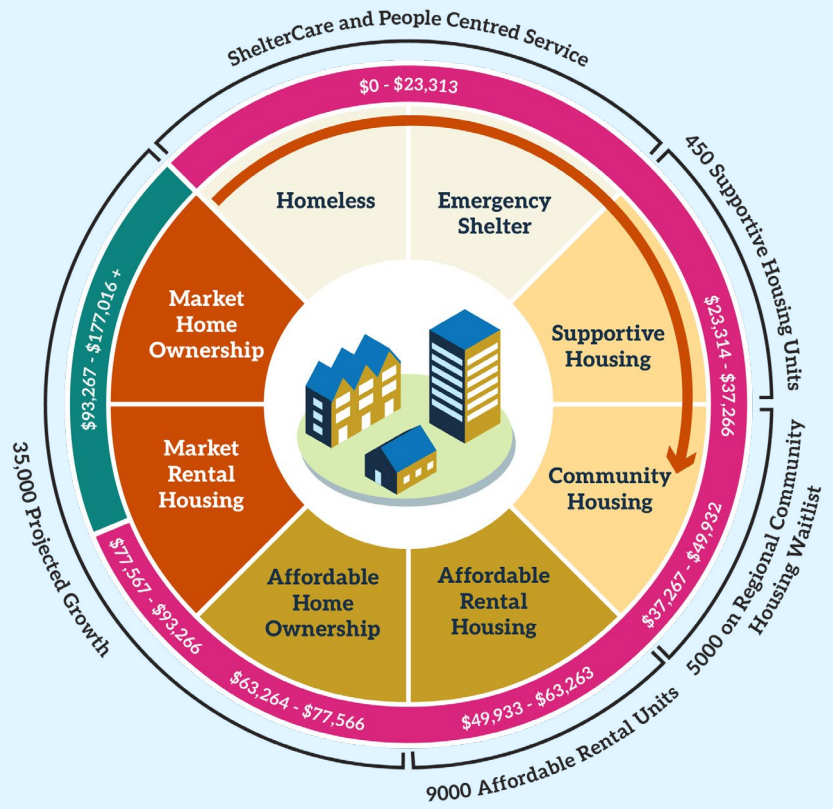
The Population and Employment Forecast and Housing Needs Assessment (Assessment) supporting Kitchener 2051 is looking at the economic, social and policy drivers to forecast the city's growth over 25 years. Based on the ages, forecasted incomes, and characteristics of the population, it makes recommendations 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.



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.



Displacement & Housing Insecurity:

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



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.



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.



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:

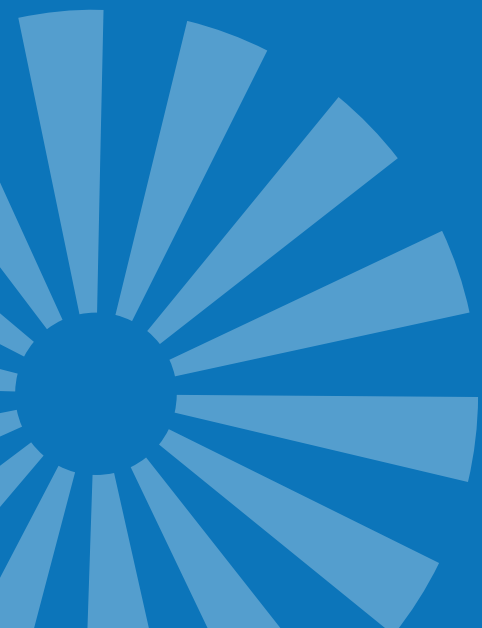
- Building affordable homes using all the tools we have and working with others, including other orders of government, builders, and organizations.
- Adding homes of all kinds to all neighbourhoods, particularly for those who need it most.
- Making sure our homes and neighbourhoods meet all of our needs.
- 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.





Kitchener 2051

A Green City

Summary of Background & Technical Data

April 2025

Prepared by Urban Strategies for the City of Kitchener



A Green City

How We Plan for the Planet & Local Resiliency

A Green City is about charting our path to creating more sustainable, healthy, and resilient communities.

