



Strategic plan for the environment

Think Locally. Act Locally.



The Mission

To ensure an environment that is ecologically sound and supportive of the health, safety and well-being of its residents by identifying and implementing policies and practices which reflect community values and impact positively on the environment.



Environmental Stewardship in Kitchener

Responsible stewardship of Kitchener's environment is critical to the quality of life that we all enjoy and it is clear that Kitchener residents care deeply about our environment.

Through various public consultation processes in recent years we have heard, time and again, that the environment should be an important factor in every decision that the city makes in planning for our future.



75% of respondents rank environmental protection as a top factor in quality of life;
2003 PMG Survey

78% of respondents listed protecting the environment as a high priority; *2005 Envirionics Survey*

80% of respondents chose a vision for Kitchener's future that focuses on the city becoming more environmentally friendly; *2006 Who-are-You-Kitchener? campaign*

Survey after survey shows that people believe that the environment is an important issue and it's clear that we have a shared vision for a clean, green and healthy future for our city. The recently updated City of Kitchener Strategic Plan for the Environment – is a significant step on the road to achieving that vision. The full City of Kitchener Strategic Plan for the Environment can be viewed at www.kitchener.ca or a printed copy can be obtained by calling 519-741-2426.



The Strategic Plan for the Environment

The City of Kitchener has been a municipal leader in environmental planning and stewardship for many years. Kitchener City Council approved the city's first Strategic Plan for the Environment in 1992.

A living document which is updated periodically, the plan guides the development of current and future city environmental initiatives.

The plan identifies objectives and priorities for action in seven key areas of focus identified by the community, including: natural heritage system and recreational amenity areas, water resources, air quality, land resource and growth management, energy systems, resource consumption and waste management, and environmental education and public awareness.

As you read this summary, keep in mind that our environmental priorities for the future are not just the responsibility of government or business and industry. It's the small things that we all do that add up to a much larger impact on our community – and on our planet.

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Natural Heritage System and Recreational Amenity Areas

Kitchener's natural lands and urban forest are rich in aesthetic beauty and biological diversity and they contribute greatly to the quality of life we all enjoy in this community.

The Grand River, streams, fish habitat, wetlands, woodlands and trees – these enhance our water and air quality. They provide a wide range of recreational opportunities. They enable us to connect to our natural heritage where we live and work. They provide habitat for plants and animals. And they are a source of civic pride in a community that places a high value on nature.

Residents have consistently identified our natural heritage system and parks as among the features of the city they value most.

Looking ahead, we will continue to make the maintenance and preservation of these areas a high priority as we subsequently work to build a culture of stewardship throughout our community and with our partners.



Water Resources

Water is one of our most precious resources – it is essential to human life and the health of our environment and our community.

Much of our drinking water in Kitchener comes from groundwater sources. In the city, numerous creeks feed into the Grand River, which receives and assimilates our treated wastewater. The Grand River is also a drinking water resource for this region and other downstream communities.



Looking ahead, we will continue to work with partners to protect water in all of its forms – groundwater and surface water for drinking, and water that is found in the river, creeks, wetlands and ponds which provides habitat for many species, provides recreational opportunities and filters pollutants from our ecosystem.

And we will work with residents and partners to build public awareness and provide expertise about how to conserve and enhance our water resources.

Air Quality

Air quality remains one of the most pressing problems of modern cities and Kitchener is no exception.

Emissions produced through the combustion of fossil fuels for transportation, heating and electric power diminishes our air quality, and they continue to take a toll on both climate change and human health.

While global, federal and provincial efforts to improve air quality are vital, the roles of Kitchener's municipal government and of each individual citizen are just as important. We believe that solutions to global issues like air quality begin right here at home. By thinking locally and acting locally, we can each make a small difference that really adds up.

Looking ahead, the City of Kitchener will continue to play a vital role in addressing our air quality and minimizing its effects on public health by advocating action from all levels of government and business and industry, facilitating local action to clean the air, and informing residents about air quality issues and the simple things that they can do to improve air quality.



Land Resource and Growth Management

It's a fact – Kitchener is seeing rapid growth. With population forecasts indicating that we could grow by 30,000 people over the next decade, we need to be strategic about how we can best accommodate that growth.

The City of Kitchener is developing a Growth Management Strategy which will enable us to strike a balance between the need to accommodate growth – through mixed use and higher density – while still preserving all of the things that make our city special.

Imagine a Kitchener where more people can walk, bike or take rapid transit to work. Where there are good jobs, economic vitality and affordable housing for all. Where we can stroll on trails and in woods in the heart of the city. Or where we can meet friends and enjoy art in places which, decades ago, were contaminated or covered by parking lots or abandoned industrial buildings.

Looking ahead, the City of Kitchener will be thinking differently about growth for our future – in terms of growing up, not out. At the same time, our planning will continue to be based on the need to be fiscally responsible and to conserve and enhance our natural environment.



Energy Systems

The City of Kitchener is proud of its reputation as a leader in improving municipal energy management practices. We've been managing our energy consumption and cultivating what are now considered best practices by many for nearly three decades.

Despite our reputation, we know that as Kitchener grows and concerns increase regarding the effect of poor air quality, greenhouse gases, climate change and shortages of fuel, we need to continue to examine and improve how we use energy.

We'll need to explore alternative options for transporting people and goods, heating the spaces where we live and work, and generating electricity to run an ever-increasing array of household appliances and industrial and commercial machinery.

Looking ahead, the City of Kitchener will continue to examine departmental and city-wide efforts pertaining to energy use and we will seek ways to reduce energy consumption, and improve energy efficiency. We will encourage a sustainable energy use lifestyle through public education and the increased use of cleaner, renewable energy sources, new technologies and management practices.



Resource Consumption and Waste Management

In the community that pioneered the “Blue Box,” reducing resource consumption and decreasing the amount of materials heading to the local landfill continues to be a high priority. Residents, businesses and local government have been doing their part to reduce, reuse and recycle for nearly three decades now.

But it's not just about increasing our level of recycling. In the future, other “R”s will be important, too – like rethinking and repairing. As our community grows, we all need to be thinking even more about other environmentally friendly ways to do things – or whether we need to do those things at all.

Looking ahead, just as Kitchener residents and businesses are working to do their part to reduce resource consumption, the City administration will continue to strive to achieve the same objectives at our own facilities and properties through the use of renewable resources, the implementation of effective monitoring programs, and the employment of efficient operating practices including state-of-the-art waste management.



Environmental Education and Public Awareness

If you stop and think about it, many of the decisions that we make each day affect our environment in one way or another – from deciding whether or not to recycle that soda can to the bigger policy issues like creating a Strategic Plan for the Environment.



For that reason and because we are in constant interaction with our environment, it is critical that we become informed and aware of environmental issues, and that we understand the ecosystem in which we live and, more importantly, our impact on it.

By understanding the inter-connections among everything in our environment, we learn how to conserve the natural environment so that we can meet our needs today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Looking ahead, the City of Kitchener will continue to encourage an environmentally healthy lifestyle for citizens through informing and reaching out to them about environmental issues and programs, so that they can participate in informed dialogue and meaningful actions that contribute to an ecologically sound and healthy local environment. Effective monitoring programs will chart our progress, enable us to identify and celebrate our successes, and determine areas for future focus.

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