

2009 Annual Report to Citizens



Towards a better future. . .

Each year, the city reports back to citizens about these community priorities recounting the progress we've made in those areas, and putting our minds to the future and how we will continue to achieve success in those key areas in the coming year.

LEADERSHIP & ENGAGEMENT

DIVERSITY

DOWNTOWN

DEVELOPMENT

THE ENVIRONMENT

QUALITY OF LIFE

In the same way, we also report to citizens annually about the progress we've made on the two critical foundations that underpin these priorities: the People Plan and Effective and Efficient Government.

This document provides a glimpse into our progress in 2009 and our plans for 2010 for continuing to invest in and improve our quality of life in Kitchener and beyond.

LEADERSHIP & COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2009:

- Based on public feedback, the fall loose-leaf collection program was restructured to make the service more equitable to all residents and more cost effective for the city.
- An in-depth Environics community survey, was launched in November to engage residents in the planning process for the city's future. This survey focused on residents' satisfaction with Kitchener's quality of life, municipal services, safety, and the community's priorities and vision. Staff initiated a public consultation process to help city council decide whether or not to declare five city-owned properties as surplus to the city's needs. City council concurred with residents who participated in the public consultation, and voted to keep the lands.
- The city's corporate communications and marketing division launched the How Did You Know? survey, in an effort to gauge how residents currently receive their city-related information - as well as how they would like to receive it in the future.
- As part of a larger revitalization plan for the Kitchener Market, the community was invited to help choose a new logo that represents the community as a whole, and a facility with more than 130 rich years of tradition.



LOOKING AHEAD TO 2010:

- The city will use the information gathered through the most recent Environics survey as a springboard for asking residents more questions, clarifying survey results and probing deeper into the community priorities which citizens see as most important during the 2010 Who-are-you-Kitchener? 2 campaign.
- Residents will be encouraged to share their thoughts on the future of the city's public-art collection through a community-wide survey. Citizens' comments and stories will be used in the development of a new public-art master plan which will map out the direction the city will take with its future public-art installations.
- The city will develop a new online communications strategy that will guide corporate use of online tools and social-media applications, for the purposes of interacting with and providing information to more citizens.
- Work will continue on the city's new volunteer support strategy which is intended to ensure that community volunteering and participation in Kitchener remain strong in the future.
- A draft community-engagement strategy which will support the city in better involving the community in its decision-making processes, will be soft-launched as a six-month pilot project amongst city staff.

DIVERSITY

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2009:

- The city replaced its former TTY (text telephone) system with new Textnet service and software that enables deaf, deafened, hard-of-hearing or speech-impaired residents to more easily access - and converse with - city staff.
- The city adopted a new Accessibility Standards for Customer Service policy which sets out requirements regarding customer-service training, receiving and responding to feedback, as well as service-disruption announcements. The standards also include guidelines on the use of service animals within city facilities.
- "Miniature Kitchener" was introduced to staff and citizens. Based on Statistics Canada information, this tool looks at Kitchener as if it was a population of 100 people and describes what that diverse group would look like in certain categories such as age, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation and housing types.
- A working group made up of staff and citizens developed a "diversity lens" for the city to use when appointing citizens to sit on its advisory boards and committees. Use of the lens will ensure groups reflect the community as a whole and engage a more diverse mix of people in decision-making processes.
- The city gratefully accepted the gift of a handmade canoe from the Healing of the Seven Generations, a First Nations organization, as a demonstration of their support and friendship.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2010:

- The corporate diversity strategy will be presented to city council. The strategy, will focus the city's efforts to ensure its corporate culture embraces the spirit of access, equity and inclusion and that it continues to strive to be more reflective of the diversity of the community it represents.
- A plain-language movement will be launched to ensure the city is providing service and communicating to its customers in the clearest language possible.
- City staff will recommend a new youth services strategy for council's consideration in the spring. The strategy will be informed by feedback the city received from youth across Kitchener - including youth from the local Aboriginal community and local youths with disabilities.
- The city's new website, which will be launched in the summer, will include a number of features to make accessing and sharing information easy and efficient for people with disabilities, as well as people from other cultures.
- The Bye-Bye Barriers campaign will be launched to take a close look at every city department, division and work area to identify and

address any possible barriers that may limit citizens' access to and participation in the life of the city.