It is about working together to enhance our parks and protect our natural environment while transitioning to a low-carbon future.

Background & Technical Data Summary

In 2019 the City of Kitchener declared a climate emergency. The Official Plan is one tool that the City can use to respond to the climate emergency. The *Kitchener 2051 Climate and Energy Technical Study* was completed to help shape new and responsive policies which respond to climate change.

The *Climate and Energy Technical Study* examined the factors affecting Kitchener's ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate change.

It also reviewed:

- The latest climate science
- Related government policy (at all levels)
- Kitchener's unique climate risks



What is Climate Change?

Climate change is driven by the release of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, largely from the combustion of fossil fuels. To combat these emissions and their resulting warming effects, Canada was among the 195 countries that signed the Paris Agreement to work towards keeping the global average temperature below 2°C above pre-industrial levels and to pursue efforts to limit the temperature increase to 1.5°C.

November 2024 marked the first time global temperatures averaged above 1.5°C for a 12-month period. The result of this global temperature change has and will continue to cause disruptions which are experienced right down to the local level, causing billions of dollars of damages, exacerbating poverty, refugee flows, political disruption, and health impacts.

Preliminary Key Findings

Kitchener's climate is expected to experience harsher conditions and more often, leading to:



Rising Temperatures:

More heatwaves and seasonal shifts in warm weather



Unpredictable Precipitation:

Increased risk of severe storms and flooding



More Extreme Weather:

Hotter summers with potential droughts, and more rain and snow in fall, winter, and spring

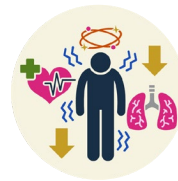
Since the 2014 Official Plan, new provincial, regional, and local policies now require the City to address climate change and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in planning decisions.

The study identified three main areas of risk for Kitchener:



Ecological Impacts:

Heat stress, flooding, invasive species, and impacts on existing infrastructure



Social & Health Impacts:

Extreme weather events, worsening air quality, food and water-borne illnesses, and mental health impacts



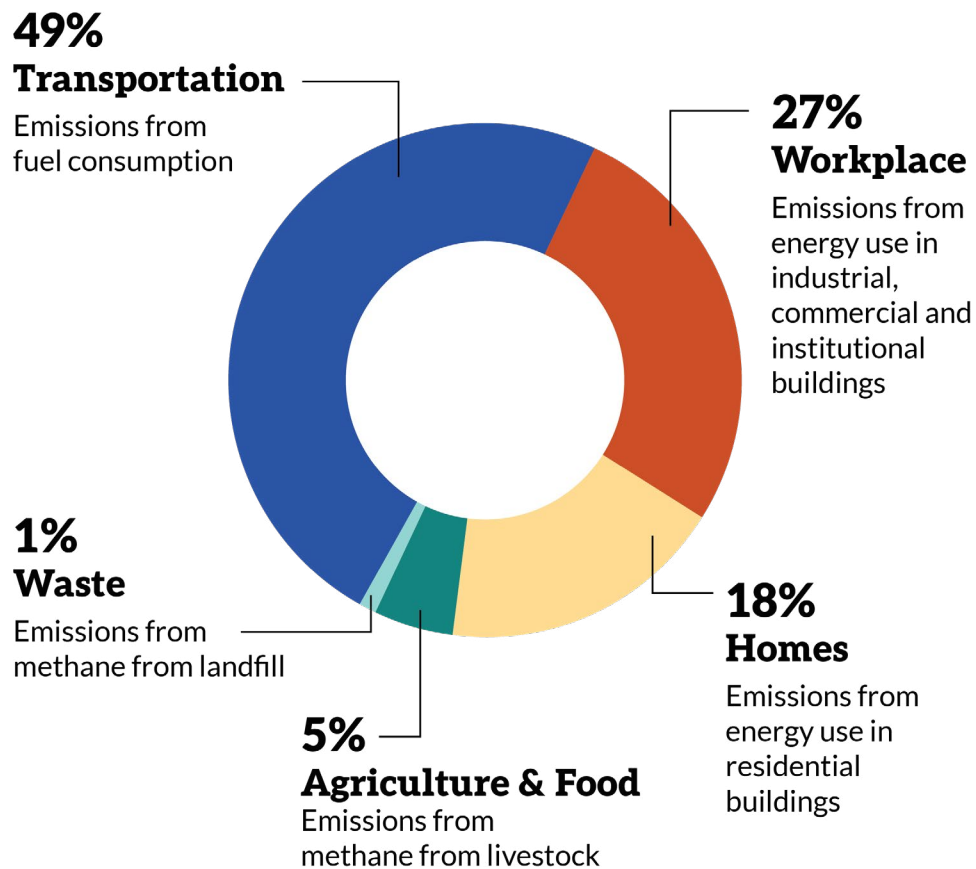
Economic Impacts:

