



Kitchener 2051 Phase 3 What We Heard Report

Summer 2025

Prepared by Urban Strategies for the City of Kitchener





Territorial Acknowledgment

The City of Kitchener is situated on the traditional territory of the Chonnonton, Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee People's. We recognize our responsibility to serve as stewards for the land and honour the original caretakers who came before us. Our community is enriched by the enduring knowledge and deep-rooted traditions of the diverse First Nations, Metis and Inuit in Kitchener today.

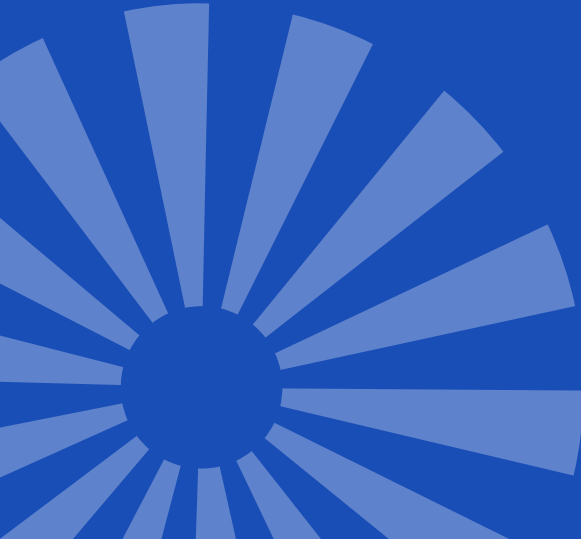


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Section 1

Introduction



1.1 Kitchener 2051 Overview

The City of Kitchener is preparing a new Official Plan (OP) – known as Kitchener 2051. An OP is a document that shapes the way our City grows and develops. A Provincial law called the Planning Act sets out what an OP can do, including:

- Directing growth and change, mostly related to how land and buildings are used;
- Guiding decisions on land use, development, transportation, physical and community infrastructure, and more;
- Implementing the City's vision, established through the Strategic Plan; and
- Providing direction for implementing tools like the Zoning By-law.

The existing City of Kitchener Official Plan was adopted in 2014 and has positively shaped growth and development across the City over the last decade. A new OP is needed now to respond to current and future conditions and trends. Kitchener is growing fast and facing city-building challenges like the housing crisis, pedestrian and cyclist deaths and injuries, inequity, climate change, social isolation and how to pay for aging infrastructure and City services. The City is also presented with opportunities like new mobility technologies, a young and highly skilled workforce, strong neighbourhoods and communities, a rich and diverse culture, and a growing desire for urban connection.

Kitchener 2051 will address conformity with Provincial policy and legislation and the Region of Waterloo Official Plan, alongside recently completed plans for the City, such as Housing for All, Places & Spaces, and Cycling & Trails Master Plan, to set out a forward-thinking and contemporary City-wide policy framework.

Kitchener 2051 is about the people who call Kitchener home today and in the future.

That includes Indigenous people, newcomers, longtime residents, business owners and entrepreneurs. It's about our community today but also about the people who are not yet here. Like the young people who will grow old in our community, the family looking to move to Kitchener, or the student who will call our community home after graduation. Kitchener 2051 looks at how we move around the City and the places in between. It is about what we will need to do together to grow, adapt, and succeed as a resilient and complete city.

Kitchener 2051 needs to consider a full range of perspectives to ensure that the OP reflects the needs of all. This includes communities often underrepresented in these processes, like equity-seeking communities, renters, and people who have experienced homelessness, poverty and housing precarity.

Along the way, we will learn from the community as we shape an OP that reflects who we are, what we value, and the Kitchener we can become.

1.2 Kitchener 2051 Process Timeline

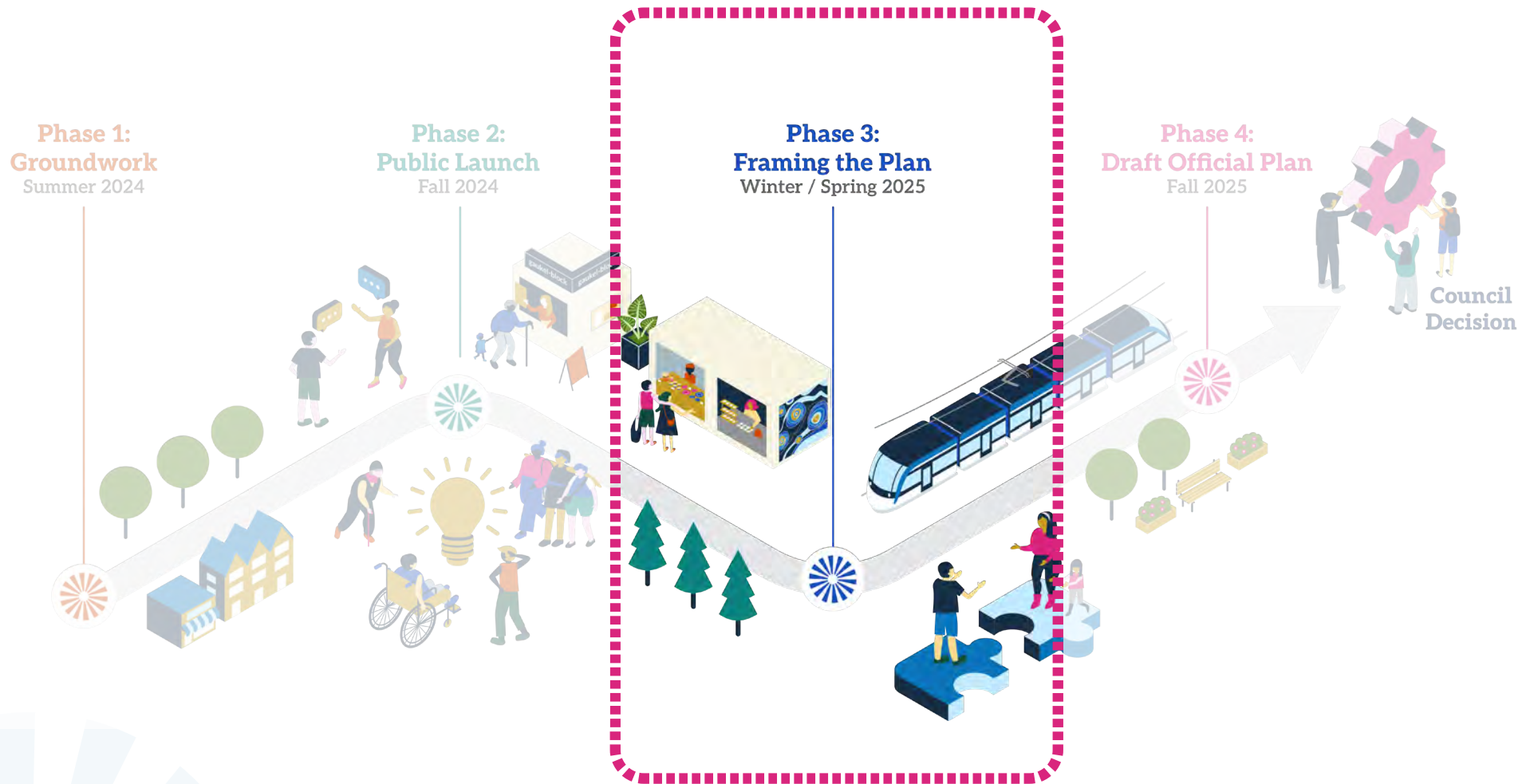


Figure 1: Illustration showing the Kitchener 2051 timeline - by phase. Phase 3, the focus of this report, is highlighted.

1.3 About this Report

This **Phase 3 What We heard Report** outlines the engagement goals, objectives, values, and approaches guiding the Kitchener 2051 process, as well as the engagement opportunities provided between December 2024 and June 2025. It also summarizes the feedback and key learnings that emerged during the first two phases of the process.

Phase 1: Groundwork, conducted between June and August 2024, was a pre-engagement phase centred around audience identification and mapping, process design, objective and approach setting, and strategy development.

Phase 2: Public Launch, conducted from September to December 2024, was used to introduce the process and the four key themes to the broader community. The Public Launch phase provided 21 engagement opportunities designed to gather high-level input, ideas, and aspirations from the public and interest holders about Kitchener's future.

Phase 3: Framing the Plan: conducted from December 2024 to June 2025, was used to introduce the framing for the new Official Plan to the broader public. This included introducing and gathering feedback on the big ideas and focus areas that begin to frame early Official Plan policy directions as well as introducing and gathering feedback on the different ways Kitchener might Grow in the future. This phase provided over 30 opportunities for engagement on the various elements.

What follows is an overview and summary of key findings gathered through multiple engagement channels, including, community working group sessions, Speaker Series event #2, two Approaches to Growth Workshops, Conversation Kits, advisory committee and community presentations, Indigenous community engagement, and through online engagement (interactive Approaches to growth survey, and social media).

First Nations and Local Indigenous community engagement is being undertaken in a separate, yet parallel process, with the intention to build stronger relationships with First Nations Rights Holders, those with historical and continued interests in the lands and waters of the City of Kitchener, and local Indigenous community members.

Engagement with Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation and Si Nations of the Grand River First Nation follow consultation and accommodations protocols established by each respective Nation and will not be included in this document. It is important to keep these processes separate to respect the understanding that the First Nations are Rights Holders, and their involvement is uniquely positioned as such.

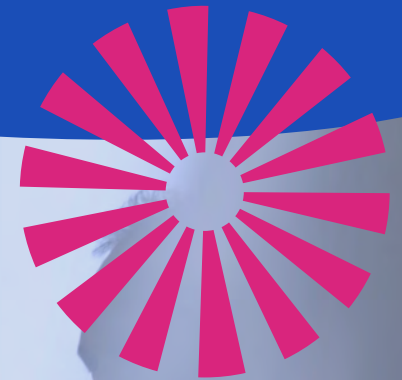
Engagement with the Local Indigenous community has been summarized and included in Section 4 of this report.

Section 2

Engagement Overview

In February 2024, Kitchener City Council directed staff to initiate the work on a new Official Plan, founded on engagement principles to guide how community members and collaborators would be included in the process. These principles were then used as a starting point for the Kitchener 2051 Community Engagement Strategy (CES). The CES:

- outlines the project background, overall engagement goals, objectives, and values guiding the process;
- identifies the different audiences who will be engaged throughout the process; and
- provides a high-level plan, timeline, and approaches for how the City will engage with each audience.



2.1 Overall Engagement Goals & Objectives

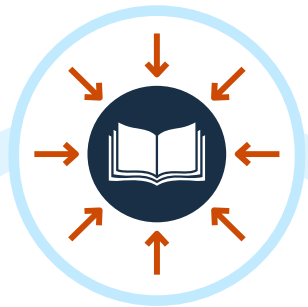
The overarching goal of Kitchener 2051's engagement strategy is:

“

Through meaningful engagement, the new Official Plan and elements of the planning process such as data analysis, forecasting, and the work of policy experts, will be anchored in and shaped by the voices and experiences of those who live, work, and play here.

