

Staff Report



Chief Administrator's Office

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REPORT TO: Committee of the Whole

DATE OF MEETING: January 30, 2023

SUBMITTED BY: Kathryn Dever, Director Strategy & Corporate Performance,
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PREPARED BY: Angie Fritz-Walters, Strategic Plan Engagement & Program Manager,
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WARD(S) INVOLVED: All Ward(s)

DATE OF REPORT: January 18, 2023

REPORT NO.: CAO-2023-047

SUBJECT: Strategic Plan 2023-2026 - Compass Kitchener Community Priorities

RECOMMENDATION:

For Information.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to present the Compass Kitchener advisory committee's community priorities for the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan, and to outline supporting community engagement activities and findings which led to these priorities.
- Compass Kitchener's 8 community priorities for 2023-2026 are: Housing Affordability, Belonging, Welcoming and Inclusive Community, Support for Newcomers, Environmental Sustainability, Urban Growth, How We Move Around the City, and Public Engagement.
- There are no financial implications associated with this report.
- Broad community engagement has been undertaken to inform the community priorities, with details of the engagement activities outlined in the report; and the community was informed by posting of the report to the City's website with the agenda in advance of the Council meeting.
- This report supports the development of the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.

BACKGROUND:

With the start of each new Council term, City of Kitchener Council is engaged in defining a Strategic Plan to set the City's direction for the next four years that builds on the progress made, while planning for the future to take advantage of new opportunities to respond to emerging issues, trends and shifts in citizen priorities. The process begins with broad community engagement on the needs, expectations and aspirations of residents, designed and delivered by staff in partnership with the Compass Kitchener citizen advisory committee. At the start of each term, Compass Kitchener identifies community priorities from this engagement, which form one key consideration in the development of each Strategic Plan. This report

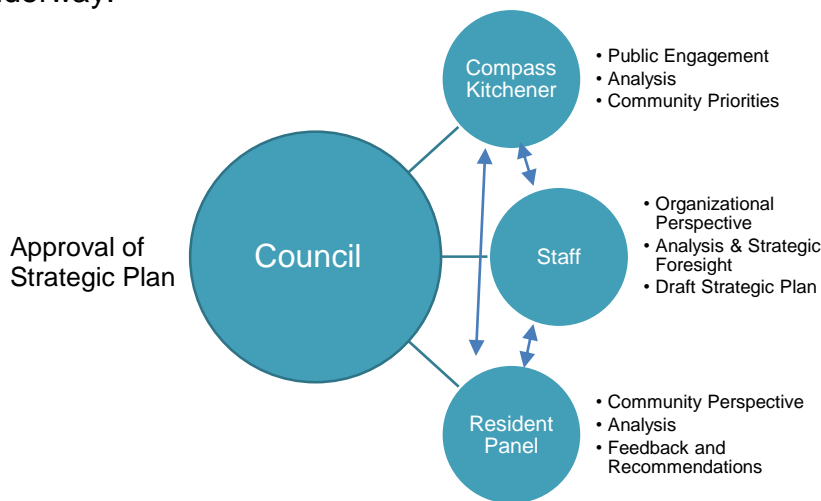
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outlines Compass Kitchener’s community priorities for 2023-2026, and Council will receive a presentation and be engaged to reflect on and discuss these community priorities. No decisions or approval is being sought from Council.

REPORT:

Strategic Planning Roles and Inputs

The Strategic Planning process includes a variety of inputs from a number of groups outlined in the visual below. Compass Kitchener, Staff and the Resident Panel each contribute different perspectives, functions and develop key deliverables for council’s consideration. Key learnings are being shared between the various groups, including with council. This report is an opportunity for council to receive Compass Kitchener’s community priorities. All of these inputs are considered by Council in its leadership role to oversee development of the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan. Staff and Compass Kitchener note that there is a lot of alignment between inputs and aspirations gathered from the various phases of community engagement completed and still underway.



Community Engagement

Together with staff, Compass Kitchener planned and implemented a number of engagement activities that provided a variety of options for residents to participate in different ways. Highlights of each engagement phase are included below.