DEVELOPMENT

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2009:

- City council endorsed Kitchener's new growth management strategy which provides the framework for effectively managing a growing city. The strategy outlines where new development will take place to ensure it will contribute to a healthy, complete community and that it is aligned with future infrastructure investments.
- The city entered into an agreement of purchase and sale with Andrin Investments Limited for the redevelopment of the Centre Block property in downtown Kitchener. Execution of this purchase and sale agreement has allowed the developer to proceed with detailed project planning and marketing.
- Work continued on the Belmont Village road improvements, which will result in improved road/streetscape infrastructure, traffic functionality/efficiency of parking, vehicular/pedestrian safety, landscaping and curb appeal for the local business community.
- BMX and free-ride cyclists were thrilled by the official opening of the new McLennan Park bike park, the first facility of its kind in southern Ontario. The no-fee bike park features four

dedicated courses: a 4x track, a pump track, a free-ride course and a dirt-jump park. Each course is ranked appropriately based on skill level.

- Property-assessment values for locations near developments supported by the city's economic development investment fund (EDIF) were approximately 15 per cent higher than values citywide — and approximately 40 per cent higher than they were near the same EDIF-investment locations in 2004.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2010:

- The city will undertake a review and update of its Official Plan, the document that contains objectives and policies to manage Kitchener's future rate of growth and change, advises how land can be used, protects the natural environment, and ensures the timely provision and adequacy of services.
- A comprehensive review of all of the city's employment lands will take place, to inventory properties that are currently designated or zoned for industrial use, to ultimately determine if there are enough industrial lands in Kitchener - and/or whether any lands can be converted to other uses.
- The city is preparing a community master plan for its largest remaining greenfield area located in the southwest corner of Kitchener. The plan will provide guidance for the development of the area into a complete community that is planned, designed and developed to be walkable, transit-supportive, and respectful of the natural environment.
- A review of the city's "green" development policies will take place which will look at energy production and conservation, air quality, water conservation and waste management to investigate matters that can be influenced at the local level.
- Staff will implement mixed-use-corridor zoning throughout King Street East and other areas of the city. The zoning will allow for a broad range of uses that are intended to serve and be compatible with existing neighbourhoods and employment areas.

DOWNTOWN

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2009:

- The King Street streetscape reconstruction project - including the reconstruction of Speaker's Corner - commenced last spring, resulting in wider sidewalks, flexible parking, improved lighting, added street trees and new planters that filter storm water along much of the downtown section of the roadway.
- The federal and provincial governments contributed a combined \$31.4 million for the creation of the Communitech Hub: Digital Media and Mobile Accelerator, to be located in downtown Kitchener. The hub will serve as a centre of innovation for digital-media companies and entrepreneurs and drive creation of new companies and jobs in Waterloo Region and throughout Ontario.
- City council "imagined the possibilities" by endorsing the Civic District vision and master plan - an initiative that will enhance arts, cultural and educational opportunities for both downtown Kitchener and the entire region.
- The top of Kitchener City Hall became a spectacular sight each night as two brand-new high-definition projectors lit up the downtown skyline. Known as "the Cube," this digital-projection system showcases an array of digital media and promotional videos on the south and west faces of the 13-metre structure above the 10th floor of the tower.
- The Downtown Façade Improvement Grant program was approved by city council and several businesses took advantage of it.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2010:

- Construction will begin on the new provincial courthouse in the eastern end of downtown Kitchener, on the block bordered by Frederick, Duke, Scott and Weber streets. The courthouse will consolidate three of the province's regional court facilities into the new downtown building and is expected to attract new jobs to the core for the courthouse itself and for associated businesses such as law firms.
- The city's economic development team is working closely with the Downtown Kitchener BIA and retail expert MJB Consulting on the development of a retail and restaurant attraction strategy, aimed at filling vacant commercial storefronts in downtown Kitchener.
- The new six-storey, 500-space parking garage, at the corner of Charles and Benton streets, will open this fall. The garage will include new retail space on the main floor, facing Benton Street. The design includes a warehouse theme with large windows based on prominent buildings from other areas of the downtown.
- Work will commence on a new 412-space underground parking structure, to be located under the Kitchener public library's main branch on Queen Street North. The garage will complement the future vision for the Civic District - the area bordered by

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Queen, Ellen, Frederick and Weber streets.

● The city will develop an overall strategy for the redevelopment of key city-owned lands in the downtown. This could include key objectives for each site, preferred use and density, as well as recommendations on the preferred time and disposition of each parcel.

