

# Staff Report



Development Services Department

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**REPORT TO:** Special Council

**DATE OF MEETING:** April 17, 2023

**SUBMITTED BY:** Natalie Goss, Manager Policy & Research, 519-751-2200 Ext. 7648

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**WARD(S) INVOLVED:** Wards 9 & 10

**DATE OF REPORT:** April 13, 2023

**REPORT NO.:** DSD-2023-197

**SUBJECT:** Downtown Kitchener Vision and Growing Together - Council Strategy Session

**RECOMMENDATION:** For Discussion.

## Questions:

### Council Strategy Session Part 1 – Downtown Kitchener Vision

1. What three words would you use to describe your ideal Downtown Kitchener?

### Council Strategy Session Part 2 – Growing Together

1. What are Council's priorities about directing where low, medium, and high-density growth occurs within the Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs)?
2. What other considerations does Council have when accommodating new housing and jobs within the Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs)?

## BACKGROUND:

### DTK Vision

In January 2022, City Council endorsed a community-led process to develop a new vision for downtown Kitchener (DTK). Growth is happening at a time where housing affordability, climate, equity, and social factors are coming together to change the face of the downtown core. The pandemic has caused significant impacts to the business community. Over the last several months the Downtown Community Working Group has worked together with city staff through several themed workshop discussions to set the stage for the development of a new vision and series of principles to guide the future of DTK. A broad community engagement outreach commenced at the end of February 2023 that included several pop-

up events at the Kitchener Market and Carl Zehr Square as well as a variety of online engagement approaches.

### **Growing Together**

Kitchener is growing, and much of that growth is around the ION LRT system and its associated stations. These areas have been identified as Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs) by the Region of Waterloo. MTSAs are areas within a 500 to 800 metre distance of a transit station or roughly a 10-minute walk. MTSAs have unique provincial and regional policies wherein intensification around transit is a core fundamental principle of Ontario's planning framework. The City has launched the Growing Together project to implement these policies by updating the City's Official Plan and Zoning By-law. The Growing Together project builds upon the previous work done with the community while responding to new direction from the province, implementing the updated Regional Official Plan, and addressing new and emerging City priorities. This will create a planning framework for Kitchener's MTSAs by enabling and encouraging responsible growth for many years. The City is engaging on the Growing Together project throughout 2023, starting with an interactive workshop using a 3D-printed model of the central MTSA's. Staff have already hosted multiple public workshops and will run the workshop with members of Council during this Strategy Session.

### **REPORT:**

The purpose of the Strategy Session is to obtain input from members of Council on two separate but related topics: (1) preliminary findings from community engagement on the Downtown Kitchener Vision project, and (2) the distribution of growth within the City's Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs) through an interactive workshop. The workshop will be conducted in two parts with the first focused on the DTK Vision and the second portion providing an opportunity to explore the anticipated population growth in the following 7 of Kitchener's 10 MTSAs through a hands-on exercise:

- Grand River Hospital Station
- Central Station
- Victoria Park & Kitchener City Hall Station
- Frederick & Queen Station
- Kitchener Market Station
- Borden Station
- Mill Station

### **Council Strategy Session agenda**

#### **DTK Vision Workshop – 20 mins**

Staff will provide a brief project overview and update. The balance of the workshop will provide Council with an opportunity, using the tool Mentimeter, to share input on the words each member of Council would use to describe their ideal Downtown Kitchener. Council will then see how their words compare to the top 10 words that were shared by the community.

#### **Questions:**

1. What three words would you use to describe your ideal Downtown Kitchener?

## **Growing Together Workshop – 70 mins.**

Topics covered during the workshop include:

- The amount of growth the province has directed to the City of Kitchener within the next 10 years. On March 20<sup>th</sup>, 2023, Council resolved to forward its Municipal Housing Pledge to the Province, pledging to support the building of 35,000 homes in Kitchener by 2031. Based on Provincial and Regional policies directing growth to existing built up areas and along transit corridors, approximately 18,000 of the 35,000 homes allocated to Kitchener will be directed to the 7 MTSA's listed above.
- The factors that influence growth and development, and the City's obligations to accommodate this growth.

Staff will provide a short presentation on Growing Together. The balance of the workshop will provide Council with an opportunity to place approximately two-hundred 3D-printed building pieces on the model, representing 18,000 new housing units. The buildings represent a mix of low, medium, and high-rise housing forms. The distribution of buildings was chosen based on current and projected development trends while also accounting for new policy objectives such as creating more opportunities for missing middle housing forms.

Following the placement of the 3-D printed buildings the facilitator will ask members of council to share their thoughts on the following two questions.

### **Questions:**

1. What are Council's priorities about directing where low, medium, and high-density growth occurs within the Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs)?
2. What other considerations does Council have when accommodating new housing and jobs within the Major Transit Station Areas (MTSAs)?

### **NEXT STEPS:**

#### **DTK Vision**

Staff will take the input shared at the Council Strategy Session and together with the information shared by the community, through recent DTK Vision events and online, the Downtown Community Working Group will use the information to draft a new vision and principles for DTK. At this time it is anticipated that a draft vision and principles will be shared with the community starting in June. Council will have an opportunity to provide input on the draft vision and principles at a subsequent Council Strategy Session in August.

#### **Growing Together**

Staff will take the input shared at the Council Strategy Session, and those of earlier public workshops, and translate the results into a smart digital model. The smart model can analyze patterns pertaining to growth, density, housing, and more. This process lets staff align the feedback provided with various technical considerations to create complementary community informed and data driven outcomes.

In June, staff will report back to Council with a summary of what we've heard through engagement efforts. A preliminary approach to growth in the 7 central MTSA's will also be released in June, including the general locations that will be the focus of low, medium, and high-rise forms of development. Community engagement on this work will continue

throughout the summer 2023. At this time, staff expect to have an updated land use, zoning, and built form framework for Growing Together to Council for a decision towards the end of 2023.

**STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:**

This report supports the delivery of core services.

**FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

There are no financial implications arising from the result of this discussion.

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:**

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

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

**ATTACHMENTS:**

Attachment A – Growing Together Workshop Presentation