



Digital Kitchener 2.0

2026-2030



The big picture: Digital Kitchener 2.0

Kitchener is a city that embraces change with confidence.

As the heart of Waterloo Region and its largest urban centre, Kitchener and our broader region serves as Canada's innovation capital, where we are surrounded by world-leading tech visionaries and globally and nationally recognized companies, which continue to shape the future from right here at home.

Innovation is not something we chase. It is who we are; it is in our DNA. As a community, we understand digital and live at the edge of discovery.

Digital Kitchener 2.0 is our next leap forward - a strategic, future-focused plan that positions Kitchener to lead in an era defined by artificial intelligence, data-driven cities, and rising expectations for digital access. This renewed strategy builds on the strong foundation of our first Digital Kitchener plan, which expanded public Wi-Fi, modernized city services, elevated open data, and fostered a culture of civic innovation.

Today, the opportunities ahead are bigger, and so is our responsibility. AI, automation, and smart infrastructure are transforming how cities operate. Residents expect seamless digital experiences, personalized support, and transparent access to information.



Digital Kitchener 2.0 is our commitment to meet this moment with ambition and accountability. From 2026–2030, we will:

- Put residents at the centre of every digital experience
- Expand the reach, quality, and accessibility of digital services
- Use data and AI responsibly to improve decisions and operations
- Strengthen collaboration with the community and local innovators
- Expand digital equity through partnerships that improve access to tools, connectivity, and skills
- Accelerate innovation through a renewed commitment to experimentation

Together, these commitments form a clear, confident, and future-oriented roadmap for the decade ahead. Digital Kitchener 2.0 is a people-centred transformation strategy designed to create a city that is smarter in how we use technology, more inclusive in how we provide access, and faster in how we respond to the needs of the people who call Kitchener home.

Kitchener has always led with purpose. With Digital Kitchener 2.0, we are renewing that leadership for a new era – one where every resident benefits from the power and promise of digital innovation. We are building Kitchener Together.

Mayor Berry Vrbanovic,
on behalf of Kitchener City Council



Our Digital Kitchener journey: past, present, future

How it all started.

In 2015, Kitchener embraced a bold idea: technology should help shape a more connected, innovative, and accessible community. The first Digital Kitchener strategy launched in 2017, guided by four pillars—**Connected**, **Innovative**, **On-Demand**, and **Inclusive**. These themes propelled Kitchener into a new era of civic technology and set a foundation for long-term digital leadership.



Preparing for what's next: a strategic review

By 2025, it was time to take another major step forward.

The City conducted a comprehensive strategic review rooted in global research, community engagement, and a deep assessment of progress. The review examined barriers, explored international best practices, evaluated AI's potential, and gathered over 500 voices from residents, staff, partners, and the tech community.

This work revealed a clear message: **Kitchener is ready to accelerate**

Our progress: becoming more connected, innovative, on-demand and inclusive

Since 2017, Kitchener has:

Connected

- Utilized regional partnership-built fibre backbone to expand free public Wi-Fi in city facilities and parks
- Modernized wireless access and updated phone systems for improved customer service
- Installed LED streetlights with IoT mesh network, enabling remote monitoring and sensor integration

Innovative

- Deployed mobile computing strategy and field maps to support road and sidewalk reporting
- Launched pilots and partnerships, from smart parking to autonomous vehicle testing
- Built a civic innovation lab to accelerate new ideas and collaboration