Environics Survey of Kitchener Residents (April 2022)

Telephone Interviews were conducted with 1,006 residents, and for the first time, demographic criteria were used to ensure respondent selection better reflected the diversity of the community as a part of this statistically reliable survey. The survey revealed 6 themes to explore further with our diverse community, to obtain deeper input, and ideas on how the City might respond:

- Housing Affordability
- Sustainability
- Urban Growth
- Recreation and Leisure Programs and Services
- Public Engagement
- Delivering City Programs and Services

Broad in-person and virtual community engagement highlights (July to September 2022)

- Over 4,000 Visits to the EngageKitchener online page
- 617 Ideas Shared at 4 Neighbourhood Focus Groups
- 541 Ideas Board contributions
- Over 100 interviews by the newly developed Street Team conducted in locations across the City where people gather
- 35 Artistic Contributions to the 20-year Vision

Compass Kitchener convened an All Advisory Committee meeting in October 2022 to review the results of the public engagement and to obtain reaction and feedback on a draft set of community priorities. Based on all of the community engagement, Compass Kitchener shares with Council its community priorities for 2023-2026; each is outlined below with an aspirational statement that describes the outcome that is desired, and sample resident quotes taken directly from community engagement.

Housing Affordability

Kitchener is a place where everyone has a comfortable and affordable place to call home.

- Diverse housing options at a variety of price points
- Development tools that balance the needs of the City, residents and developers
- Creative design to meet the changing needs of residents eg. adaptive re-use, multi-family units, tiny homes etc.
- Aging in place – accessible to physical needs of older adults

Resident Quote: *“The most important issue for me right now is housing. I live in a rented apartment and almost all of my income goes toward rent, which is why I have to take a 40-minute bus ride to Stanley Park Community Centre for the Waterloo Food Bank. If the city addresses rising housing costs, I believe our children and grandchildren will have a better life than we did, and they will be able to pursue their interests rather than working multiple jobs to make ends meet.”*

Belonging

Kitchener is a place where everyone feels a sense of belonging within vibrant and connected communities.

- Proactive for a healthy community
- Free community spaces for cultural communities
- Free/Affordable community recreation and leisure programs
- Accessible arts and cultural activities

Resident Quotes: *“More connected communities reduce isolation, stronger communities prosper.” “Recreation - affordability for all - eliminate any barriers to participation.” “Engagement in recreation and leisure programs for youth in our city would improve mental health, reduce youth crime and encourage positive outcomes long term for youth. In order to do this the programs need to be expanded, have proper oversight to ensure quality and be free.” “My family is really excited about the completion of the Huron Community Centre...we*

hope they can provide something different for the community... something based on culture at the community centre would be great."

Welcoming and Inclusive Community

Kitchener is a place where everyone is valued, and our diversity is celebrated.

- Equity, Diversity and Inclusion prioritized in all our work
- Reconciliation
- Accessibility for All
- Reducing stigma (mental health, financial need etc.)

Resident Quotes: *"There are not many programs that I can attend with my physical ability. I am an older woman and not that physically capable for many of the offered programs."*
"Empower immigrants with supports to start new small businesses." *"Focus on building a community as we grow."*

Support for Newcomers

Kitchener is a place where newcomers feel welcome and thrive.

- Settlement experience is smooth, connecting with services, ensuring basic needs are met, learning to navigate our systems
- In-person service and alternate languages are promoted
- Newcomers can connect with their communities through arts and culture and recreation

Resident Quote: "Kitchener should develop more diverse programs for youths who face language barriers. Newcomers are frequently excluded from city or neighborhood association programs because they believe they will struggle to fit in."