”

To help achieve this goal, five overarching engagement objectives were developed:



1

Provide meaningful opportunities and seek substantive input to help shape the OP



2

Build awareness and capacity for informed engagement



3

Build trusting relationships



4

Strive for equity and representation



5

Elicit a broad range of ideas and go deep on the interesting ones

2.2 Overall Engagement Values

Guiding all Kitchener 2051 engagement are 5 key values:

1. Inclusive

This means sound engagement practices that are welcoming and accessible for all, providing safer and appropriate opportunities for community members to express their views and share ideas.

2. Equitable

This means reducing barriers for those who may have challenges to participation and including those outside traditionally recognized structures and processes.

3. Respectful

This means listening first and engaging from a place of regard and intention, and valuing lived / living experience and community expertise.

4. Meaningful

This means being clear and transparent about what we're engaging on – what is open to change / input and what is not.

5. Responsive

This means engaging with community members in ways they'd like to be engaged and being open to feedback on methods to meet their needs / interests.



2.3 Phase 3 Engagement Goals & Objectives

The goal for Phase 3: Framing the Plan was to:

“

Draft an Official Plan that is reflective of our community's shared values and that benefits all residents.

”

Phase 3: Framing the Plan Objectives:

- Introducing and gathering feedback on the different ways Kitchener will Grow
- Introducing and gathering feedback on Big Ideas and Focus Areas
- Continuing to build community knowledge and capacity

Engagement undertaken in Phase 3 helped introduce and socialize early directions and potential approaches to growth that will become foundational elements of the new Official Plan.

Phase 3 engagement activities were designed to gather feedback and gauge sentiment related to these concepts while ensuring that participants had the baseline information needed to fully understand the potential trade-offs and/or synergies that occur during decision-making processes related to land use and growth.

Ultimately, what we learned in Phase 3 will deepen our understanding of community priorities and readiness for change. This input will guide us as we continue drafting the new Official Plan, setting out a roadmap for how Kitchener can grow and evolve in ways reflective of our community's shared values and that benefits all residents.

2.4 Phase 3 Engagement by the Numbers

Between July and December 2024, there were over 21 opportunities to engage during Phases 1 and 2 of the Kitchener 2051 process, reaching over 2,000 members of the community.



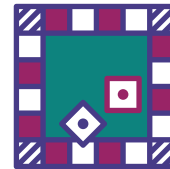
Over **30** opportunities to engage in-person and online



137 Online Survey responses were submitted



68 attendees participated in the two Approaches to Growth workshops



145 Grade 5 students learned about Kitchener 2051 and got to play the Block Party land use board game in class



More than **70** people have participated in the Community Conversation Kits so far



In-person engagement in different Wards **8**



250+ views of the Phase 3 launch video



7 Community Working Group Meetings

2.5 Phase 3 Engagement Approach

A key priority of the Phase 3 engagement approach was to demonstrate what we learned during Phase 1 and 2 by incorporating key learnings into:

- A new overall structuring framework
- The Approaches to Growth (early growth directions)
- The Big Ideas & Focus Areas (early policy directions)

The new structuring framework responded to public input by ensuring the principles of A Caring City were woven throughout each of A Connected City, A Thriving City, and A Green City themes.

The Big Ideas and Focus Areas and Draft Approaches to Growth were developed in part by synthesizing and incorporating the priorities and aspirations shared by the public during Phase 2.

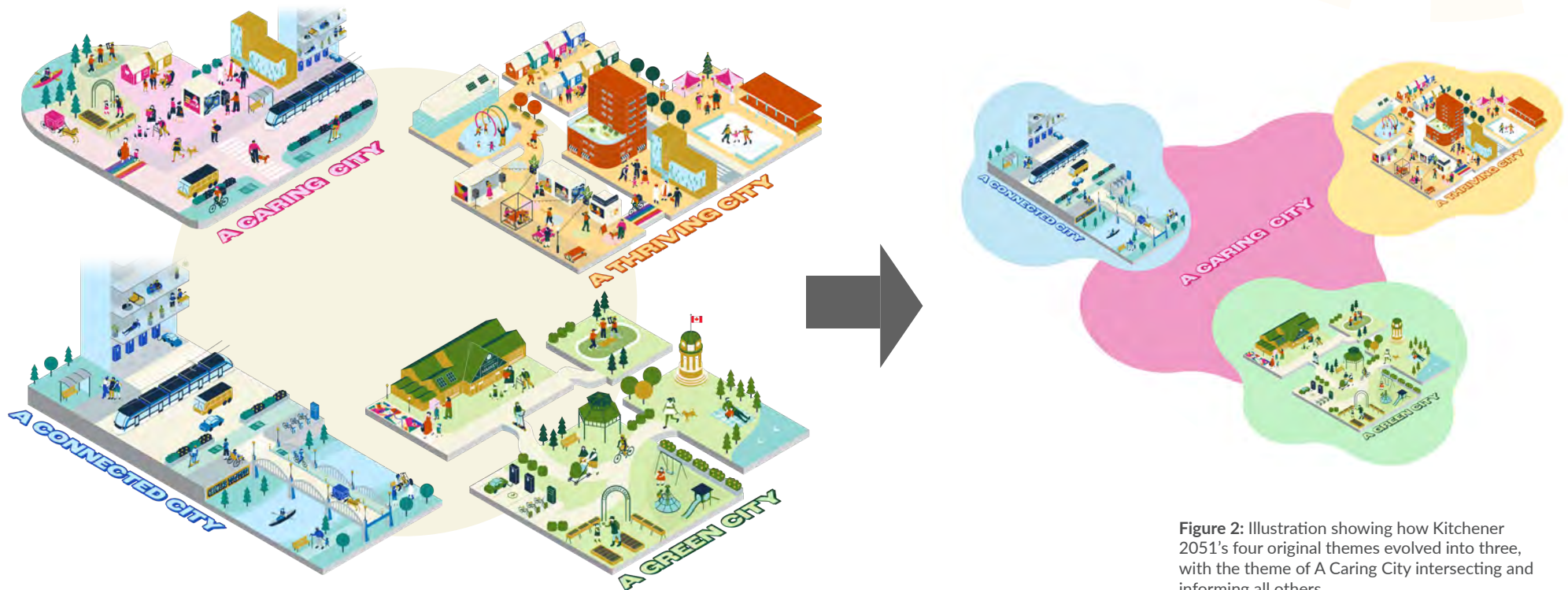


Figure 2: Illustration showing how Kitchener 2051's four original themes evolved into three, with the theme of A Caring City intersecting and informing all others.

Section 3

Summary of Phase 3

Engagement Opportunities



3.1 Phase 3: Framing the Plan

Community Values Engagement: Validating What We Learned - Winter 2024/25

In order to validate what we learned during Phase 2, the team took the Draft Community Values out to the community for comment and confirmation.

The Community Values were distilled from the thoughts, ideas, and suggestions gathered during Phase 2, and highlighted a shared desire for a future Kitchener that is equitable, connected, and resilient, with a strong commitment for its people and environment.

- Affordability
- Thoughtful & Resilient Growth
- Access & Inclusion
- Safe & Sustainable Mobility Options
- Mutual Care & Belonging

The validated community values were then used to help refine the emerging directions and early growth options shared as Big Ideas and Approaches to Growth later in Phase 3.

Community Values Pop-Ups

Over the winter, six pop-up events were held around the city in order to introduce the Kitchener 2051 process and gather feedback on the Community Values. Sessions were held at the following locations:

Kitchener-Waterloo Multi-cultural Centre - November 21, 2024

Centreville Chicopee Neighbourhood Food Program & Tea/Coffee Program - January 8, 2025

Williamsburg Community Centre - January 13, 2025

Victoria Hills Community Centre - January 20, 2025

Forest Heights - January 22, 2025

Kitchener Public Market - January 25, 2025

During these events, the team talked to approximately 175 people.

Community Values Survey

A City-wide survey was deployed on the City's engagement page introducing the Community Values. The survey offered an overview of each of the five values and provided an opportunity for the public to provide feedback on how important each value is to Kitchener's future - as well as an opportunity to provide open ended feedback on each value.

The survey was available online between January 6 to 31, 2025 and 89 completed surveys were submitted.

Kitchener 2051 Community Working Group

Regular monthly meetings with the Community Working Group were held to share key project information, solicit feedback on core elements of the planning and engagement process, and to gather ideas and insights related to broader opportunities presented by the Kitchener 2051 process.

The key topics of each monthly meeting were:

- **January 9 2025:** Approaches to Growth
- **February 6 2025:** Big Moves & Focus Areas
- **March 6 2025:** Community Conversation Kits pt.1
- **April 3 2025:** Community Conversation Kits pt.2
- **May 1 2025:** Approaches to Growth
- **June 5 2025:** It's time to shape Official Plan policies!
- **July 3 2025:** Official Plan Policies & Technical Reports

Advisory Committee Presentations - Spring 2025

Between April and June 2025, the project team presented to and gathered input from City Advisory Committees including the Active Transportation & Trails Advisory Committee; and the Climate Change and Environment Committee.



Figure 3: The Community Working Group working through an activity exploring how to integrate commercial uses and missing middle housing into existing neighbourhoods.

Phase 3 Youth Engagement

In early 2025, City of Kitchener staff visited five elementary schools to engage with Grade 5 students as part of Kitchener 2051. Schools were intentionally selected in neighbourhoods that serve equity-denied communities, to ensure that diverse youth voices and lived experiences were reflected in the process. The youth engagement module was designed to share age-appropriate information about the role of the Official Plan in shaping the city's future, while sparking curiosity and dialogue through the use of Block Party, the interactive land use board game.

Staff met with 145 Grade 5 students in 6 different classes.

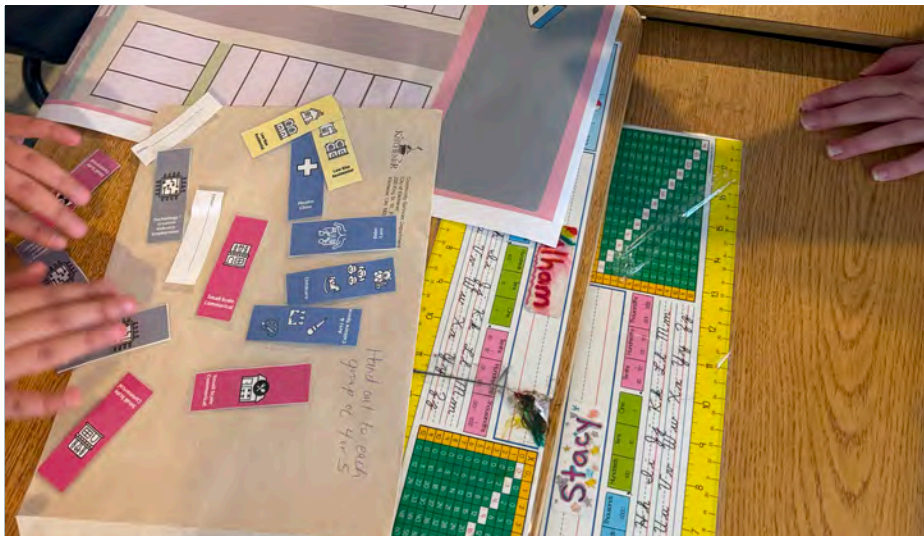


Figure 4: Students interacting with the Block Party Land Use Boardgame.