Rising costs of inaction, insurance challenges, and business disruptions

How Can the Official Plan Respond?

As we set out to write a bold and action-oriented Official Plan that responds to the climate crisis, we will continue to ask several important questions:

- Do our policies align with current science and innovative practices?
- How can we build today, so that we can be prepared for the challenges and opportunities of tomorrow?
- Are we incorporating different ways of knowing, including Traditional Indigenous Knowledge?
- How can we ensure we protect our natural environment?
- Do our policies support transition to cleaner types of energy and reduce our reliance on fossil fuels?



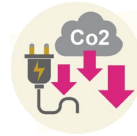
Waterloo Region's Emissions breakdown by sector, from 2015 data

Policy Direction

The way we hope to direct our policy is routed in the state of climate science and our local context. The *Climate and Energy Study* has set out recommendations for our new Official Plan with this priority, and a focus on identifying targets, establishing a framework, and key actions which can be implemented.

The proposed targets focus on climate mitigation, or ways to lessen our contributions to climate change by cutting our Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emissions. Based on the current science, a target of reaching an equal balance between greenhouse gas emissions and greenhouse gases removed from the atmosphere by 2050 is recommended, along with a carbon budget tool to track our progress. A carbon budget is a tool that establishes our local amount of GHG emissions that can be released in the community.

The policy recommendations of the Climate and Energy Study prioritize:



Efficiency - which means avoiding emissions by reducing demand



A Consumption-Based Emissions Inventory - which considers the energy it takes to make the products we use, and the fuel it takes for them to get to us



Planning for Adaptation and Resilience - which means building in the ability to withstand the impacts of climate change



Acting Now - which means making changes now to avoid the costs and impacts of action later

The Climate and Energy Study recommendations fall into the following topic areas:

1. Municipal Leadership
2. Natural Environment
3. Energy Transition
4. Connected Communities
5. Energy Efficient Buildings
6. Sustainable Consumption
7. Resiliency
8. Preparing for Emergencies
9. Monitoring Progress

A Green City - DRAFT Big Idea and Focus Areas



Big Idea: Our Environment

We value, protect and conserve our natural environment so that Kitchener is a place where you and your family can be safe, healthy, and comfortable for generations to come. Kitchener will emit almost no greenhouse gases and our communities, built and natural environments will be ready for hotter days and more intense storms. We will learn from Indigenous land-based cultural practices and stewardship in the spirit of reconciliation to build a stronger community, based on a mutual understanding of each other and the environment.

We're focusing on:

- Protecting the countryside as a critical ecological landscape.
- Planning for housing and jobs that support sustainable transportation options and makes better use of existing land and infrastructure.
- Driving emissions to zero and building resiliency with every decision we make.
- Connecting people with each other, the land, the air, and the water, and helping people stay safe and comfortable in neighbourhoods across the City.

Related Policy & Initiatives

- [TransformWR](#), Waterloo Region's community-wide response to the climate crisis. Endorsed by all area municipalities in 2021, the plan sets the target of 80% greenhouse gas emissions reduction by 2050.
- [Corporate Climate Action Plan](#), guides Kitchener's internal climate action through corporate policies which are intended to cut emissions.





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.