On Demand

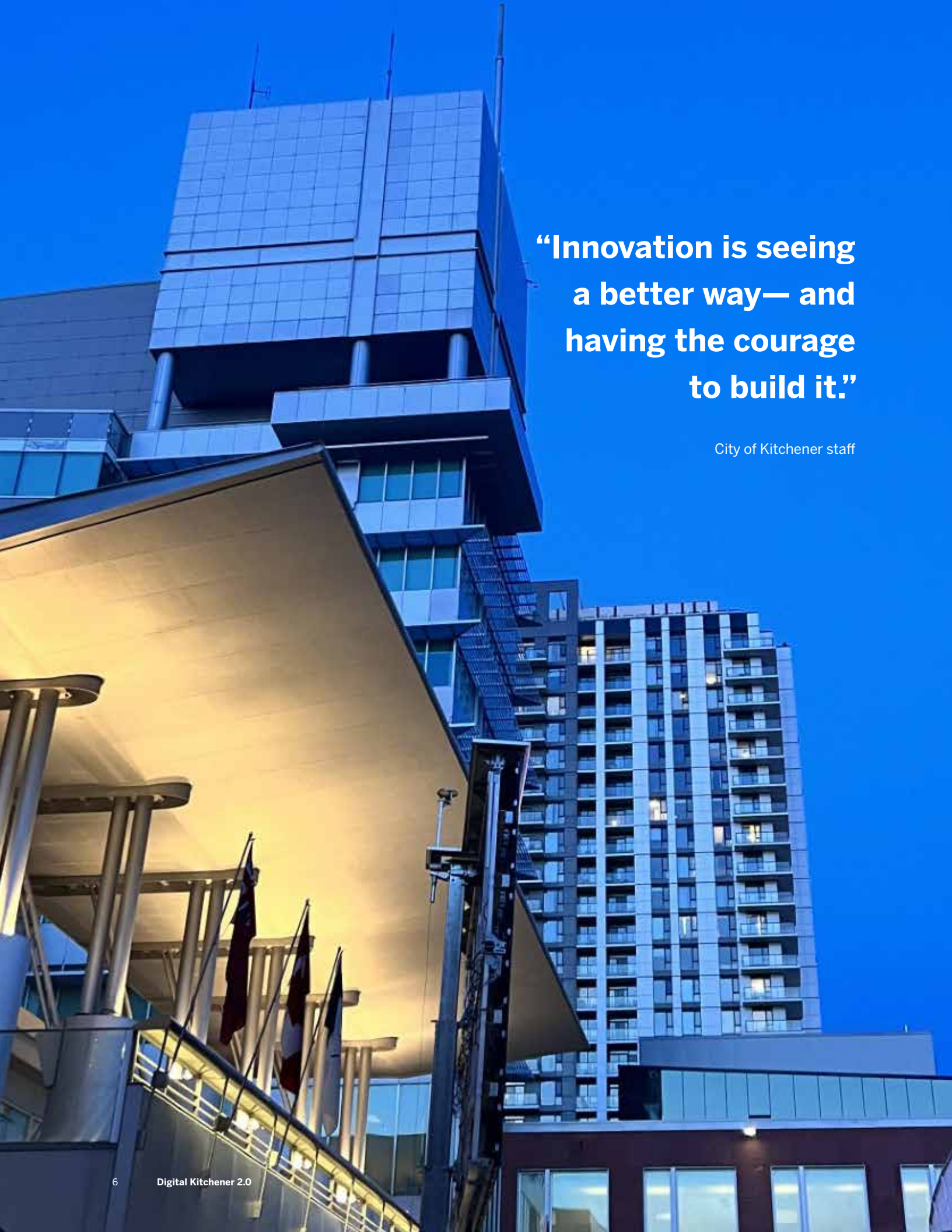
- Expanded online services for taxes, utilities, planning, and other core services
- Enhanced corporate website and created a customizable customer-first portal
- Improved open data, mapping tools, and decision-making dashboards

Inclusive

- Increased digital access through tech lending, and affordable device programs
- Improved accessibility through mobile-friendly portals and voice-enabled navigation
- Supported digital literacy and community partnerships in underserved areas

These achievements reflect Kitchener's belief that a digital city must be inclusive, future-ready, and resident-focused. Digital Kitchener 2.0 builds on this momentum with even greater ambition.





**“Innovation is seeing
a better way— and
having the courage
to build it.”**

City of Kitchener staff




Shaping a digital future together



The refreshed strategy reflects what we heard from the community and what we learned through research. Residents, staff, and partners shared their experiences, priorities, and expectations for a more digital city, while evidence-based research highlighted global best practices and emerging technologies shaping the future of cities.

Together, these insights revealed five shared themes that connect community voices with the vision and goals of Digital Kitchener 2.0:

- Advancing digital equity so everyone can participate and benefit
- Modernizing and integrating services to make everyday interactions simpler and more connected
- Expanding automation to improve efficiency and responsiveness
- Designing around user needs to create accessible, human-centred experiences
- Strengthening governance and collaboration to support responsible, city-wide innovation



These themes form the foundation of the strategy and guide the priorities and actions outlined in the sections that follow.

