

# Staff Report



Development Services Department

www.kitchener.ca

**REPORT TO:** Climate Change and Environment Committee

**DATE OF MEETING:** April 16, 2026

**SUBMITTED BY:** Natalie Goss, Manager of Policy and Research, 519-783-8933

**PREPARED BY:** Mike Balch, Planner (Policy), 519-783-8928

**WARD(S) INVOLVED:** All Ward(s)

**DATE OF REPORT:** March 24, 2026

**REPORT NO.:** DSD-2026-137

**SUBJECT:** High Performance Development Standards Program Update

---

## RECOMMENDATION:

For Information with Waterloo Region Community Energy as delegation.

## REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the High-Performance Development Standards (HPDS) which is in program development.
- The report highlights the reposition to a voluntary pilot program.
- There are no anticipated financial implications.
- This report supports **Cultivating a Green City Together: Focuses a sustainable path to a greener, healthier city; enhancing & protecting parks & natural environment while transitioning to a low-carbon future; supporting businesses & residents to make climate-positive choices.**

## BACKGROUND:

WR Community Energy (WRCE) is a collaboration between the Region of Waterloo, the three area urban municipalities, and local utilities to implement the Community Energy Investment Strategy, which focuses on facilitating the energy transition across the Region.

The High-Performance Development Standards (HPDS) project was initiated in 2021, through WRCE's HPDS Working Group (formerly the Land Use and Energy Working Group). The group initially explored enabling land use policies and the viability of harmonized standards across the Region.

The HPDS is intended to be a set of design standards for new, Planning Act development applications submitted in the Cities of Cambridge, Kitchener, and Waterloo, and the Townships of North Dumfries, Wellesley, Wilmot, and Woolwich. These standards are being designed to embed the energy transition, environmental and infrastructure considerations, and climate resilience into the planning and approvals process to future-proof the

\*\*\* This information is available in accessible formats upon request. \*\*\*  
Please call 519-741-2345 or TTY 1-866-969-9994 for assistance.

community. These standards are a key way to support greenhouse gas reduction targets from TransformWR, as we plan for growth through to 2051.

In collaboration with area municipalities, WRCE has undertaken significant engagement with the development industry and the broader community to solicit feedback on the design of the HPDS. Feedback supported the development of the discussion draft that was released in the fall of 2024 with subsequent engagement in the winter of 2025 including presentations to the Climate Change and Environment Committee.

Following changes in Provincial direction in 2025, a revised approach to a voluntary, opt-in program was supported by the HPDS Working Group and regional CAOs earlier this year.

**REPORT:**

The HPDS will launch as a voluntary, opt-in, pilot program with a select cohort of developers across Waterloo Region in September 2026. Participating developers will have the opportunity to shape the future of high-performance developments in Waterloo Region while getting access to technical expertise and resources that help demonstrate potential cost savings, improved performance, and market differentiation in addition to direct application support and recognition programs.

The intent of this pilot program is to test HPDS targets and processes in real-world conditions, while reducing uncertainty and advancing capacity building within the development community. Participants of the pilot will be well-positioned as champions as the industry advances towards future standards at a local, provincial, or federal level.

The HPDS Pilot Program will be open to all developers in Waterloo Region. The cohort will be selected via an expression of interest process to ensure a mix of development types and geographic locations (e.g. low, mid- and high-rise; residential and non-residential projects; in urban and rural municipalities). The pilot will begin September 2026, and selected applicants will follow the process without obligation to reach the targets that exceed current municipal standards.

This approach is informed by feedback received from the broader community in 2025 that generally expressed a desire to advance high-performance standards and some in the development industry who expressed a desire for a voluntary program.

At this time, financial incentives are not available, however may be explored in a future phase of this work.

The standards are organized into three main categories:

1. Built Environment: To develop safe, inclusive, and accessible spaces.
2. Natural Environment: To support climate resilience through nature-based solutions, promote mindful resource use, and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions.
3. Energy Efficiency: To outline requirements for energy efficient and resilient developments.

**STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:**

This report supports **Cultivating a Green City Together: Focuses a sustainable path to a greener, healthier city; enhancing & protecting parks & natural environment while transitioning to a low-carbon future; supporting businesses & residents to make climate-positive choices.**

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

In 2024, WR Community Energy and the Region of Waterloo were successful in securing approximately \$500,000 through the Codes Acceleration Fund from Natural Resources Canada to support this work. No additional funds are required from the Region or area municipalities to support this project, therefore there are no direct financial implications.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:**

INFORM – This report has been posted to the City’s website with the agenda in advance of the council / committee meeting.

CONSULT – Substantial consultation to date including public engagement sessions, development industry meetings, and online resources ([EngageWR.ca](https://www.engagewr.ca)).

**PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:**

- [DSD-2023-109](#) - Harmonized Green Development Standards Phase 2 Project Launch
- [DSD-2024-067](#) - Harmonized Green Development Standards Project Update
- [DSD-2024-267](#) - Waterloo Region High Performance Development Standards Engagement Launch
- [DSD-2025-120](#) – High-Performance Development Standards Discussion Draft
- Planning Act

**REVIEWED BY:** Janine Oosterveld, Manager of Customer Experience and Project Management