THE ENVIRONMENT

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2009:

- City council directed staff to proceed with the implementation of a 500-kW/h solar-energy system on the roof of the city's future consolidated maintenance facility (CMF) - pending project approval from the Ontario Power Authority's Feed-in Tariff program.
- In an effort to address the sediment accumulation and water-quality problems in Victoria Park lake, city councillors directed staff to commence preliminary work on a phased reconfiguration of the lake to improve its overall function.
- The city distributed its first round of grants under the \$5-million Local Environmental Action Fund (LEAF) to 15 grassroots projects designed to improve the local environment through, for example, improved air quality and energy conservation. The fund was created to direct more effort and resources toward Kitchener's environment.
- The removal of the dams at Wards and Brigadoon ponds and the ecological restoration of these ponds and adjacent portions of Strasburg Creek were completed. Environmental benefits include: the elimination of barriers to fish movement, enhanced habitat for cold / cool water fish species, and enhanced wildlife habitat.
- The consolidated maintenance facility will be built to the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) silver standard. Among the LEED components that will now be included funded by a portion of the \$14 million in federal, provincial and municipal infrastructure stimulus funding the CMF project has received are a geothermal heat recovery system, low-flow fixtures, expanded drainage, improved lighting and building system controls.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2010:

- Issues such as parking and traffic calming will be addressed in the city's new transportation demand management study which will map out future trends and recommendations related to transportation in and around Kitchener.
- Work on standardizing and upgrading the city's energy-management control systems throughout its facilities will continue. The majority of the project's costs are covered under the \$1 million in federal, provincial and municipal infrastructure stimulus funding the city was awarded for this initiative.
- A cycling master plan will be unveiled, with the ultimate goal of creating policies, programs, design standards and infrastructure that support and promote cycling. The contents of the master plan will be informed by input received from residents.
- Rehabilitation of the sanitary sewer and watermain infrastructure on Greenbrook Drive will continue, using trenchless methods. Environmental benefits include reduced leakage in the buried pipes; reduced loss of potable water through watermain leaks into the ground; reduced groundwater leaking into sewer mains and reduced demand for water supply and treatment, and sewage processing.
- The city will continue to make headway with its Air Quality in Kitchener report, recommending five more "best bets" for council's approval. The document recommends more than 50 initiatives over the next decade to improve Kitchener's air quality.

QUALITY OF LIFE

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2009:

- The city held the grand opening of the Activa Sportsplex - one of the only athletic complexes in the country to achieve the prestigious LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) gold certification.
- Kitchener city council ensured the protection of 40 city properties by directing staff to: list nine local properties on the Municipal Heritage Register; and identify 31 properties within the Victoria Park Heritage Conservation District as properties of very high cultural heritage value or interest.
- Sixteen local projects were awarded \$37.6 million in federal, provincial and municipal infrastructure stimulus funding, which will enhance the quality of life for local residents. Projects include improvements to Bridgeport Community Centre and to Sportsworld Arena; accessibility improvements to a number of city facilities; and the development of McLennan Park.
- Kitchener city council made a significant investment in the long-term stability and reliability of the city's indoor ice facilities by approving the purchase of the Sportsworld twin-pad arena property.
- The Williamsburg Community Centre opened to the public in early October.
- City staff undertook the development of an

older adult strategy which will position the city to respond to the current and emerging needs of this growing group of citizens.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2010:

- Doon Valley Golf Course's expanded 27-hole course will open in the spring. This expansion will allow the city to continue to provide affordable golf activities for the majority of its citizens, and enhance the ability to teach the game to juniors and beginners so they can become life-long participants.
- The city's draft parks and open spaces master plan will be presented to city council and the community for consideration in the spring.
- The detailed design phase for the Kitchener Public Library main-branch expansion will get underway in the new year, with tenders expected to be awarded over the summer and construction

garbage and compost options for getting rid of their waste.

With environmental preservation in mind, the city will investigate the possibility of working with the Region of Waterloo Grand River Transit to launch a new joint initiative that will promote the use of public transit to staff.

- The city will look into obtaining an online recruitment system to manage the vast amount of resumes submitted to the corporation throughout the year.
- With the analysis of the city's 2009 Employee Culture Survey results complete, subcommittees of staff from across the corporation will begin to work on the five priorities identified from the survey including: Workload, Negative Acts in the Workplace, Benefits Satisfaction, Performance Management and Performance Appraisal.



projected to start in the fall. The expansion includes a 25,000-square-foot addition to the main building, which will allow for services, collections and programs to be reorganized and expanded.