Our vision

Digital Kitchener drives a culture of collaboration where community voices guide digital initiatives, services are efficient and accessible, and innovation unlocks opportunities across our city.





The vision for a more digital Kitchener

Kitchener is building a digital future shaped by community voices and focused on improving quality of life. By embracing innovation and collaboration, we aim to create a city where services are easy to use, information is accessible, and technology expands opportunity for all. This vision outlines the future we will create together.

Our vision

Digital Kitchener drives a culture of collaboration where community voices guide digital initiatives, services are efficient and accessible, and innovation unlocks opportunities across our city.

We have created a set of goals to move this vision forward. We will:

- **Deliver seamless digital services anytime, anywhere:** Offer a seamless digital experience that makes city services and information easy to access.
- **Build a connected and smart city:** Harness AI, automation, and smart infrastructure to make services faster, more efficient, and responsive.
- **Cultivate an innovative and collaborative community:** Foster creativity and collaboration where innovators, businesses, and organizations work together to solve civic challenges.
- **Ensure inclusive and equitable access:** Ensure every resident can connect and thrive by providing reliable connectivity, digital skills training, and equitable access to technology.
- **Advance open data for transparency and innovation:** Provide standardized, accessible data through public portals and dashboards to promote transparency and enable innovation.
- **Embrace experimentation and city-wide innovation:** Transform the innovation lab into a collaborative hub that encourages bold ideas, experimentation, and co-creation to drive city-wide innovation.

Achieving this vision requires bold, practical steps that turn ideas into action. Our goals outline how we'll modernize services, embrace smart technologies, and foster collaboration to create a city where innovation benefits everyone. These priorities reflect what matters most to our community—making life simpler, more connected, and ready for the future.

**Deliver seamless
digital services
anytime, anywhere**

Offer a seamless digital experience that makes city services and information easy to access.

What you told us matters most

“I want an experience where everything is simple and connected — I can complete or request any service online, easily find information about my community, and choose how I connect with staff. It should feel seamless, convenient, and designed for everyone.”

We’re working to create a modern, inclusive, and connected digital experience for everyone.

Our focus is on:

- Making City services easy to access online
- Using technology to improve efficiency and responsiveness
- Designing solutions with residents and community partners

To do this we will:

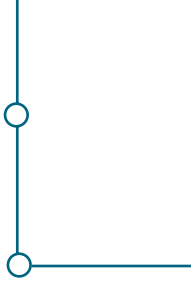
- Move more city services online and enhancing existing ones
- Use AI-enabled solutions to streamline customer-facing service delivery
- Enhance the website search function and content for faster and accurate results

What this could look like by 2030...

Residents can complete most services end-to-end online — from permit applications to tax inquiries — with real-time status updates and proactive notifications. AI-powered chat support resolves most questions instantly, reducing the need for phone calls or in-person visits.







Modernizing city services: faster, smarter, online

The City of Kitchener modernized its development and licensing services by enhancing its AMANDA-powered online portal, shifting key planning, building, and licensing applications to a fully digital format. This allowed residents, businesses, and contractors to complete end-to-end applications online, improving access to services anytime, anywhere.

The portal delivered a more responsive and accessible user experience, with automated updates, online inspection scheduling, digital payments, and real-time application tracking. These improvements streamlined workflows across departments, reduced paper-based processes, and improved coordination between staff and customers.

Early results demonstrated meaningful efficiency gains. Sign permit applications submitted online were processed an average of five and a half days faster than those submitted in person or by email. This success created a strong foundation for expanding digital service offerings, including site plans, Committee of Adjustment applications, and mobile sign permits.



Build a connected and smart city

Harness AI, automation, and smart infrastructure to make services faster, more efficient, and responsive.

What you told us matters most

“I want a city that responds quickly and reliably because it’s using smart technology behind the scenes. When data and AI help spot issues early, reduce delays, and keep services running smoothly, my day-to-day experience feels consistent and dependable.”

We’re building a city that is connected, efficient, and responsive.

