

What is it?

Introducing the first annual City of Kitchener Citizens' Report Card. This report card will track the success of the City of Kitchener and its council in reaching their four-year targets toward longer term goals outlined in the Plan for a Healthy Kitchener. The goals forming this 20-year strategic plan (2007 – 2027) come from you, the citizens of Kitchener, following one of the most extensive and inclusive consultation processes in the City's history – the Environics Study in 2005. This study was followed closely by the Who-are-you-Kitchener? campaign conducted by Compass Kitchener in early 2006. More than 3,000 citizens took part.

It should be noted that the grades presented in this report measure the city's progress against the community vision in the Plan for a Healthy Kitchener and do not attempt to measure everything that the city does in the course of a year. It is acknowledged that the city tackles and accomplishes many initiatives which are outside of the scope of the Plan for a Healthy Kitchener.

Who are we?

Compass Kitchener is a small group of citizens who advise council as members of the community. Our purpose is to create and lead a public engagement process to determine the community vision and direction. Our goal is to assist council in establishing their four-year agenda, ensuring that it follows the community's long-term vision. And finally, we report annually on the performance of council and city in meeting their agenda. The result is this report card to both council and the citizens of Kitchener.

Rating Scale and Description for Compass Kitchener Report Card

Star rating	Scale description
	Met expectations with excellence
	Met most expectations
	Met some expectations
	Met few expectations
	Met very few or no expectations

How was the report card created and graded?

The report card is organized into the six community themes outlined in the Plan for a Healthy Kitchener which are: Quality of Life, Leadership and Community Engagement, Diversity, Downtown, Development and the Environment. It also comments on the seventh corporate theme, Efficient and Effective Government, although specific analysis is not provided.

To come up with ways of measuring progress in each of the themes we reviewed supporting documents, spoke with city staff and advisory committee chairs, and came up with a long list of possible measurements. Through a focused process we reduced that list to a few key facts and metrics based on relevance and clarity of indicator, ease and cost of collection, and timeliness of collection. Our list is neither exhaustive nor complete, but we see this report as an opportunity to gain insights and to benchmark the City of Kitchener's progress toward strengthening our community's health and well-being. It is a living document and therefore can be refined as time goes on.

Compass Kitchener members assessed each theme's progress and assigned grades as a group. The results show room for improvement, but in its first year of a 20-year plan, Kitchener is off to a great start.

What you see before you is a summary of the highlights in each theme and our opinions on the findings. For a complete list of metrics and results please refer to the "Annual Status Report" located at www.kitchener.ca.

How is Kitchener doing?

The results of the following report show that Kitchener is off to a great start with the first completed year of its 20-year plan called A Plan for a Healthy Kitchener. As this is the first year for measuring results, it is not expected that all recommendations in A Plan for a Healthy Kitchener will be completed. As such the individual grades assigned to each theme leave room for improvement in future years as more progress is made in line with the plan.

Quality of Life

Citizen's Vision, 2027: "Our shared vision is for Kitchener to be a community that invests in maintaining basic services, in addition to amenities such as community centres, museums, theatres, art galleries, and leisure facilities, even if that means paying higher taxes."
– A Plan for a Healthy Kitchener

The City of Kitchener is contributing to the quality of life that residents want. In fact, according to research done by UBC Professor John Helliwell, Kitchener, residents are the happiest people in Ontario among the cities he studied. Here are some 2007 milestones:

- Council has embraced the citizens' "A Plan for a Healthy Kitchener" (P4HK) and city staff have created business plans around the goals of the plan. Kitchener is listening to its residents!
- This Report Card is the first annual "check-in" on action toward citizen goals.
- The Heritage Conservation District plan was approved, including a new heritage district which will protect our cultural heritage resources that citizens have identified as important.
- The city hosted "Creating a Culture of Safety" forum, resulting in many new partnerships and grassroots crime prevention initiatives.