Phase 3 Introduction Video

A two-minute video was created to help launch Phase 3 of Kitchener 2051. It highlighted key takeaways from Phase 2, introduced the Phase 3 focus areas, and encouraged participation in the upcoming Approaches to Growth and Big Ideas engagement opportunities.

The video was posted on the Kitchener 2051 Engage webpage, and shared on City social media channels on April 1st 2025, and has been viewed over 250 times.



Figure 5: Snapshot from the Phase 3 Launch Video.

Approaches to Growth Engagement: How and Where we Grow - Spring 2025

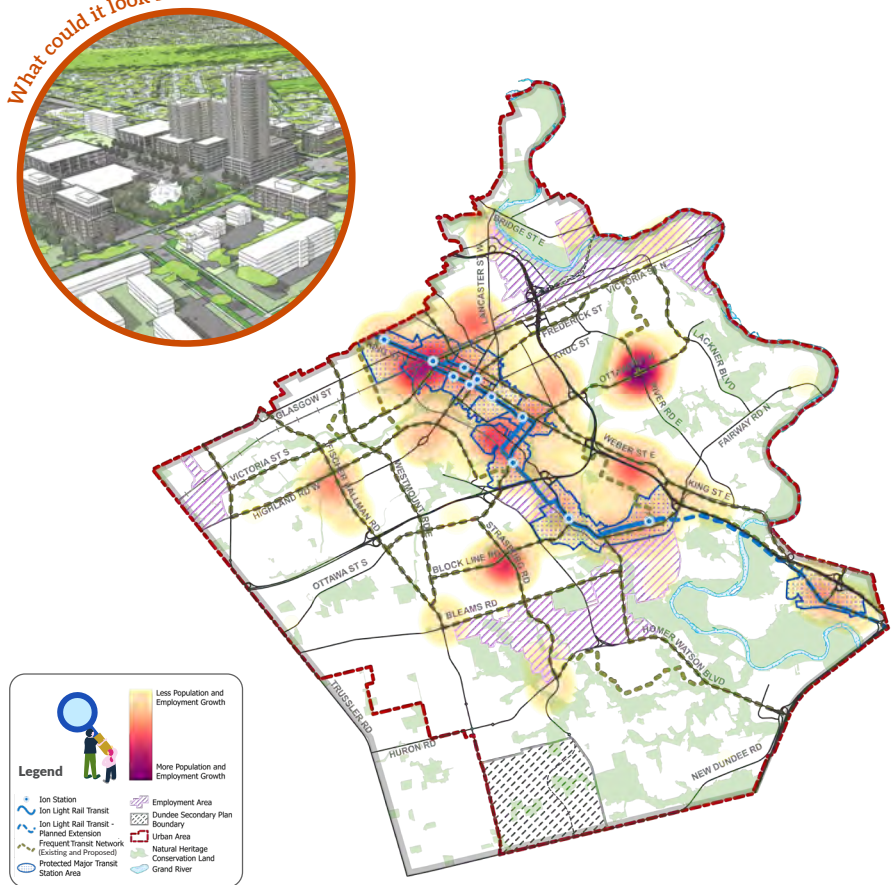
Over the winter, City of Kitchener staff developed and tested three distinct Approaches to Growth for Phase 3 of the Kitchener 2051 engagement process.

- New Urban Centres
- Nodes and Corridors
- Evolving Neighbourhoods

Each of these scenarios were shaped by technical studies, guidance from Council and staff, and input shared by community members and interest holders during Phase 2 - and are grounded in a shared set of Core Assumptions:

- Be future focused
- Maintain growth within the existing urban area boundary
- Plan for change across the city neighbourhoods
- Greater integration of places, systems, and networks
- Conserve and protect the natural heritage system
- Support Kitchener's economy

What could it look like?

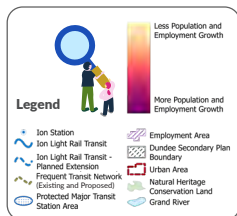
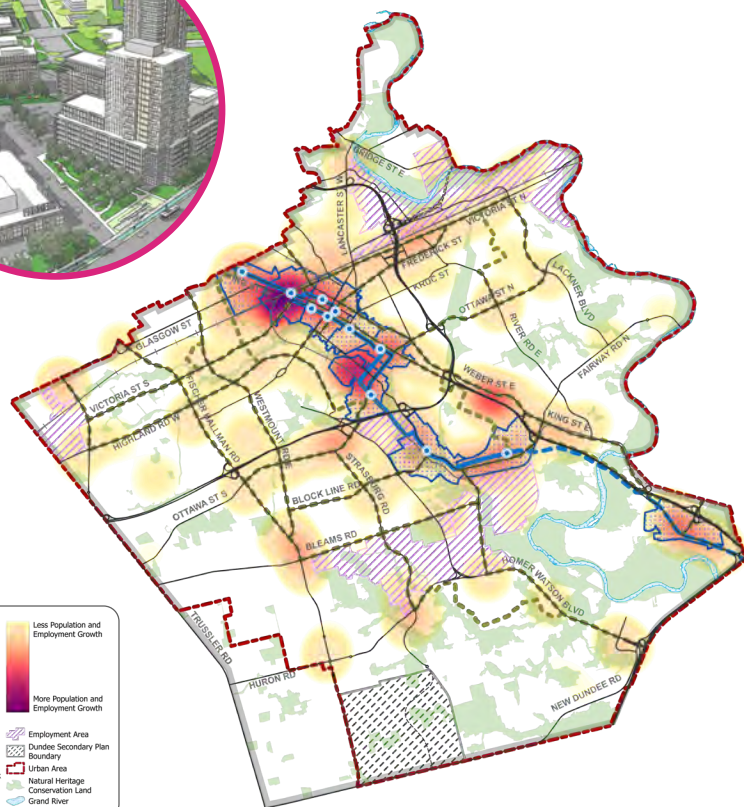


New Urban Centres:

This approach focuses growth in select urban centres with large parking lots or underused sites that can be redeveloped. These areas are close to key amenities like parks, trails, frequent transit, schools, libraries, and community centres. It also includes growth in transit-supportive neighbourhoods and along growing main streets already seeing mixed-use development.

Figure 6: Map and description of the New Urban Centre Approach to Growth

What could it look like?

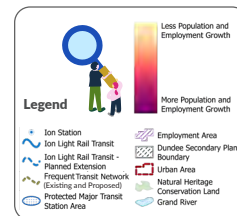
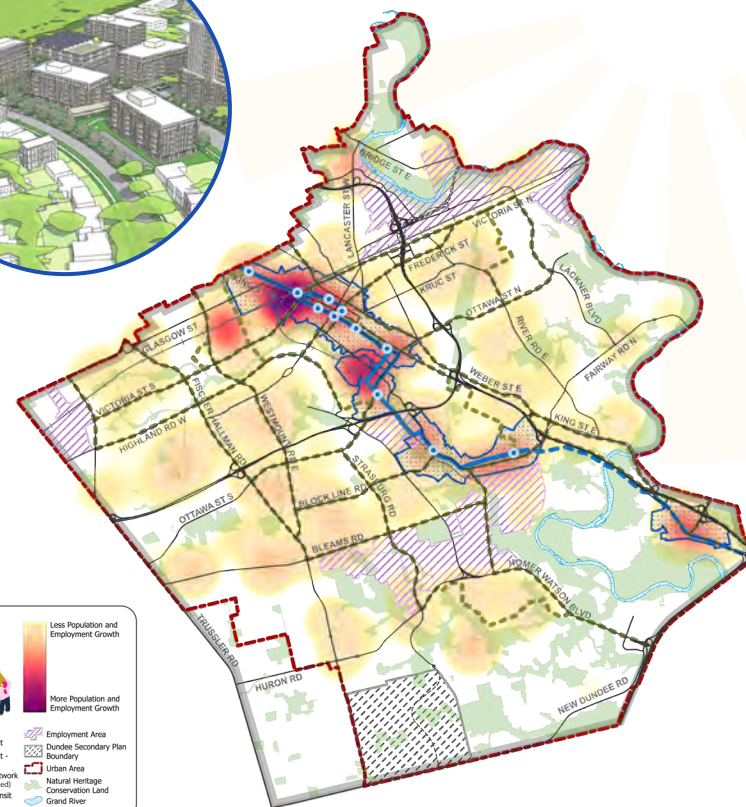


Nodes and Corridors:

This approach adds housing, jobs, and community amenities along major transit corridors and at key intersections (“nodes”), often centered around commercial plazas. It builds on the City’s existing Nodes and Corridors framework, updating policies to support more housing, a greater mix of uses, and walkable, complete communities.

Figure 7: Map and description of the Nodes and Corridors Approach to Growth

What could it look like?



Evolving Neighbourhoods:

This approach supports adding a mix of housing types, shops, services, and jobs throughout all of Kitchener’s neighbourhoods, rather than focusing growth in specific centres or corridors. This approach aims to create more inclusive, complete neighbourhoods city-wide, where more people can live, work, and access daily needs close to home.

Figure 8: Map and description of the Evolving Neighbourhood Approach to Growth

Speaker Series Event and Approaches to Growth Workshop - April 5 2025

The combined Approaches to Growth and Speaker Series Event was the public launch of Kitchener 2051 Phase 3 engagement, and the first introduction to the spatial and growth components of the new Official Plan.

Held at St. Mary's High School in Ward 3, this four-hour, drop-in-style event combined the second Kitchener 2051 Speaker Series series event with an interactive public workshop designed to introduce participants to the different growth approaches the City could take as part of its new Official Plan.

The event began with a keynote presentation by foresight expert Helen Kerr of KerrSmith Design. Helen shared a variety of emerging trends and signals of change that could shape how Kitchener grows and changes over the next 30-50 years.

The chosen topic and combined nature of the event were intentionally chosen to encourage event participants to move beyond short-term thinking or focusing on current constraints as they participated in the subsequent Approaches to Growth interactive workshop.

The Approaches to Growth workshop directly followed the Speaker Series event. Set up in the atrium outside the theatre, the workshop was set up as an interactive “Choose Your Own Adventure” style activity offering participants a chance to navigate a set of eight short ‘day-in-the-life’ scenarios or decision points.