By embracing innovation and technology, we aim to:

- Make decisions guided by data and insights
- Reduce manual work and improve efficiency
- Collaborate with the community to co-create solutions

To do this we will:

- Use AI and data to inform predictive maintenance and monitor infrastructure
- Support pilot projects using local tech for municipal challenges
- Streamline service delivery and reducing manual tasks using AI

What this could look like by 2030...

City-wide data systems predict when roads, facilities, or equipment need maintenance before issues arise, triggering timely work orders that reduce disruptions and improve safety.





CLADIER & DENTON GARAGE

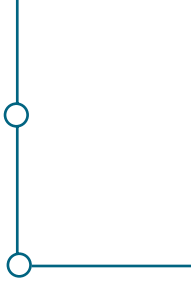


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Maximum Clearance 2.1m (6'10")

Maximum Clearance 2.1m (6'10")





Smart, connected parking across Kitchener

The City transformed its parking enterprise by replacing aging transponder-based systems with a fully digital system, using artificial intelligence-based computer vision to recognize license-plates across all garages and surface lots. The automated technology upgrade created a hands-free, sensor-enabled parking network that improved reliability, enhanced connectivity across sites, and aligned with the City's smart infrastructure goals.

The new system enables customers to access parking automatically through license-plate scanning, pay seamlessly through mobile apps or online accounts, and manage permits in real time. Digital dashboards and centralized management tools give staff better data, improved oversight, and streamlined operations.

This transformation positioned parking as a connected smart-city service—reducing physical devices and paper use, improving convenience, and enabling more efficient use of parking assets. By integrating sensors, automation, and real-time data, the City created a future-ready platform that supports ongoing innovation and demonstrates how connected infrastructure can improve everyday urban experiences.



Cultivate an innovative and collaborative community

Foster creativity and collaboration where innovators, businesses, and organizations work together to solve civic challenges.

What you told us matters most

“I have easy access to transparent funding information, streamlined digital tools, and collaborative networks that help me secure resources, connect with opportunities, and thrive in a city that champions innovation and growth.”

We’re working to create a modern, inclusive, and connected digital experience for everyone.

Our priorities include:

- Simplifying access to resources and opportunities
- Supporting entrepreneurs and emerging businesses
- Driving innovation through public–private collaboration

To do this we will work with our partners to explore:

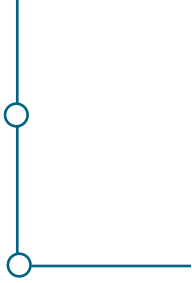
- Provide and promote collaborative spaces and shared digital tools
- Grow local collaborations to test and scale innovative municipal solutions
- Modernize city processes for easier engagement

What this could look like by 2030...

Local startups and civic innovators regularly co-design solutions with City staff. Challenge-based pilot programs accelerate ideas from concept to implementation.







Pitch Kitchener: igniting civic innovation through collaboration


Pitch Kitchener reshaped how the City of Kitchener collaborated with local innovators. Rather than relying solely on traditional procurement cycles, the City invited startups to pitch creative solutions to municipal challenges. The program was originally developed through the City's participation in the Bloomberg Harvard Leading City Procurement Reform initiative, which helped Kitchener modernize its approach and adopt global best practices in challenge-based innovation.

The first round drew strong interest from the local tech community and led to three pilot projects in infrastructure, fleet, and golf operations. Two of these pilots demonstrated clear value and moved into multi-year agreements, showing that this new procurement approach could responsibly test, validate, and scale solutions that benefited residents and staff.

Overall, Pitch Kitchener demonstrated what an innovative and collaborative community looked like in practice. It opened simpler pathways for entrepreneurs, strengthened public-private partnerships, and accelerated the shift from promising ideas to real results—helping local innovation thrive while positioning Kitchener as a leader in modern civic procurement.



**Ensure
inclusive and
equitable access**



Ensure every resident can connect and thrive by providing reliable connectivity, digital skills training, and equitable access to technology.

What you told us matters most

“I have reliable internet, access to devices, and user-friendly digital platforms that allow me to connect, learn, and complete essential tasks easily. I feel confident using technology, including AI, and can access public resources like Wi-Fi, charging stations, and information whenever I need them.”