In addition to the specific projects listed above which have emerged as a result of the recommendations in P4HK, the city has accomplished many other achievements which contribute to the city's quality of life. Some of these include: construction of the new Activa Sportsplex, completed renovations to expand the Victoria Hills Community Centre, and the business case for a new Kingsdale Community Centre was approved.

Still more work is yet to be done, of course, in growing our quality of life. While Kitchener was rated 4th out of 29 Canadian cities for the lowest Criminal Code violations from 2002 - 2006 (Conference Board of Canada), citizens continue to voice concerns over safety, and staff continue to work to respond to this concern. And, recognizing that the city has limited control over many of our heritage properties, we would like to see more buildings brought forward for designation. Finally, despite opinion surveys of Kitchener residents indicating a willingness to see taxes raised in order to support initiatives that would further our efforts in becoming a vibrant community, this has not yet materialized as council has made a concerted effort to keep tax rate increases in line with inflation. All things considered, way to go Kitchener!

Diversity

Citizen's Vision, 2027: "Our shared vision is for Kitchener to be a multicultural community in which different ethnic groups are encouraged to retain their cultures and lifestyles."
– A Plan for a Healthy Kitchener

Much more work needed - Diversity is scored lowest out of all strategic areas, despite positive steps in the right direction, because the city has much left to do in this priority area.

As a corporation, the city has made great progress with their 'Diversity in the Workplace' program, including diversity training for all employees, a partnership with an international referencing firm to screen international candidates, and development of a multicultural approach to customer service. Indeed the city won a Best Practices Award for its work in promoting diversity in the workplace! To date, however, diversity among employees and managers has not been tracked for benchmarking purposes, and so the numbers, percentages, and turn-over rates of diversity groups working at the city are not known. We are hoping to see this data in the near future.

In collaboration with other local municipalities, the city has established and is implementing its Joint Accessibility Plan for persons with disabilities. A barrier-free future is in our sights.

Work on a community access, equity and inclusion plan is well in hand. A policy framework, including principles, roles and responsibilities, and tools is being drafted. However the real work remains in adapting services, supports and communications in the day-to-day. We are aware of both the importance and the challenge of completing this in a timely fashion.

As an indicator of community progress, the 2001 immigrant and racialized groups employment figures show that we have a long road to travel toward equity and integration in this community. Recognizing that several factors contribute to this dilemma, we would like to see the City of Kitchener show even stronger leadership in creating a healthy community for all who live here.

So, a good start! What is next?

Downtown

Citizen's Vision, 2027: "Our shared vision is for Kitchener to be a community that has built a vital and lively downtown which provides all residents with a unique mix of exciting big city amenities and diverse services."
– A Plan for a Healthy Kitchener

Great start – Overall, downtown Kitchener is moving in the right direction! Much of the progressive Downtown Strategic Plan has been put into action. Housing construction projects are up and the downtown campuses have and will continue to improve vitality in the core.

Compass Kitchener is pleased to see that the number of people working downtown has increased over time but are concerned that the rate of increase has dropped off lately. And, continued work is needed to attract more citizens to visit downtown. An increase in retail and arts and cultural events, for example may draw more activity to our city centre. Culture Plan II, a comprehensive plan to build on Kitchener's strengths in arts and culture, has been slow to progress through 2007, but more activity is anticipated for 2008. The importance of this can not be understated as it provides a direct link to the city's economic development strategy, as both an economic driver and a contributor to improved quality of life.

Development

Citizen's Vision, 2027: "Our shared vision is for Kitchener to be a community that has carefully planned its neighbourhoods and growth by trying to attract specific types of growth, even if it means restricting some new developments."
– A Plan for a Healthy Kitchener

Good start – the city has been progressive and is ahead of many municipalities in the province in preparing to replace aging infrastructure through its Accelerated Infrastructure Program. The city has also been working to secure resources from other levels of government while increasing sewer and water rates to pay for infrastructure renewal. Where we are behind is in reaching the infrastructure replacement targets the city set out for itself because of excessive complexity, unforeseen environmental risks and dramatically rising reconstruction costs.