As they moved through the activity, participants were asked to make decisions based on the future they most wanted to experience.

In order to have participants consider the needs and/or choices of Kitchener residents who may experience the city in a different way, each participant was also assigned an ‘Avatar’ or alternate persona to consider as they completed the activity.



Figure 9: Speaker Series #2: Approaches to Growth

The avatars were developed using Kitchener's demographic data and insights from the Housing Needs Analysis and associated Social Planning Report.

Each one reflects a different lived experience in the city—shaped by factors like age, income, family structure, housing situation, and access to daily needs.



Figure 10: Avatar descriptions used in the Approaches to Growth interactive activity



Figure 11: Avatar descriptions used in the Approaches to Growth interactive activity

Participants made decisions at eight key points - once as themselves, then again as their assigned avatar. Each decision offered three options, each reflecting one of the three Approaches to Growth.

At the end of the activity, participants reflected on where their personal choices aligned, with or differed from, their avatar's. Scores were then tallied to identify which growth direction was most preferred, both personally and for their avatar.

28 people attended the speaker series event and participated in the interactive workshop.

Approaches to Growth Workshop #2
- May 1 2025

A second Approaches to Growth workshop was held in the rotunda at City Hall in downtown Kitchener on the evening of May 1st. This 3-hour drop-in style event offered the same activity as the first Approaches to Growth workshop.

40 people attended the event.

Approaches to Growth Online Survey

Participants who were unable to attend the in-person Approaches to Growth workshops or had additional feedback to share were given the opportunity to participate in an online Approaches to Growth survey. This 15-minute interactive survey mirrored the format of the in-person Approach to Growth events, and was made available on the City's Engage online engagement platform between April 16th and June 13th.

48 online surveys were completed.

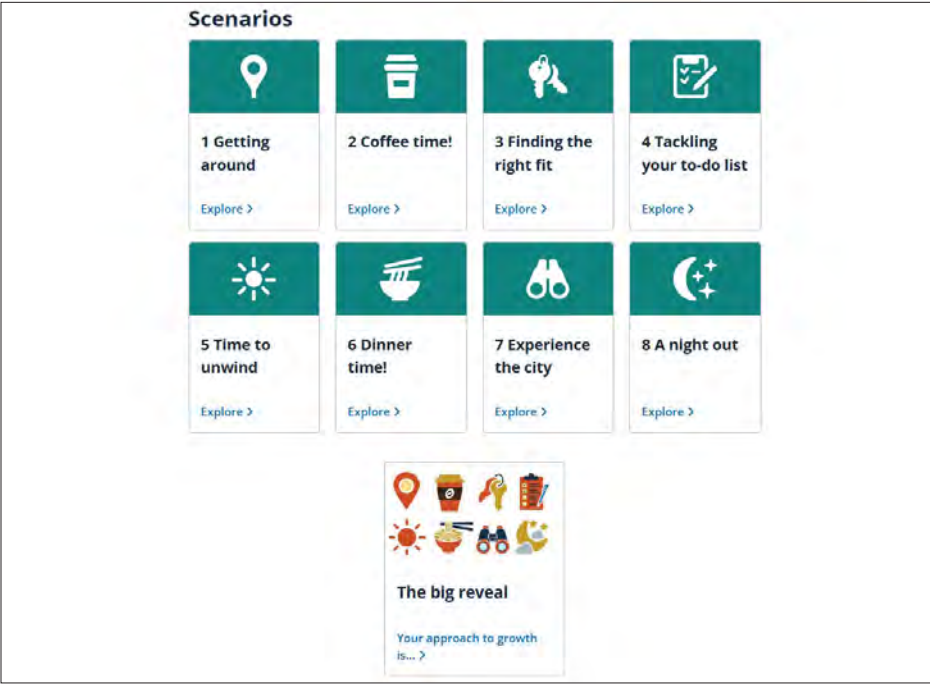


Figure 12: Snapshot of the online interactive survey.

Big Ideas & Focus Areas - Spring/Summer 2025

Before drafting the new Official Plan, the City of Kitchener crafted three Big Ideas to help guide future growth and shape our desired future. These Big Ideas were developed using what was learned during earlier public and interest holder engagement.

The Big Ideas were introduced to the public in Phase 3 through the Community Conversation Kit and the associated theme 'Backgrounders'.

The Big Ideas



Our Neighbourhoods

If you live in Kitchener, or if you would like to live here, if you rent or own, if you live alone or with others, if you need care or assistance, there will always be a home for you here. You and your family – however you define it, are able to make your home in any of Kitchener's thriving neighbourhoods. Our neighbourhoods will be places where neighbours can connect, where people of all ages can learn and play, and where shops and services are close by.



Our Economy

Our economy will be built on businesses of all types in neighbourhoods across the city, from shops and services to industry, innovation hubs, and offices. Residents and goods will get where they need to go quickly, efficiently and sustainably. Coordinated energy and infrastructure investments in businesses across the city will create a more competitive, resilient economy.



Our Environment

We value, protect and conserve our natural environment so that Kitchener is a place where you and your family can be safe, healthy, and comfortable for generations to come. Kitchener will emit almost no greenhouse gases and our communities, built and natural environments will be ready for hotter days and more intense storms. We will learn from Indigenous land-based cultural practices and stewardship in the spirit of reconciliation to build a stronger community, based on a mutual understanding of each other and the environment.

Community Conversation Kits

The Community Conversation Kits were designed to share the Big Ideas and Focus Areas and to gather the community's thoughts and priorities about growth through an interactive community-led activity booklet.

Conversation Kits were available online and in print from local libraries and community centres, and were designed to facilitate thoughtful small-group discussions about the City's emerging Big Ideas and focus areas.

Intended for groups of 4–8 participants, the kits guided participants through structured activities and discussions. In order to incentivize participation, hosts were encouraged to order a shareable meal (reimbursable up to \$30 for the first 50 submitted kits) to help convene and energize the conversation. Once the kits were completed, participants were asked to submit their kits via email or drop-off at civic facilities.

Insights gathered through the kits directly informed the development of draft Official Plan policies, ensuring that community values, aspirations, and priorities are embedded in Kitchener's vision for growth into the future.

The Community Conversation Kit was accompanied by technical backgrounders for each of the Big Ideas, which outlined definitions, concepts, and possible actions the City may take.

The technical backgrounders provided each participant with an understanding of how an Official Plan can respond to proposed Big Ideas and how the City of Kitchener might approach each one.

Conversation Kit Activities:

Section 1: Open Discussion on Big Ideas

Participants were provided background and prompts to guide a conversation about the City's three Big Ideas. They shared what resonated, what could be improved, and how these ideas connected to their own experiences and aspirations for Kitchener.

Section 2: Priority Allocation Exercise

Building on the Big Ideas, participants explored 18 emerging policy directions developed by the City. Through discussion, they considered the relevance and importance of each direction, then collaboratively allocated 100 points across the 18 options, giving more points to directions they felt were most important.

Section 3: Open Discussion on Emerging Directions

Following the allocation exercise, participants were asked to share how and why they prioritized certain directions, highlighting areas of agreement, difference, and the values that shaped their choices.

Section 4: Demographic Collection

To support equitable engagement, participants were invited to complete a voluntary demographic survey. Results will help the City understand who participated, and where future outreach efforts may be needed to reach underrepresented voices.

In order to continue gathering input as the Official Plan is being drafted, the priority allocation exercise will remain open over the summer.



Figure 13: Staff member talking to a participant at Approaches to Growth Workshop #1

Indigenous Community Engagement

As part of the Kitchener 2051 process, the City has been engaging with local Indigenous community members and organizations through a series of one-on-one and small group engagement sessions.

Kitchener is home to a diverse Indigenous community made up of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples from a range of cultural backgrounds. As an integral part of the broader community, Indigenous residents bring unique perspectives, priorities, and lived experiences. During Phase 3, sessions were held with local Indigenous individuals and organizations with support from Indigenous-led design and engagement firm, SpruceLab.

Conversations were structured around key themes:

- ***Relationships*** with the City, amongst Indigenous groups, and with non-Indigenous allies
- ***Reconciliation efforts*** through resources, funding, and employment
- ***The land*** in relation to environment, access to greenspace, food security, medicine plants, and community gardens
- ***Indigenous cultural spaces, people, and programming***
- ***Housing***, including support for underhoused and unhoused community members
- ***Healthcare and healing***, including mental health and Indigenous outreach
- ***Public transit and mobility***



Figure 14: Approaches to Growth workshop #1

Section 4

What We Heard



Methodology

All open-ended responses gathered during in-person events, Conversation Kits, and via the online survey was transcribed (when necessary), coded, analyzed and summarized. Coding open-ended responses involves reading through each comment and assigning a primary (and secondary, if necessary) 'code' or theme. Similarly coded responses are then grouped together and analyzed to help identify patterns, overarching themes, as well as shared ideas and sentiments.

Closed-question, or quantitative responses from both the in-person events (interactive information panels) and online tools (e.g. multiple choice, ranking, and Likert scale survey questions) were calculated and converted to chart form where possible.

Responses that were vulgar, or illegible were given a code of N/A and not included in the results.

Important note on data inclusion

In alignment with the Kitchener 2051 project objective of fostering an inclusive and respectful engagement process, comments which contained offensive, harmful, or inappropriate language, or comments targeting individuals or groups, have been omitted from this summary. This ensures that the outcomes reflect the shared values and priorities of our community.

4.1 Approaches to Growth

In-Person Workshops

Input gathered at the in-person Approaches to Growth workshops showed that all three growth directions: Nodes and Corridors, Urban Centres, and Evolving Neighborhoods, received a comparable share of support, with each approach capturing roughly one-third of the total votes (35%, 34%, and 30% respectively).

When isolating the 'Me' (individual) responses, Nodes and Corridors emerged slightly ahead with just over 39% of votes, followed by Urban Centres (32%) and Evolving Neighborhoods (25%).

When looking at the 'Avatar' responses, where participants were asked to make decisions from another's perspective, Urban Centres led with just over 35% of votes, while Evolving Neighborhoods and Nodes and Corridors each garnered approximately 32%.

Overall, the results demonstrate a relatively even distribution of support, suggesting broad appeal for all three approaches and validating the direction toward an integrated, or composite, growth strategy.