- The Centre in the Square performing-arts venue will continue with its renovation - a project that has been covered by \$1.2 million in funding under the federal, provincial and municipal infrastructure stimulus program. The funds are being used to rehabilitate sections of the theatre, which will in turn modernize and extend the life of the facility.
- The city will redevelop the former Patrick Doherty Arena as the future home of the Kingsdale Community Centre. This centre will offer a variety of recreational, social, educational and support programs and services to meet the needs of area residents. Construction is expected to begin in the spring, with completion by the end of 2010.

PEOPLE PLAN

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2009:

- Results of a comprehensive Employee Culture Survey of all City of Kitchener staff placed the organization among the highest performing in the province in terms of workplace culture, organizational health and employee quality of work life.
- The City of Kitchener was named one of the Waterloo area's top 15 employers by Mediaworld Canada Inc. The city also finished within the top 300 employers in the running for Mediaworld's prestigious annual Top 100 Employers list. More than 2,600 Canadian companies applied for the honour.
- The city introduced a workplace language coaching program, which pairs staff for whom English is a second language with language coaches from the Working Centre to build employees' confidence and communication skills. To date, 11 employees have been coached either individually or in a peer workshop setting.
- An organizational design review was launched by the city's corporate management team to take a high-level, holistic look at how the city is operating as an organization and identify ways the corporation as a whole can better support the implementation of its own strategic plan.
- As a component of its commitment to building a healthy and safe organization, the city enhanced its efforts to promote health in the workplace through added training and wellness-related programming. Through a variety of activities including a wellness fair featuring more than 70 local service providers — employees were able to participate in clinics and receive information on Alzheimer's Disease, heart health, stress management, blood pressure management and weight management to name a few key areas of focus.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2010:

- Plans for the relocation of more than 400 city staff members to the new consolidated maintenance facility will be developed and finalized. A number of city staff members will sit on these groups, and help map out what specific steps need to be taken to ensure successful consolidation of the city's existing operations facilities under one roof.
- Starting in January, new receptacles will be in place at city hall, encouraging staff to divert more waste from the landfill. Staff will have recycling,

EFFECTIVE AND EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT

HIGHLIGHTS FROM 2009:

- After several years in development, the city introduced the City of Kitchener Strategic Plan, the single comprehensive strategy that will now guide the work and spending of city government over the next two decades.
- At the heart of the strategy are the community's shared vision and priorities. Architectural drawings of the city's future consolidated maintenance facility (CMF) were completed and submitted as part of the building-permit application process. When complete, the CMF will bring a number of municipal operations and services under one roof.
- Given the public-sector accounting board has mandated that Canadian municipalities record their tangible capital assets in their annual financial statements starting with the 2009 fiscal year, city staff worked diligently over the last year to determine the value of all assets controlled by the city and used to provide service to taxpayers.
- The city was selected from more than 300,000 organizations worldwide to receive a special-achievement award from the ESRI software company, in honour of innovative use of geographic information system (GIS) technology.
- The city launched a new search tool on its website that allows residents to find out exactly what their loose-leaf collection options are and when leaf collection will occur in their area.

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2010:

- The city will partner with the local eSolutions Group to design and launch a brand new website that will be more user-friendly and accessible for all citizens. The website redesign process will focus on look and feel, content and navigation, and the addition of some interactive features.
- In an effort to curb confusion for residents, the city will eliminate the process of identifying all city wards by names, in favour of recognizing them only by a number system. The changes to the way the city's wards are identified will take effect for the next municipal election, which will be held in October 2010.
- Work will continue on the city's comprehensive long-term parking strategy for downtown Kitchener. The strategy will aim to balance economic development objectives and business needs with growth management, environmental and transportation demand management objectives.
- The city will develop a five-year information-technology strategy for the corporation. The objectives of the strategy are to maximize technology to support timely, relevant and accurate information; optimize technology solutions that will enhance the city's ability to interact and communicate more effectively with internal and external clients; and develop an enabled and knowledgeable workforce. Improvements will be made to the operation of the city's corporate contact centre — an initiative completed as part of phase one of the customer service project. Proposed improvements include the possible separation of dispatch and contact-centre functions; improved use of technology, particularly the active customer response system; increased training; and call quality monitoring. Once improvements to phase one are complete, work towards phase two will be initiated.