

# Staff Report



Development Services Department

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**REPORT TO:** Community and Infrastructure Services Committee

**DATE OF MEETING:** April 3, 2023

**SUBMITTED BY:** Garett Stevenson, Interim Director, Planning, 519-741-2200 ext. 7070

**PREPARED BY:** Janine Oosterveld, Manager, Customer Experience & Project Management, 519-741-2200 ext. 7076

**WARD(S) INVOLVED:** All Wards

**DATE OF REPORT:** March 16, 2023

**REPORT NO.:** DSD-2023-109

**SUBJECT:** Harmonized Green Development Standards Phase 2 Project Launch

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## RECOMMENDATION:

That Report DSD-2023-109 Harmonized Green Development Standards Phase 2 Project Launch be received, and further,

That Council direct staff to initiate Phase 2 of the Green Development Standards project and to bring a recommendation back to Council.

## REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to highlight the background (Phase 1) work of the Land-Use and Energy Working Group to date and support its recommendation to initiate a joint work program to design a harmonized Green Development Standard (GDS) for urban-area municipalities across Waterloo Region.
- The key finding of this report is that there is benefit in proceeding with the preparation of a Green Development Standard to support the City's and region's climate action goals. With the support of the Region, a harmonized approach among the three cities – Kitchener, Waterloo, and Cambridge and, potentially the townships will support clarity and consistency for the development industry. This would be unique in Ontario and simpler for developers.
- The financial implications are accommodated in an existing budget and shared among a working group of partner municipalities and utilities through WR Community Energy. An application for federal grant funding will also be submitted.
- Community engagement for this report included the posting of this report to the City's website with the agenda in advance of the committee meeting. Community and industry engagement will be conducted as part of Phase 2 with a community engagement strategy established as part of the work plan.
- This report supports Environmental Leadership.

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

## **BACKGROUND:**

In 2021, WR Community Energy formed a Land-Use and Energy Working Group with the purpose to integrate energy considerations into the planning process. The City of Kitchener was a founding member. In 2022, the group established a subcommittee to study the impacts of establishing a Green Development Standard for cities in Waterloo Region. GDSs were deemed important to study to implement policies and climate actions in the following:

- Climate Action WR (2013),
- Community Energy Investment Strategy (2018),
- The declaration of a climate emergency (2019),
- Transform WR (2021),
- The Regional Official Plan (2022 adopted, under review by the province), and,
- Kitchener's 2014 Official Plan.

The Working Group (and GDS Subcommittee) includes:

Amanda Kutler, Region of Waterloo (GDS Subcommittee)  
Kathy Padgett, City of Cambridge (GDS Subcommittee)  
Janine Oosterveld, City of Kitchener (GDS Subcommittee)  
Max Kerrigan, City of Waterloo (GDS Subcommittee)  
Allen Chan / Shaun Wang, Enova Power Corp.  
Blair Hiseler, Enbridge  
Umar Waqas, GrandBridge  
Michele Kamphuis, Kitchener Utilities  
Matthew Day, WR Community Energy (GDS Subcommittee)

The GDS work was planned in 2 phases. Phase 1 focused on informing municipal and agency staff how other municipalities established a GDS including enabling policies and best practices for implementing a GDS to assist in determining whether and how to collaborate and on what scale. Phase 2, pending the completion of phase 1, would focus on community and industry engagement and the design of a GDS.

In June 2022, the GDS Subcommittee retained Urban Equation and The Planning Partnership to conduct the Phase 1 work. These consultants were chosen based on their successful work developing GDS with the Town of Whitby and the City of Pickering. Drawing from these experiences and an understanding of Waterloo Region's context and needs, a Phase 1 Report (Appendix A) was completed in three parts: Policy Review, Best Practice Review, and Engagement Summary.

## **REPORT:**

The Phase 1 Green Development Standard (GDS) Report provides a summary of policy review and engagement and provides key building blocks to support the creation of a leading GDS to the Regional and urban-area municipalities, utilities, and other municipal partners. By helping build consensus among this group, the report serves as a tool to facilitate the creation of community-wide standards that are compatible with leading GDS across the country. To this end, the Phase 1 report completes foundational work needed to enable the next phase of the project through the following building blocks:

- Understanding best practices across leading municipalities

- Understanding how policies can support green development standards
- Collection of baseline information to secure next phases of work
- Engagement and education approaches to effectively foster partner buy-in
- An overview of anticipated next phases of work.

A GDS would be applied through applications requiring Planning Act approval such as site plan and subdivision approvals. While sustainable design was initially proposed to be removed from site plan control through Bill 23, this proposed change was not enacted allowing municipalities continued authority to address sustainable design matters through site plan. The Municipal Act also enables a municipality to pass by-laws around environmental well-being including respecting climate change and to develop green roofs or alternative roof surfaces that achieve similar levels of performance to green roofs.

The Working Group recognized the benefit of taking a harmonized approach across municipalities for several reasons:

- resource sharing of expertise through external consultants with experience in designing a GDS;
- consistency across local municipalities for the benefit of the development industry; and,
- collective capacity-building for staff across municipalities through its design, training, and applying the GDS to projects.

The Phase 2 work will occur in over the course of the next two years with community and industry engagement at each stage of the project. A detailed workplan will be established as a first step in conjunction with the retention of a consultant team to support various aspects of the project. It is anticipated that a report back to participating municipal Councils for a decision would occur late 2024 or early 2025.

Taking a collective approach to establishing a harmonized Green Development Standard will be a first of its kind in Ontario. It will allow the local municipalities to address our climate goals together while sharing resources and building capacity on staff teams. Additionally, a harmonized approach will make it easier for the development industry understand and apply the GDS to projects and aligns with provincial interest in creating a consistent approach to these standards.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:**

This report supports Environmental Leadership.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

Capital Budget – At this time, the recommendation has no impact on the Capital Budget as the Land-Use and Energy Working Group is preparing to submit for a Natural Resources Canada Codes Acceleration Fund grant to support this body of work. Should the application be unsuccessful, each municipality is requested to contribute up to \$40,000 over three years which can be accommodated from an existing account.

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 – An engagement strategy will be developed as part of the work plan for Phase 2 and occur at various stages of the project over the next 24 months. Recommendations in the Phase 1 report include a development industry panel, and community engagement through surveys and workshops.

COLLABORATE – If applicable.

ENTRUST – If applicable.

**PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:**

- *Municipal Act, 2001*
- *Planning Act*

**APPROVED BY:** Justin Readman, General Manager, Development Services

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment A – Waterloo Region Green Development Standard: Phase 1 Summary Report