Environmental Sustainability

Kitchener is a place where the environment is protected and enhanced

- More Trees and Green Spaces – Maintain old growth trees
- Natural gardens and fruit trees (food security)
- Ensure access to clean water for future generations
- Infrastructure is improved to adapt to a changing environment
- Climate action and mitigation – reduce carbon emissions
- Helping the community learn about and implement healthy environmental initiatives on residential and business properties

Resident Quote: *"Kitchener should facilitate a program that includes door-to-door canvassing of existing houses without front-yard trees to provide free new trees. It's well established that the reductions in storm water runoff and heat island effects would pay for this program in the long run."*

Urban Growth

Kitchener is a place where growth is thoughtfully planned, innovative and sustainable

- Growing with a vibrant community in mind (growing community, not just buildings and roads)
- Continuing to add amenities to support growing population – keep accessibility in mind
- Work with developers to ensure residential building options are not limited to high rises

- Economic development - support businesses, retain talent
- Infrastructure and emergency preparedness – proactive to mitigate major weather events

Resident Quotes: *“Need proper infrastructure and amenities to support growth.” “The city has very good urban design guidelines which should result in good development but are too often ignored ...don't let the developers shape our city. When we do we get poor urban design. All developments should have units and amenities that are family friendly.”*

How We Move Around the City

Kitchener is a place where walking, cycling and public transportation are convenient, safe and accessible in every neighbourhood

- Trails and cycling connections expand throughout the City and keep up with growth
- Winter maintenance of trails and cycling for transportation and recreation
- Affordable, efficient public transportation – connected to suburbs/newer neighbourhoods and other Cities
- Less reliance on cars for transportation
- 15 minute neighbourhoods (walkability, close to work, shopping and amenities)

Resident Quote: *“You shouldn't only prioritize transit and cycling expansions in the downtown core, while leaving the suburbs to be as dead and car dependent as they already are. I live in a newer suburban development near the city border...We need to stop focusing solely on cars when it comes to the suburbs, prioritize transit and cycling as well. This will improve the quality of life of people living in the suburbs who won't have to drive as much and people in the city core who won't have to deal with suburbanites polluting downtown with their cars. Transit/cycling routes also have more capacity than car lanes, which will make it easier to intensify and bring much needed middle-to-high density development into the lowest density areas of the city.”*

Public Engagement

Kitchener is a place where residents are engaged, feel heard and contribute meaningfully to decision making

- Better promotion of the City's campaigns and engagement opportunities using new approaches, plain language, public education
- Closing the loop – reporting back on results and how input made a difference
- Engagement initiatives integrated into places where people are already gathered
- Youth Engagement – incorporate communication channels that youth use
- Strategy to reach and build relationships with equity-seeking groups

Resident Quotes: *“This street team interview is a great way to get the public engaged. I was informed by the street interviewer that the city conducted phone interviews earlier to narrow down the public interest into a few topics. Now if I was phoned about this interview I would have denied to participate as I feel it isn't as big of an impact as this person-to-person street interview is. It was clear that my thoughts and points were getting heard and being written down and made sure to get to where it is intended to go. I feel more comfortable doing person to person interviews as I feel my thoughts actually get through.” “Anonymous is key for public engagement. I really appreciate the anonymity of this project (street interviews) as it keeps topics of interest with little to no influence on who it is coming from. The street team project is a*

great step in getting the ideas of the residents and really appreciated the team putting themselves out there to get input for the city!”

Compass Kitchener offers the following as foundational to success in the 8 community priorities:

- An image of the future of Kitchener as a place where equity, diversity and inclusion is woven into everything we do. It is at the heart of our planning, and a core principle of all of our projects.
- The importance of continuing to enhance the effectiveness of collaborative relationships to address cross-jurisdictional issues that are of the greatest importance to residents. All of this important city-building work is enhanced and accelerated when all levels of government, community organizations and residents work together toward a shared vision for Kitchener, and stresses the importance of bringing stakeholders together to enhance the effectiveness of working relationships and collaborative plans.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report supports the development of the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Capital Budget – The recommendation has no impact on the Capital Budget.

Operating Budget – The recommendation has no impact on the Operating Budget.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

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

CONSULT – Over 4,000 citizens participated in the community engagement process, including the Environics survey, in-person focus groups and virtually through the online EngageKitchener platform.

COLLABORATE – The community priorities included in this report are the result of collaboration between members of Compass Kitchener and City staff to execute a process to gather community input for the city’s next strategic plan.

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

CAO-2022-162 Compass Kitchener Citizen Advisory Committee Work Plan

APPROVED BY: Dan Chapman, Chief Administrative Officer