We're committed to creating a digital environment where everyone can participate and thrive.

Our focus is on:

- Helping residents and staff build skills for a digital future
- Listening to feedback and keeping information accessible
- Working with partners to strengthen digital literacy and innovation

To do this we will:

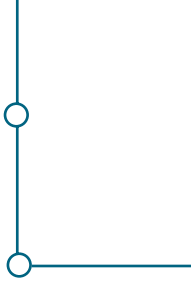
- Update technology access and Wi-Fi in our community spaces
- Work with our partners to increase digital literacy
- Use feedback to improve digital quality and access

What this could look like by 2030...

Every community centre and public space offers reliable Wi-Fi and easy-to-use digital literacy supports. Digital inclusion programs are co-designed with community partners and residents facing barriers.







Connected communities start with accessible tech

The City of Kitchener's partnership with The Working Centre demonstrated how refurbished technology could expand digital access in the community. Through the centre's Computer Recycling Program, retired City devices were securely renewed and made available at low cost, helping residents who faced barriers to accessing reliable technology.

During 2025, more than 250 laptops, desktops, and accessories have been refurbished and redistributed, reducing waste and supporting digital inclusion. The Working Centre also used some of these devices to enhance on-site workstations for employment and learning.

This initiative showed how sustainable technology practices supported digital equity. By giving devices a second life, the City and The Working Centre helped more residents connect, learn, and participate fully in an increasingly digital world.



Advance open data for transparency and innovation

Provide standardized, accessible data through public portals and dashboards to promote transparency and enable innovation.

What you told us matters most

“I have easy access to reliable business data and intuitive digital tools that help me make informed decisions, connect with local opportunities, and benefit from a city that fosters innovation and sustainable growth.”

We are committed to creating a transparent, data-driven environment that empowers everyone.

Our focus is on:

- Sharing information to build trust and accountability
- Enabling new ideas and solutions through accessible data
- Providing meaningful data to guide decisions and growth

To do this we will:

- Use data to share information and allow community exploration
- Share key datasets and formats that drive innovation and investment
- Standardize data systems to ensure seamless integration

What this could look like by 2030...

Near real-time open data powers dynamic dashboards and maps that help residents, researchers, and local businesses turn insights into practical solutions that enhance daily life across the city.







Using open data to grow a more equitable and resilient city

Kitchener's Cooling Our City: An Equitable Guide to Tree Planting demonstrates how open data is directly shaping equitable, data-informed environmental action. By publishing canopy, census, and spatial analysis data through accessible digital tools, the City enables residents and staff to clearly see where shade gaps exist and where planting efforts will have the greatest impact.

This transparent, data-driven approach has earned both the 2025 MISA Ontario Excellence in Municipal Systems Award and a Smart 20 Award, recognizing Kitchener's leadership in applying technology and spatial analytics to advance tree equity and climate resilience. The initiative supports the City's long-term goal of achieving 30% tree canopy coverage in every ward by 2050.

Open data also enables action: insights from the Tree Equity Map guide the annual planting of 150 large trees in underserved neighbourhoods, ensuring investments respond directly to community needs. By embedding open data into environmental planning, Kitchener is demonstrating how transparency fuels innovation, trust, and measurable progress toward a greener, more equitable future.



**Embrace
experimentation
and city-wide
innovation**

Transform the innovation lab into a collaborative hub that encourages bold ideas, experimentation, and co-creation to drive city-wide innovation.

What you told us matters most

“I want the City to work with the community and partners to explore new ideas, learn what works, and improve services before making larger changes. When solutions are tested and shaped together, innovation helps the City keep learning, adapting, and improving over time.”

We’re building a city that embraces creativity, collaboration, and digital inclusion.

To do this we will focus on:

- Drawing on proven models to guide our innovation journey
- Building strong partnerships to co-create impactful solutions
- Promoting transparency and celebrating innovation across the city

To do this we will:

- Reimagine the innovation lab model to support bold ideas and solutions
- Foster a culture of innovation across the organization
- Explore collaboration concepts and opportunities

What this could look like by 2030...

