



STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2026 REPORT CARD #1

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

August 2025





Executive Summary

This Report Card presents Compass Kitchener’s evaluation of selected projects completed in 2024 under the City of Kitchener’s 2023-2026 Strategic Plan. As a citizen-led advisory committee, Compass Kitchener provides this assessment to City Council and staff to support transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement in the City’s strategic planning and implementation efforts.

The committee assessed two completed strategic actions in 2024: (1) Accelerate Commercial Business Approvals, and (2) Advance Truth and Reconciliation. Both were rated as exceeding expectations. The business approvals project demonstrated strong coordination, practical service improvements, and responsiveness to the needs of local entrepreneurs. The committee recommends the City expand its work beyond the downtown core, deepen its engagement with equity-seeking business communities, and continue tracking and reporting on long-term outcomes. The Truth and Reconciliation work reflected a commendable shift from time-bound deliverables to an ongoing, relationship-centered commitment, aligned with the City’s evolving role as a respectful partner. The committee encourages the City to remain guided by Indigenous leadership, communicate progress in ways that elevate Indigenous voices, and embed reconciliation as a cross-organizational priority rather than a standalone initiative.

The report also includes reflections on the development and implementation of the current strategic plan. Compass Kitchener commends the City for adopting an adaptive planning model, broadening public engagement, and beginning to track outcomes alongside outputs. The committee encourages continued clarity around Compass Kitchener’s role in engagement processes like the Resident Panel and urges the City to share outcome data and estimated budget information to strengthen future evaluations.

In closing, Compass Kitchener offers this report in the spirit of partnership and progress, with the shared goal of making Kitchener a more inclusive, responsive, and connected city for all. The committee encourages the City to (1) continue strengthening outcome-based evaluation and sharing progress transparently; (2) provide budget information, including internal costs, to support more comprehensive assessments; (3) clarify Compass Kitchener’s role in public engagement initiatives such as the Resident Panel; and (4) embed Truth and Reconciliation throughout the organization in alignment with the spirit of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s Calls to Action.



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Compass Kitchener

Compass Kitchener consists of community volunteers and serves as an advisory committee appointed by and reporting to Kitchener City Council. It serves as a liaison between the City of Kitchener and residents, providing advice to Council on the community's vision and priorities during the development of the city's strategic plan. The committee also delivers a regular report to Council evaluating the implementation of the strategic plan with advice and recommendations.

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

Troy Glover (Chair)
James J. Young (Vice-Chair)
Carlos Abarca
Kim Brabazon
Srihasya Kandala
Rodney Gill
Judy Stephens-Wells
Lee-Anne Thompson
Linda Terry
Lori Trumper