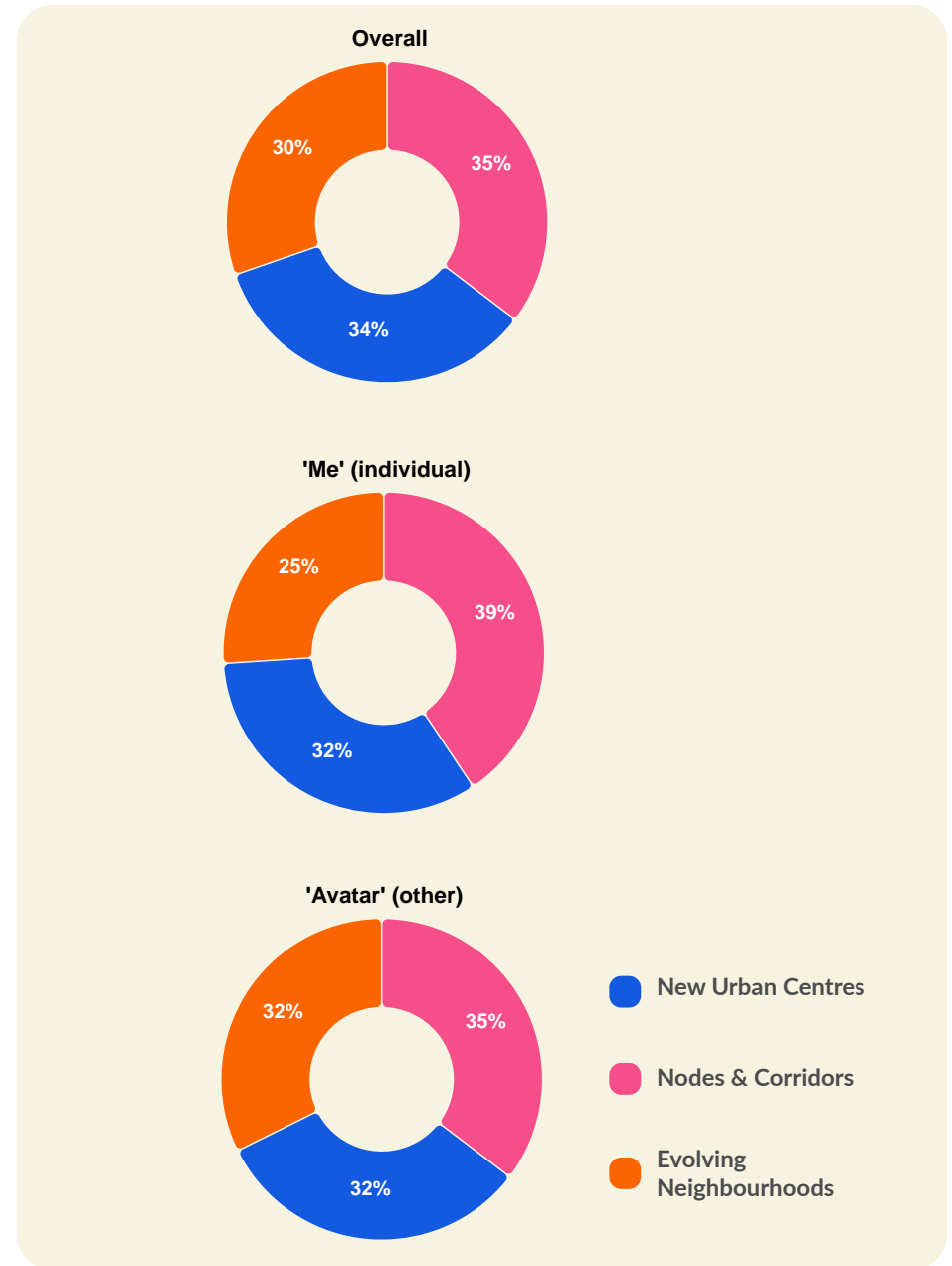


Figure 15: Charts showing overall in-person workshop votes by perspective

Getting Around

Participants were asked about their preferences about transit options around the City of Kitchener. Of 85 total responses, 35 respondents selected Nodes and Corridors as their preferred growth strategy, followed by 27 respondents for New Urban Centres and 22 respondents for Evolving Neighbourhoods.

In comments, respondents expressed a desire for more frequent public transit service and more active transportation options (including walking and biking).

Coffee Time!

Of 83 total responses, 32 respondents selected Evolving Neighbourhoods as their preferred growth strategy, followed 28 respondents for New Urban Centres and 22 respondents for Nodes and Corridors.

In comments, respondents shared support for a greater number of local business options.

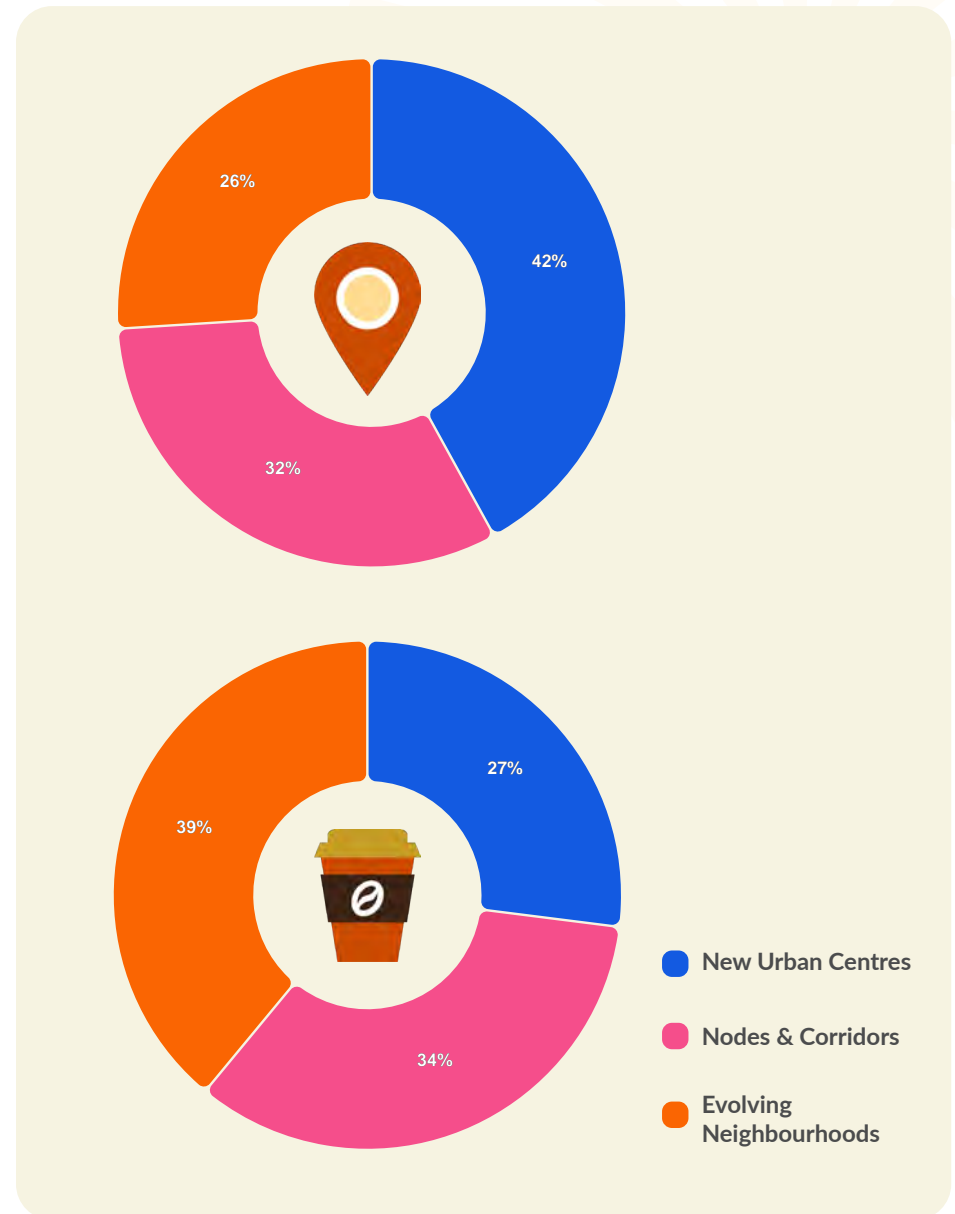


Figure 16: Charts illustrating the in-person workshop results by decision point

Finding the Right Fit

Participants were asked about the kinds of housing that they were most interested in living in. Of 83 total responses, 36 respondents selected Nodes and Corridors as their preferred growth strategy, followed by 27 respondents for New Urban Centres and 18 respondents for Evolving Neighbourhoods.

In comments, respondents mentioned their desire for more middle housing and a concern for inaccessible housing options -- particularly for the older generation.

Tackling Your To-Do List

Participants were asked about their behaviours when running errands. Of the total 84 respondents, 36 respondents selected Nodes and Corridors as their preferred growth direction, followed by 29 respondents for New Urban Centres and 21 respondents for Evolving Neighbourhoods.

Respondents highlighted the convenience of accessing many amenities in a single location and stressed the importance of accessibility for residents of all ages.