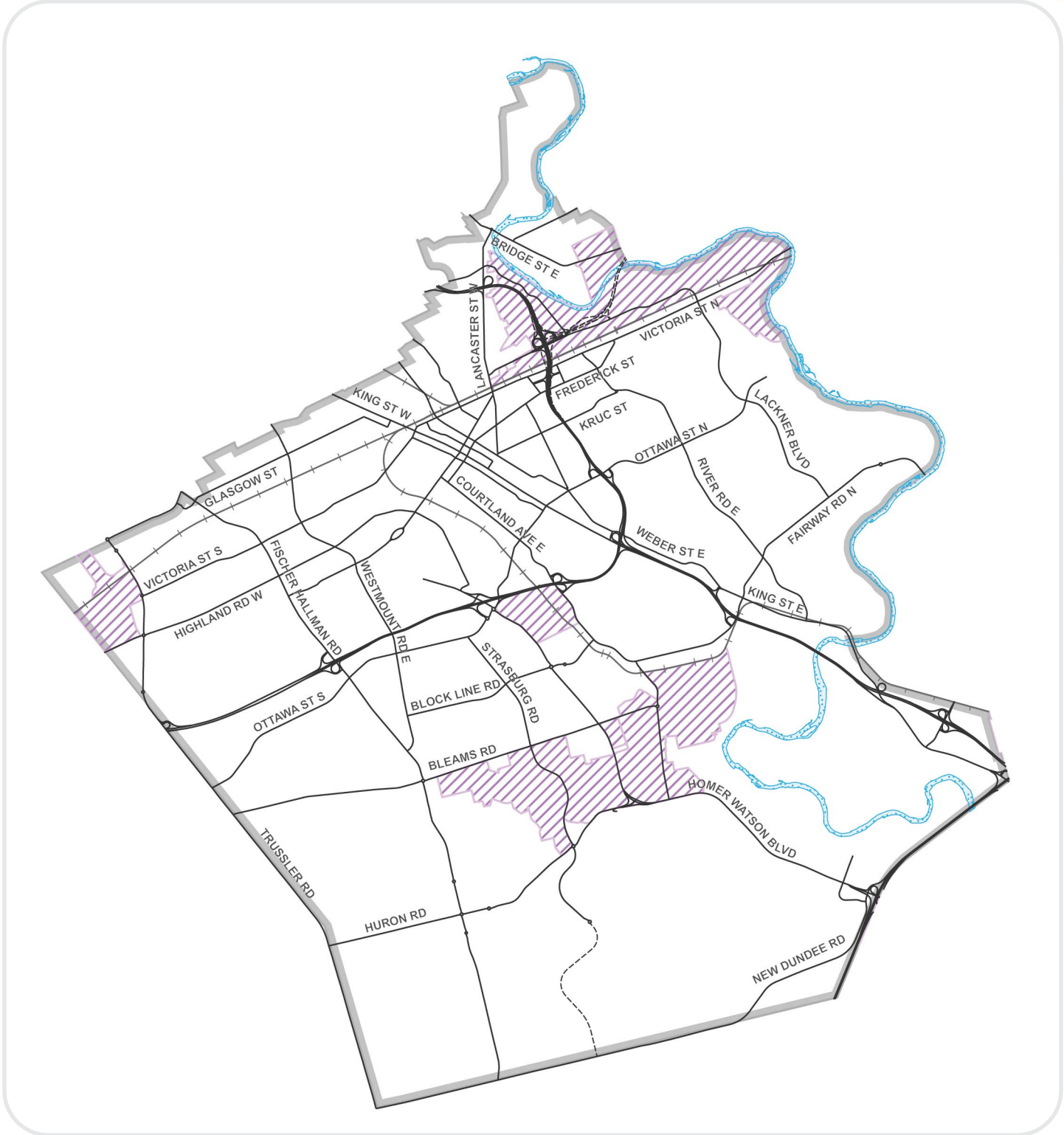
Background & Technical Data Summary

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 a grow 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 to prioritize areas of greatest need. It also guides the quality of our parks and emphasizes 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.