Another area of concern is in the closing of work in the manufacturing sector. The city has no control over the global market that has impacted manufacturers in our city, however, we would like to see the city continue to encourage manufacturers to diversify to change with the market or to encourage new manufacturing companies to open up in Kitchener. Despite the manufacturing closures, however, Kitchener's unemployment rate continues to be below the provincial average which is a positive sign.

Kitchener is to be commended for their progressive growth management strategies in planning for complete communities in all new development areas and for placing an emphasis on intensification rather than on sprawling growth.

Environment

Citizen's Vision, 2027: "Our shared vision is for Kitchener to be a community that focuses significant energy and resources on becoming more environmentally friendly through investments in things like bike trails, improved transit systems, tougher environmental bylaws and stricter growth management policies that limit sprawl."
– A Plan for a Healthy Kitchener

Numerous highlights for 2007 include: the opening of the Huron Natural Area, being a partner in receiving a "Brownie Award" for "Best Small-Scale Residential" project in Canada for 90 Woodside Avenue brownfield redevelopment, establishment of the \$5 Million Local Environmental Action Fund, creation of the annual Five Best Bets for Air Quality, and the work towards ISO 14001 certification of the city's fleet of vehicles.

These are positive accomplishments on the environmental front; however, we want to see Kitchener take a giant leap! We should be doing more to address issues such as air quality and climate change with stronger enforcement of the anti-idling bylaw and completion of a transportation demand management strategy.

Plans for 2008 look promising. The city has revised its environmental plan to be an all-encompassing strategy to address the protection and enhancement of our natural environment and to reduce our carbon footprint, not only for the internal departments, but for the entire community. Citizens told us that the environment is a strong priority and the good news is that the Strategic Plan for the Environment is finally out in 2008 and promises to be comprehensive. Lead us Kitchener!

Leadership and Community Engagement

Citizen's Vision, 2027: "Our shared vision is for Kitchener to be a community in which the residents are engaged and active in decision making about local issues."
– A Plan for a Healthy Kitchener

Good to Great – The City of Kitchener has made strong efforts to stay in touch with citizens and to engage citizens in its day-to-day business. In fact, they have moved ahead on all of the strategic objectives outlined in P4HK in the area of leadership and community engagement.

To be sure, the city is on track with developing a Community Engagement Policy that outlines its commitment to two-way communication with citizens, and open, transparent, and inclusive local governance. The city has also moved forward on making that policy a reality. In June of 2007, council approved a one-year project to develop the Community Engagement implementation strategy. It is hoped that resources will be designated to implement and sustain this strategic priority area.

Another highlight in engagement is the current review of city advisory committees to council that will clarify committee structures, roles and responsibilities; ensure the right interests and sectors are represented; and verify that activities are in alignment with Kitchener's community priorities. Recommendations are expected in 2008.

It is commendable that the city has gone to great efforts to consult the public, through a variety of medium, on some recent large projects including Centre Block, Consolidated Maintenance Facility, Ward Boundary Review and the size of council. However, improvement is needed in some key areas such as reaching youth and more diverse populations in community engagement efforts as well as establishing a method of tracking the success of community engagement efforts. Also, the city has yet to complete its volunteer strategy, an imperative in this changing volunteer environment. And, although a Community Investment Strategy policy and framework has been presented to council, we would like to see it in action, in the community, with the community.

Efficient & Effective Government

Proudly Providing Valued Services

This seventh theme was added by staff because it is critical to delivering the other six community themes. It encompasses the priority to deliver effective and efficient services, programs, policies and initiatives that are ones that citizens need, want and can afford.

Although rating this seventh theme is not part of the Compass Kitchener mandate since it is not part of the Plan for a Healthy Kitchener, the group wishes to acknowledge the great work that the city has done in this area. **Way to go!**