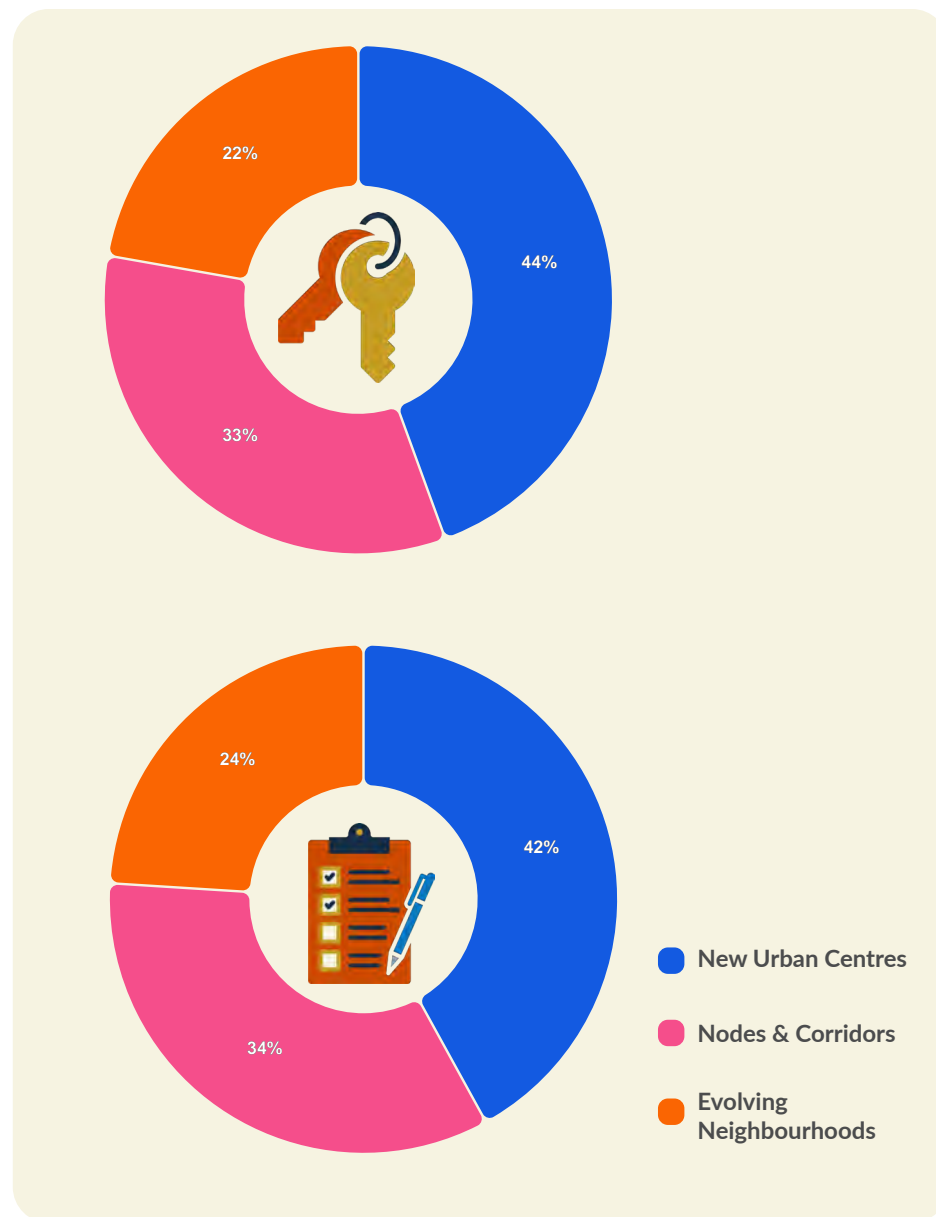


Figure 17: Charts illustrating the in-person workshop results by decision point

Time to Unwind

Participants were asked about their preferences when they were looking to unwind. Of the 83 total respondents, 32 respondents selected Evolving Neighbourhoods as their preferred growth strategy, followed by 27 respondents who selected new Urban Centers and 27 respondents who selected Nodes and Corridors.

Respondents stressed the importance of having seating available in public spaces and expressed a desire for accessible greenspace nearby.

Dinner Time

Participants were asked about their preferences when heading out to dinner. Of the 80 respondents, 29 respondents selected Evolving Neighbourhoods as their preferred growth direction, followed by 26 who selected Nodes and Corridors and 25 who selected New Urban Centres.

Respondents highlighted the importance of having food options in proximity to their homes -- both in the form of restaurants and grocery stores. They also expressed a desire for accessibility at these establishments, from both a transit and mobility standpoint.

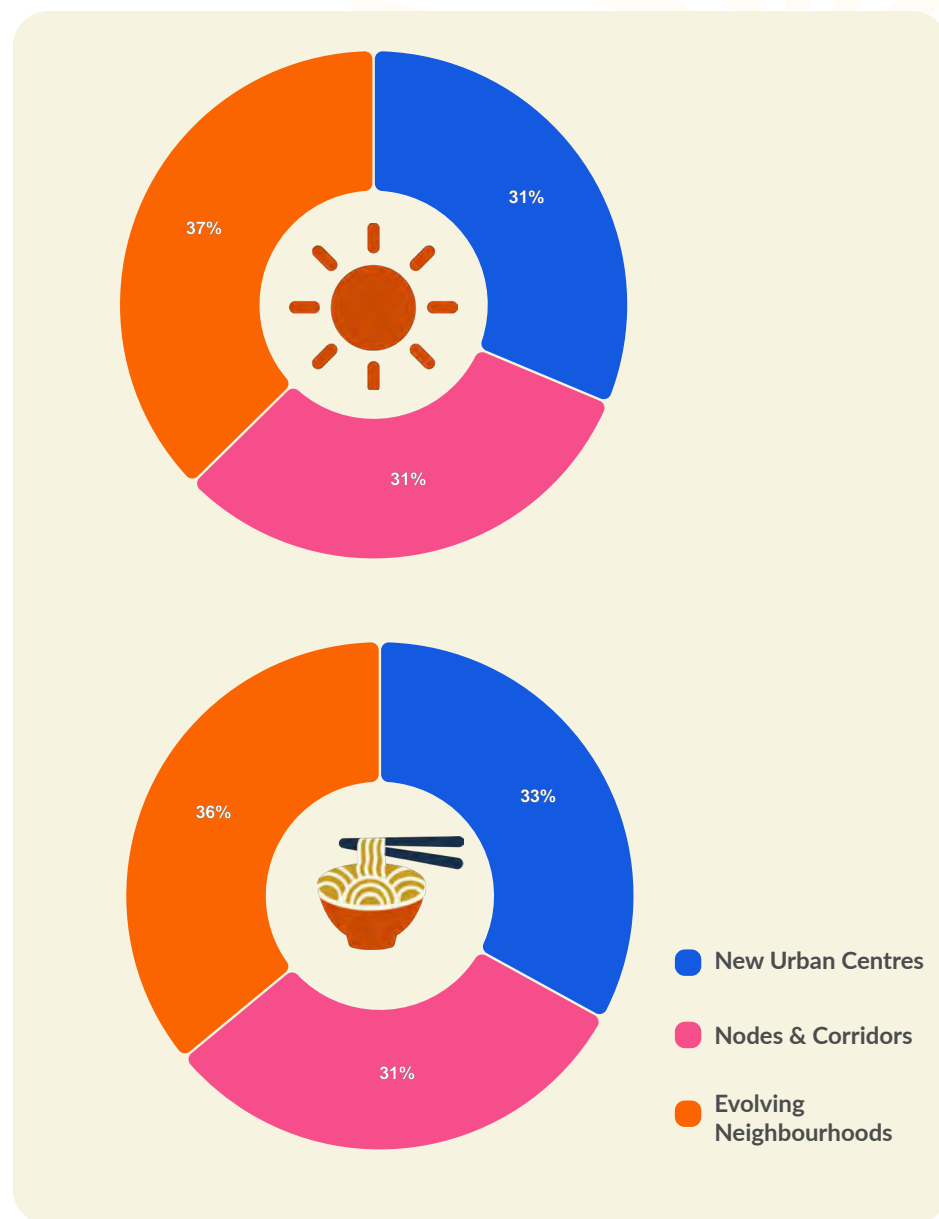


Figure 18: Charts illustrating the in-person workshop results by decision point

Experience the City

Participants were asked about how they would like to experience the city. Of 83 respondents, 34 selected New Urban Centres as their preferred growth direction, followed by 27 respondents who selected Nodes and Corridors and 21 respondents who selected Evolving Neighbourhoods.

Respondents stressed the importance of proximity when they were looking to experience the city -- especially in terms of walkability. Respondents also expressed a desire to engage in downtime in the comfort of their homes.

Night Out

Participants were asked about what they would like to experience on a night out. Of 81 respondents, 29 respondents selected New Urban Centers and 29 respondents selected Nodes and Corridors as their preferred growth strategy, followed by 26 respondents for Evolving Neighbourhoods.

Respondents highlighted the importance of proximity in late-night establishments and their desire to spend time in greenspace.

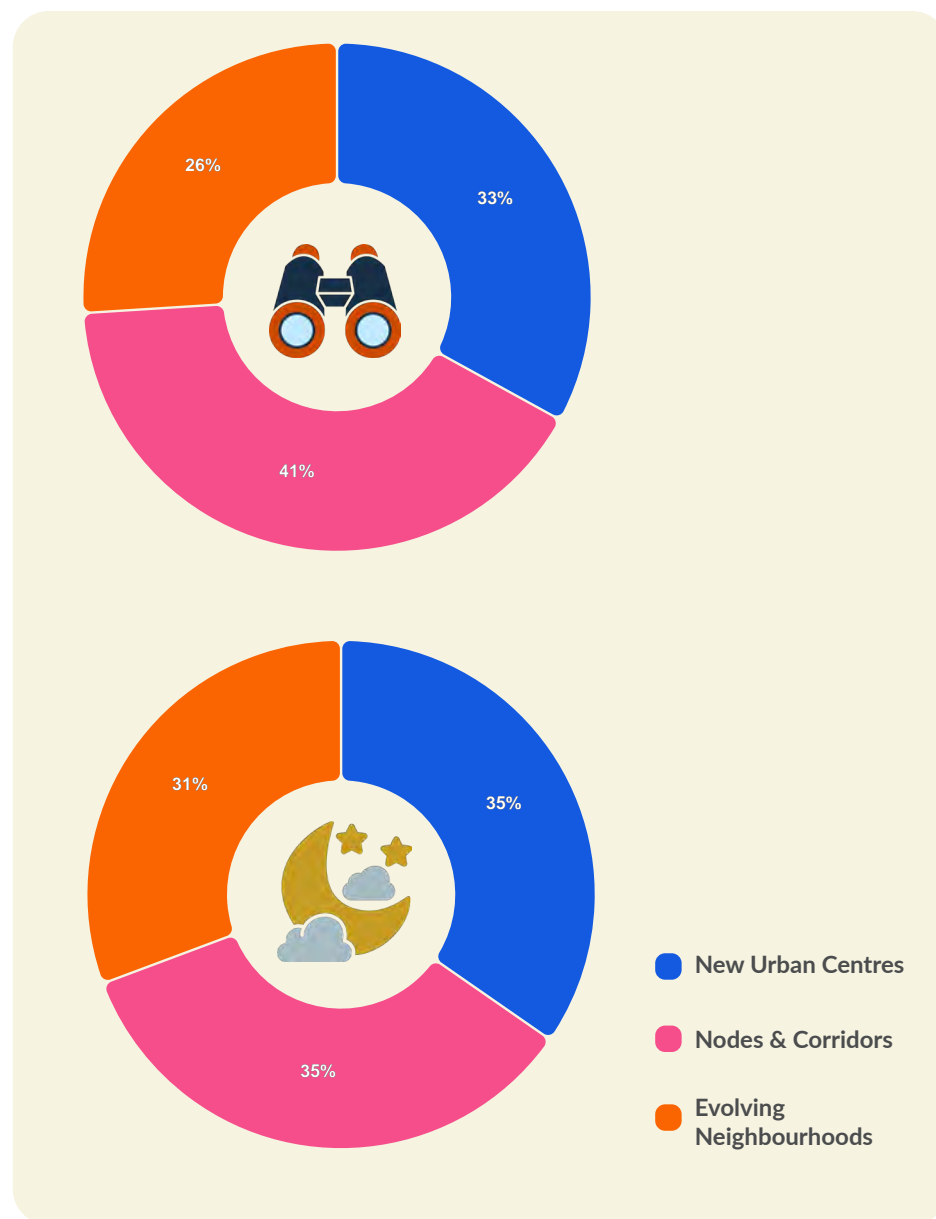
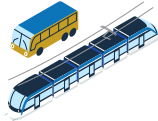


Figure 19: Charts illustrating the in-person workshop results by decision point

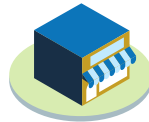
Key themes that emerged during the in-person Approaches to Growth engagement activity, included the following:

Mobility & Accessibility



Many participants expressed interest in using alternative modes of transportation, particularly walking and biking, but raised concerns about convenience, safety, and associated travel time. Accessibility also emerged as a key theme, with several comments highlighting the need for improved infrastructure and services that better support older adults and those with mobility challenges.