Project Status Overview

GOAL	PROJECT	Overall Evaluation of Completed Projects			Planned Start*	Planned Completion*	Current Status*
		Exceeded Expectations	Met Expectations	Did Not Meet Expectations			
Building a Connected City Together	Housing For All Implementation				Jan. 2025	Dec. 2025	On Track
	Localized Transportation Safety Improvement Program				Jan. 2025	Dec. 2025	On Track
	City-Wide Active Transportation Routes				Apr. 2024	Sept. 2025	On Track
	Official Plan Comprehensive Update				Jan. 2025	Dec. 2025	On Track
Cultivating a Green City Together	Corporate Climate Action Plan 2.0				Jan. 2024	June 2025	On Track
	Clean Energy Transition Strategy				Jan. 2024	Dec. 2025	On Track
	District Energy Business Case				Jan. 2024	Mar 2025	On Track
	High Performance Development Standards				Feb 2024	Dec. 2025	On Track
	Implement Tree Canopy Target Plan				Jan. 2024	Dec. 2025	On Track
	Implement Actions from Parks Master Plan				Jan 2025	Jun. 2026	On Track
	Parkland Acquisition Strategy				Jun 2024	Dec. 2025	On Track
	Grand River Park Strategy				Oct 2023	Dec. 2025	On Track
Creating an Economically Thriving City Together	Accelerate Commercial Business Approvals	✓			Sep. 2023	Apr. 2024	COMPLETE
	Implement Health/Medical Technology Innovation Campus				Jan 2025	Dec. 2025	On Track
	Creative Industries School				Jul. 2024	Dec. 2025	On Track
	Strategy for Festivals and Special Events				Oct. 2025	Dec. 2026	Not Started
	Implement an Entertainment Venue Management Structure				Feb. 2024	Dec. 2025	On Track
	Create a New Arts and Culture Master Plan				Oct. 2025	Dec. 2026	Not Started
Fostering a Caring City Together	Advance Truth and Reconciliation	✓			Jan. 2024	Dec. 2024	COMPLETE
	Municipal Newcomers Strategy				Jul. 2024	Dec. 2025	On Track
	Enhance City's Engagement Practices				Jan. 2025	Dec. 2025	On Track
	Community Centre Operating Model				Apr. 2024	Aug. 2025	On Track
	City-led Recreation & Leisure Program Review				Jul. 2024	Dec. 2025	On Track
	Sport and Recreation Master Plan				Sep. 2025	Sep. 2026	Not Started
	Community Grants Review				May 2024	Aug. 2025	On Track
Stewarding a Better City Together	Digital Kitchener Strategy				Jan 2025	Jun. 2026	On Track
	Implement City-wide Data Strategy				May 2024	May 2025	On Track
	Strengthen Employer Identity/Value Proposition				Jan 2024	Jun 2025	On Track
	Support a Psychologically Safe Workplace				Jan 2025	Dec. 2025	On Track
	Procurement Innovation				Jan 2024	Mar. 2025	COMPLETE**
TOTAL		2	0	0			
LEGEND							
* Dates as reflected in the Strategic Plan Implementation Update (Spring 2025)							
** Completed in 2025 (Will be evaluated by Compass Kitchener in its next report card when all Strategic Plan projects completed in 2025 are reviewed)							



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 statements 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 three ratings are as follows:






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: Exceeds Expectations 
Highlights
<p>Responsible Project Delivery: meet expectations</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: exceeds expectations</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• Explored options for 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.• Ensured the availability of online language translation and interpretation services during onsite visits thereby improving accessibility and support for business owners whose first language is not English.



Transparency and Communication: exceeds expectations

- 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: exceeds expectations

- 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 Truth and Reconciliation (T&R) as a **critical priority** and commends the City for actively advancing it through numerous initiatives. We appreciate the significance of the City's decision to move away from a time-bound, metrics-driven approach and instead embrace Truth and Reconciliation as **an ongoing, relational commitment**—a remarkable shift that reflects deep learning and responsiveness. As such, in reporting to Compass Kitchener on the advancement of Truth and Reconciliation (T&R), staff focused primarily on one individual project as an example to provide insights into the renewed overall direction and approach to advancing T&R. This broader approach was what Compass Kitchener chose to evaluate.

Compass Kitchener also acknowledges the thoughtful way staff continue to learn, adapt, and refine their approach to strengthen relationships and achieve meaningful progress. For these reasons, we believe **the City's work in advancing T&R exceeds expectations.**

Compass Kitchener understands that advancing T&R is not a conventional municipal project, but rather a foundational and ongoing commitment that must be embedded across the City's work. Accordingly, 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. The assessment that follows focuses solely on the City's role and efforts; it does not assess or speak on behalf of the Indigenous partners involved in this 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.** Even so, 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. Going forward, the City should clarify Compass Kitchener's role in relation to the Resident Panel, specifically whether committee members are expected to serve as facilitators, contributors, or simply observers in the process.

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.

Compass Kitchener commends the city on responding to its previous request to gather more data to support evidence-informed decision-making. The committee appreciates the city's work to developing strategic indicators and commitment to implement a city-wide data strategy.

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 these data remain accessible and user-friendly, particularly for non-technical audiences.