Mixed-use neighborhoods & small businesses



Participants shared support for neighbourhoods that bring homes, shops, and services closer together, making daily life more convenient and walkable. There was also strong appreciation for small and local businesses, with several respondents noting a preference for these over larger chain or big box stores.

Housing Affordability



The cost of housing came up frequently, with participants calling for a wider range of housing types to meet diverse individual and household needs. Many emphasized the importance of ensuring that housing remains accessible for people at different life stages and income levels.

Greenspace



The value of greenspace was a consistent theme, with participants stressing the importance of having accessible parks and natural areas nearby, where they can relax, recharge, and connect with others.

Resistance to change



While many participants were open to new ideas, some expressed hesitation or concern about change, particularly related to new growth and intensification. These responses reflected a mix of personal uncertainty and observations of broader community sentiment.

Equity across communities



A desire for fairness and balance was evident in many responses. Participants noted the importance of distributing amenities, services, and investments more equitably across Kitchener so that all neighbourhoods, regardless of location, can thrive.

Online Survey

Across the online Approaches to Growth activity's eight scenario-based decisions, respondent preferences were fairly evenly distributed. On average, Evolving Neighbourhoods received 36% of the vote, followed by Urban Centres at 32% and Nodes and Corridors at 31%.

While Evolving Neighbourhoods had the highest average level of support, it was the top choice in only one scenario. In

contrast, Nodes and Corridors was the most frequently preferred approach, leading in four of the eight scenarios, while Urban Centres topped three.

The results show that while Evolving Neighbourhoods had strong average support, participants were more likely to favour Nodes and Corridors or Urban Centres when thinking through specific trade-offs in daily life.

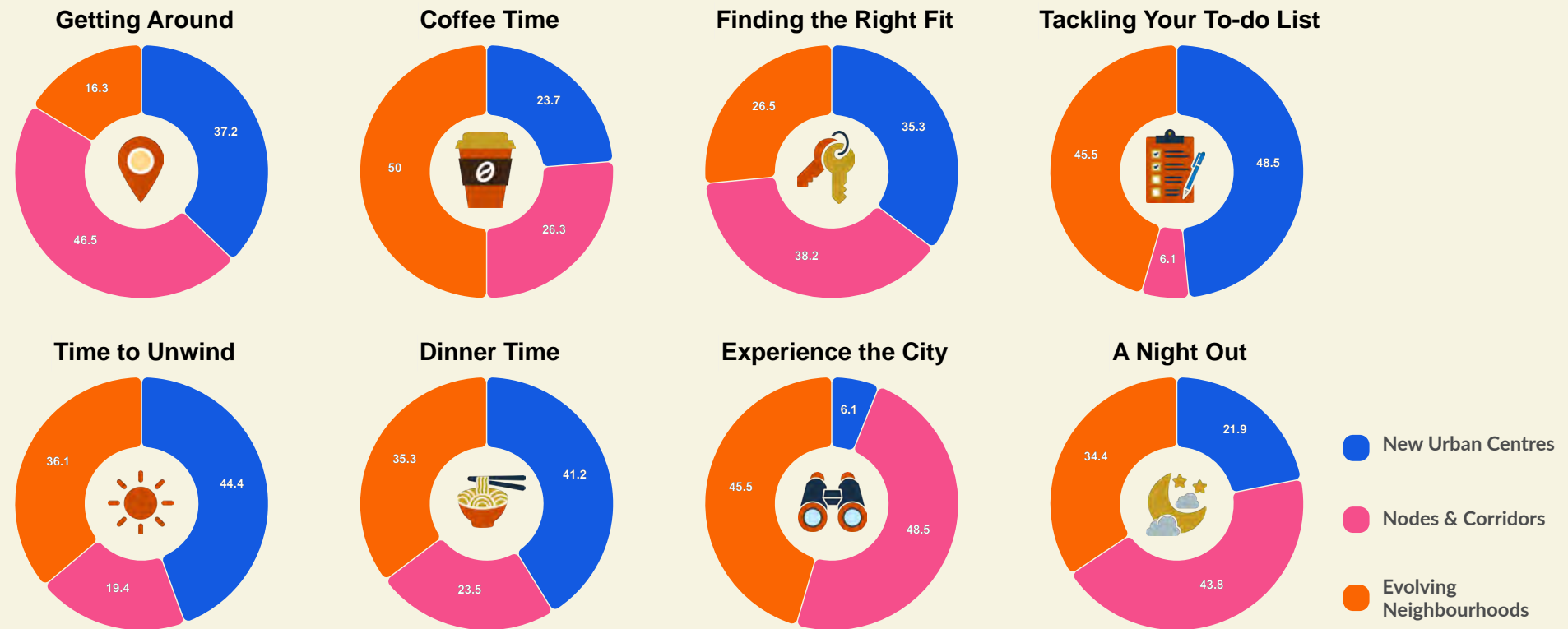


Figure 20: Charts illustrating the online survey results by decision point

4.2 Community Conversation Kits

Section 1: Open Discussion on Big Ideas

There was broad overall support for the City's Big Ideas, particularly around improving housing affordability and accessibility, building vibrant mixed-use neighbourhoods, expanding green space and tree cover, and improving transportation options across Kitchener. Many participants appreciated the City's emphasis on equity, inclusion, and livability, especially in the areas of affordable housing, resilient infrastructure, and environmentally responsible growth.

Participants also emphasized the importance of integrated planning, urging the City to continue exploring the connections between the economy, environment, and social wellbeing in the new Official Plan - as well as creating clearer definitions and pathways to achieving the big ideas. There was strong interest in better supporting seniors, people with disabilities, and equity-denied communities through improved access to housing, transit, and essential services.

Overall, the conversations reflected a strong desire to see planning efforts grounded in lived experience, responsive to on-the-ground realities, and ambitious in vision.

Section 2: Priority Allocation Exercise

In this activity, each group was given 100 points to distribute across 18 emerging policy directions, encouraging meaningful conversations about priorities and trade-offs. While every direction received some level of support, the results show clear

patterns in what people feel should guide Kitchener's future. Participants shared a strong and consistent desire for a city that is sustainable, inclusive, and prepared to meet the challenges ahead, particularly around climate, housing, and neighbourhood livability.

The most highly supported direction focused on climate resilience: "As neighbourhoods change they should consider the impacts of a changing climate." This direction received more points than any other, pointing to widespread concern about the effects of climate change and a clear expectation that the City lead with climate-forward planning. Several other environmental directions also scored well, including prioritizing the local food system, naturalizing stormwater solutions, designing for active transportation, and using data to reduce heat and flood risks. Together, these selections show a community that wants bold but practical responses to climate and environmental pressures.

Housing was also important to participants, with many strongly supporting the direction to "Use all the tools that Kitchener has... to support the expansion, preservation, and creation of affordable homes," along with calls to establish an affordable housing target and minimize the displacement of lower-income and marginalized households.

Directions related to economic development and complete neighbourhoods, such as attracting future employers, permitting small-scale commercial uses, and planning for more people to increase mobility and access to services, also received steady support. Overall, the results point to a community vision grounded in equity, resilience, and a strong sense of place.

As neighbourhoods change they should consider the impacts of a changing climate.

115

Use all the tools that Kitchener has, and build on relationships with other orders of government and private sector collaborators, to continue to support the expansion, preservation, and creation of affordable homes.

108

Creating conditions that attract the employers and industries of tomorrow and play to Kitchener's economic strengths.

101

Establish an affordable housing target.

95

Our transportation network includes safe, comfortable, and accessible active transportation routes.

78

Prioritize the local food system by seeking opportunities for urban agriculture, low-barrier food production, processing and food retail.

78

Ensure that while new homes are added in neighbourhoods, displacement of lower income and marginalized households is minimized.

70

Plan for more people in neighbourhoods to increase mobility choice, more shops, and more services closer to homes.

61

Use data about climate risks and vulnerable neighbourhoods to inform decisions on city infrastructure to reduce urban heat and flood risk.

60

Allow housing choices in all neighbourhoods – from houses to apartments, rental and ownership, market and affordable – to meet the needs of existing and future residents.

57

Continue to naturalize stormwater channels and ponds and integrate these spaces with recreation opportunities.

57

Permit small-scale and compatible commercial and service uses in neighbourhoods.

53

Create strong neighbourhoods by promoting human connection.

49

Recognize the value and significance of Kitchener's Natural Heritage System.

47

Protect and grow existing employment areas for industries that needs lots of land or create noise, dust, vibrations, or odours.

44

Direct major offices close to ION station stops or other areas with frequent transit.

41

Ensure that goods can move around Kitchener and get where they need to go easily and quickly.

41

Allow industrial uses that don't need to be located away from homes in more places throughout the city.

41

- Our Neighbourhood
- Our Economy
- Our Environment

Figure 21: Chart sharing the points allocated to each of the Emerging Directions in the Community Conversation Kits

Section 3: Open Discussion on Emerging Directions

Participants expressed strong support for the emerging directions, noting their interconnectedness and potential to advance a more livable, inclusive, and sustainable city. Housing affordability, walkable neighbourhoods, access to green space, and improved public transit emerged as the most resonant priorities. Many appreciated how the draft directions reflected the Caring City values of equity, accessibility, and community connection. Participants also emphasized the importance of embedding these values across all areas of growth and planning, including economic development, climate action, and infrastructure investments.

There was a clear call to ensure that affordability, sustainability, and livability are not treated as competing priorities, but as mutually reinforcing. Participants also shared thoughtful suggestions for improvement, including the need for stronger rental protections, more creative approaches to affordable housing (such as modular or intergenerational options), and expanded

support for newcomers, seniors, and people with disabilities. Others encouraged the City to strengthen links between land use, employment, and transit to support complete community concepts and economic resilience.

Some questioned the measurability or clarity of certain emerging directions as drafted, suggesting that more specific targets and policy tools could help increase accountability. Others voiced concerns about potential trade-offs between affordability and climate goals, and the need to preserve neighbourhood character while embracing growth.

Many urged the City to go beyond broad statements by embedding equity and environmental action into each direction, and by ensuring that all communities—particularly those historically underrepresented—have a voice in shaping what comes next.

4.3 Local Indigenous Engagement

Based on the conversations with seven community organizations representing the diverse local Indigenous community in and around the City of Kitchener, we received a number of important feedback points which will help guide the development of our new Official Plan.

Relationships

Participants emphasized the importance of community values, cultural protocols, and meaningful consultation. They encouraged City representatives to attend local Indigenous community events and gatherings as a way to foster long-term, trust-based relationships.

Participants also shared insights into Indigenous ways of working, offering approaches that could support efforts to decolonize municipal processes and decision-making.

While community organizations expressed a willingness to collaborate and build stronger ties with one another, they also voiced frustration about the current lack of connection and engagement within and across communities.

The importance of diverse Indigenous representation was a strong theme, across community, organizational, and political levels, to ensure a fuller range of voices, experiences, and perspectives are reflected in decision-making.

Participants expressed a desire to engage with non-Indigenous allies in shared gathering spaces that foster knowledge exchange, cultural learning, and mutual understanding. These spaces were seen as important platforms for building respectful relationships and advancing reconciliation through connection.

Reconciliation Efforts

Feedback related to reconciliation efforts focused primarily on the need for stable resources, equitable funding, and expanded employment opportunities for Indigenous community members in Kitchener.

Community members spoke about competition between organizations for limited resources and services, which can impede collaboration and lead to challenges relating to long-term planning.

Indigenous organizations voiced strong support for sustainable, annual funding and grant opportunities to support skills training, community gathering, and land-based initiatives such as food gardens.

Participants also emphasized the need for a dedicated, community-owned space to serve as a hub for cultural programming, events, and healing. Many expressed a willingness to work with the City to co-steward such a space.

Employment and economic opportunity were also recurring themes. Participants raised concerns about unemployment and underemployment within their communities and called for more targeted opportunities for economic inclusion and job creation.

The Land

Feedback on Indigenous communities' relationship with the land in Kitchener centered around three interconnected themes: environmental stewardship, access to land and green space, and food sovereignty.

Environmental Stewardship

Participants shared a deep commitment to protecting Mother Earth and caring for the land for the next seven generations. Several groups expressed support for the principles of the Land Back movement, which aims to return land to Indigenous Rights holders. Land trusts were highlighted as one mechanism to support long-term preservation and intergenerational stewardship.

Access to Land and Green Space

Community members also underscored the importance of free and open access to the land. Suggestions included reducing or eliminating fees for park use by Indigenous groups and increasing opportunities for cultural and land-based learning activities, such as sugarbush gatherings and ceremonies. The need for dedicated Indigenous cultural and gathering spaces was also strongly emphasized.

Food Sovereignty and Community gardens

Food-related conversations were guided by the traditional teaching: “If we are eating, then you are eating.” Participants expressed support for both formal and informal food-sharing systems, including community gardens, the planting of edible and medicinal plants in public parks, and greater access to fruit trees and wild foraging spaces.

Community members also advocated for more opportunities to practice traditional harvesting and healing in urban settings. Underpinning these conversations was a clear call for shared stewardship, with many organizations believing that the care of gardens and food-producing spaces should be a collective responsibility, rooted in reciprocity and community care.

Indigenous Space, People, and Programming

Indigenous communities expressed their desire for physical spaces which facilitate learning, gathering, and collaboration. Such spaces can include, but are not limited to:

- Land-based learning spaces
- Community centre, or hub for Indigenous organizations
- Indoor and outdoor ceremonial spaces
- Sacred fire spaces
- Therapeutic dog runs
- Urban farmer’s market, food bank, or food share program

Housing and Homelessness

Discussions about housing were anchored by the sentiment: “If we are not all home, then nobody is home.”

Participants shared voiced strong concerns about housing affordability and stability in Kitchener, particularly for the city’s most vulnerable. Participants also emphasized the need for permanent housing with secure storage, but also discussed interim housing options such as tiny homes or durable tents for unhoused community members.

For short-term solutions, the importance of low-barrier access was consistently raised, recognizing that eligibility and intake processes can often exclude those most in need.

Healthcare and Healing

Conversations around healthcare and healing focused on three interrelated areas: mental health, trauma-informed care, and Indigenous outreach.

Mental Health

Participants stressed the importance of accessible, affordable, and culturally safe mental health supports. They noted that Indigenous knowledge keepers are often excluded from mental health advocacy and engagement efforts, a practice that can undermine culturally relevant care and solutions.

Trauma-Informed Care and Healing

The dialogue around healing was grounded in the understanding that healing happens through the land. Community members called for greater investment in Indigenous-specific healing supports to address intergenerational trauma. Suggestions included more Indigenous-led service agencies, regular community sharing circles, and the creation of safe, culturally appropriate spaces for healing.

Indigenous Outreach

Participants also emphasized the need for the City to continue to enhance Indigenous outreach efforts. Many shared that community members are often unaware of the services and supports offered by the City. Expanding and improving outreach would help build awareness, improve access, and support stronger relationships between the City and local Indigenous groups, while also supporting community-led capacity building.

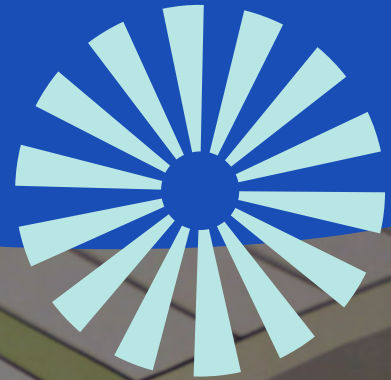
Public Transit and Mobility

Feedback on transit and mobility centered on two priorities: accessibility and affordability. Participants advocated for no-cost or low-cost transit options for vulnerable residents as a way to reduce barriers to participation in daily life.

A related concern was the geographic spread of Indigenous services throughout Kitchener and the surrounding region. Participants noted that many services are located outside the downtown core, while transit options in these areas are limited. This mismatch creates significant barriers to accessing culturally relevant programs and supports.

Section 5

Tying it All Together



5.1 Conclusion & Key Takeaways

Phase 3 of the Kitchener 2051 engagement process has again highlighted just how deeply residents care about the future of their city. Across surveys, events, and community conversations, participants shared thoughtful, passionate input about what matters most, affordable housing and vibrant neighbourhoods, climate resilience, walkable neighbourhoods, and equitable access to local food, jobs, and green space.

As the City begins drafting the new Official Plan, the ideas and priorities shared by the community will remain front and centre. The emerging directions, supported and shaped by thousands of residents, collaborators, and stakeholders, offer a strong foundation for a plan that is ambitious, equitable, and grounded in lived experience. Together, we are planning a future Kitchener that works for everyone, and every neighbourhood.

Preferred Approach to Growth

While each of the three growth approaches, Nodes & Corridors, New Urban Centres, and Evolving Neighbourhoods had their own unique strengths (and trade-offs), participant feedback made one thing clear: there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Community members emphasized the need for flexibility and choice, and a strong preference for growth that supports transit, promotes affordability, protects the environment, and brings people closer to the things they need. This input directly shaped the development of a Preferred Growth Approach that blends the best elements of all three scenarios, while aligning with the technical evaluation criteria and Kitchener's core planning values.

This Preferred Approach focuses growth in four new urban centres and along key transit corridors, while supporting gentle change across all neighbourhoods. It reflects a balance between focusing new people and jobs in areas that are well-served by existing infrastructure and transit, and ensuring that all communities, especially those that have been historically underserved, benefit from new investment and opportunity. It also responds to the call for more complete, climate-resilient neighbourhoods that meet people's needs at every stage of life.

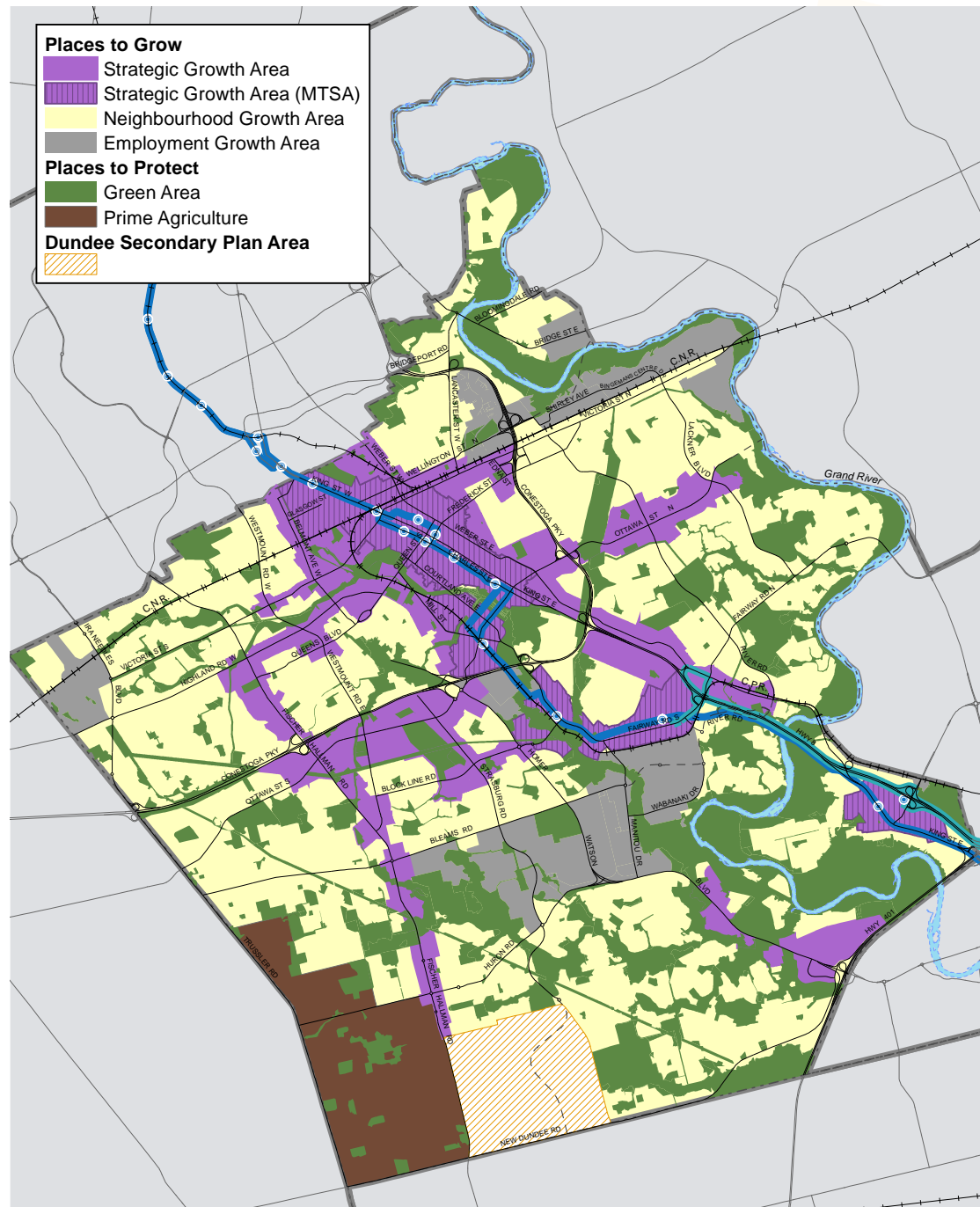


Figure 22: Map of the Preferred Approach to Growth