Recommendations for Future Planning

- Deepen engagement with equity-seeking 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

While Compass Kitchener has not previously reported on incomplete projects, the committee recognizes the importance of doing so for transparency and accountability, particularly as this year will be the final report card focused on the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan. Residents deserve to understand the status of projects that remain underway or delayed, and this section aims to provide that clarity based on the most current information available. The following provides an update on those projects, based on available information:

Protected Cycling Network

Original Target: 2022 (Completion noted in 2024 report)

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.

General comments:

In last year’s report card, Compass Kitchener encouraged the City to continue prioritizing three complex and interrelated challenges: housing, social isolation and loneliness, and climate change. Housing and climate change are identified as priorities in the current strategic plan, and we encourage the City to sustain and deepen its work in these areas. While social isolation is not explicitly referenced in the plan, it remains a growing concern in our community and merits greater attention. We understand that these are multifaceted issues that require collaboration across levels of government, sectors, and communities. At the same time, residents and the committee would like to see clearer progress and tangible solutions within the City’s sphere of influence. As we approach the next planning cycle, we encourage the City to carry these priorities



forward and communicate how its efforts contribute to addressing them. Compass Kitchener remains committed to supporting the City in this work.

In addition, as a follow up from last year's report card, Compass Kitchener urges the City to prioritize the Arts and Culture Master Plan, given the enormous challenges currently faced by the arts sector in Kitchener and the critical role that sector plays in enhancing well-being, building community and strengthening the city's economic vibrancy.

With respect to improving future evaluations, Compass Kitchener notes that budget information, including estimated internal costs, has not been provided to the committee as part of the project evaluation process. Access to this information would support a more comprehensive assessment of whether a project has met expectations relative to its scope and resource allocation.

The committee commends the City for its recent efforts to begin tracking outcomes, rather than solely reporting on outputs. Compass Kitchener was pleased to contribute to the identification of outcome indicators as part of this shift. However, it remains unclear how this work is being advanced. The committee encourages the City to continue building its capacity for outcome evaluation and to ensure progress is shared transparently with Compass Kitchener and the broader public.

As Compass Kitchener continues to evolve its approach to evaluation, the committee has begun to reflect on the limitations of focusing primarily on completed projects rather than tracking progress toward the broader strategic goals that guide them. While assessing specific initiatives provides tangible insights, it may not fully capture the long-term impact or alignment with the City's overarching priorities. Given the City's recent shift toward outcome-based reporting and impact measurement, Compass Kitchener welcomes the opportunity to engage in a broader conversation about how the committee's future work might be realigned to support and evaluate progress at the level of strategic goals. We see value in this potential shift and look forward to working with the City to strengthen accountability, learning, and shared purpose.

Finally, Compass Kitchener extends its heartfelt gratitude to City staff for their thoughtful cooperation, openness, and responsiveness throughout this evaluation process. Their collaboration has been instrumental in helping the committee understand the work underway and offer informed, constructive feedback.



In Closing

Sustain the Shift Toward Outcome-Based Evaluation

Compass Kitchener strongly supports the City's emerging focus on measuring outcomes rather than outputs. This shift enhances accountability and helps evaluate the true public value of strategic initiatives. The committee encourages the City to continue building this capacity and to share its progress openly with Compass Kitchener and the broader community.

Ensure Transparency Around Resources and Budget

The absence of budget information – including estimated internal costs – has made it difficult to assess the efficiency and scale of completed projects. Going forward, Compass Kitchener encourages the City to include resource data in project summaries to better contextualize performance and delivery.

Embed Truth and Reconciliation Across the Organization

Compass Kitchener commends the City for approaching Truth and Reconciliation as a long-term, relational commitment rather than a time-limited initiative. To build on this foundation, the committee encourages the City to continue embedding Truth and Reconciliation across all levels of its organizational culture, policies, and practices. Doing so aligns with the spirit of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, which emphasize the need for sustained institutional change through education, collaboration, and accountability. Embedding this work into core municipal functions—not isolating it as a standalone item—is essential to continuing to ensure reconciliation is lived, not just stated.

As always, Compass Kitchener offers this report in the spirit of collaboration and continuous improvement, with the shared goal of helping Kitchener become a more connected, responsive, and inclusive city for all.