The Digital Kitchener Innovation Lab evolves into a city-wide catalyst where staff and community partners rapidly co-design, test, and scale new ideas—accelerating innovation and delivering better outcomes for residents.

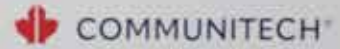


Digital Kitchener Innovation Lab



A city that supports

Made possible by the City of Kitchener and Make it Kitchener 2.0, this space is here for innovators to create, connect and grow.





Innovation through experimentation: Kitchener’s lab for local solutions

Kitchener’s Civic Innovation Lab demonstrates how learning through experimentation can drive meaningful change. Built through the original Digital Kitchener strategy, the Lab gives teams space to rapidly test ideas, prototype solutions, and explore emerging technologies without the pressures of daily operations. This approach helps the City move quickly from challenge to validated concept, reducing risk while accelerating service improvements.

Collaboration is at the heart of this work. Embedded within the Communitelch ecosystem, the Lab brings together staff, startups, scale-ups, and co-op students to co-design solutions rooted in real community needs. These partnerships strengthen both civic outcomes and local talent development—highlighted by co-op contributors whose work has earned city-wide recognition.

As Digital Kitchener 2.0 looks ahead, the Lab is expanding its focus to responsible AI experimentation, enabling teams to explore tools that enhance service delivery and support staff in new ways. By fostering curiosity, iteration, and partnership, the Innovation Lab continues to model how experimentation can create smarter, more adaptive, and more community-centred services.





Global impact

Look throughout this document to
find the goals mapped to the SDGs



Connecting local goals with global impact

The refreshed Digital Kitchener strategy positions the City as a leader in ethical digital transformation by aligning local objectives with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and related global frameworks. This ensures that initiatives supporting digital access, open data, innovation, and smart city development also advance global priorities for equity, sustainability, and resilience.

SDG alignment

Digital Kitchener goals map to key SDGs, including:

- **SDG 4:** Quality Education
- **SDG 8:** Decent Work and Economic Growth
- **SDG 9:** Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure
- **SDG 10:** Reduced Inequalities
- **SDG 11:** Sustainable Cities and Communities
- **SDG 16:** Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions
- **SDG 17:** Partnerships for the Goals

This alignment ensures programs such as digital skills training, civic tech support, barrier-free services, and open data contribute to both municipal and global outcomes.

Global frameworks

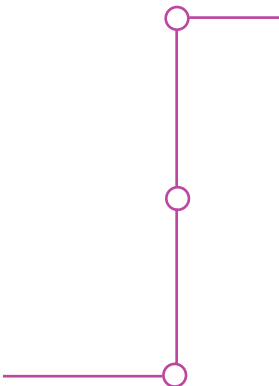
The strategy also reflects priorities from the UN Pact for the Future, the Global Digital Compact, and the Declaration on Future Generations, emphasizing digital cooperation, responsible AI, inclusive design, youth engagement, and strong privacy and security practices.

By integrating these frameworks and applying strategic foresight, Kitchener strengthens its leadership in responsible digital transformation and sets a benchmark for municipal innovation.

Look throughout this document to find the goals mapped to the SDGs.



From vision to action: moving forward together



Kitchener’s refreshed Digital Kitchener strategy offers a clear path toward a more connected, equitable, and innovative city. Every action reflects our commitment to improving residents’ experiences through technology that is accessible, transparent, and collaborative.

Grounded in a decade of progress, we move ahead with a shared vision shaped by our community and guided by principles of equity and openness. The work ahead will take creativity and partnership, but we are well-positioned to turn this vision into meaningful impact.

Together, we will build a city where technology strengthens trust, enhances opportunity, and empowers every resident.



...to tackle
transportation and
supply-chain challenges
communittech.ca/fasttrack





A human-centred strategy in an AI-enabled era

AI played a key role in developing the Digital Kitchener Strategy—helping synthesize insights, shape narrative, and accelerate ideas. In a time when digital transformation is intertwined with intelligent systems, AI isn't just a helpful tool; it's a foundational capability that influences how communities learn, connect, govern, and innovate.

At the same time, the strategy remains rooted in human values—guided by community input, lived experience, and a commitment to public service. AI was used to enhance human judgment, not replace it, ensuring decisions reflect empathy, equity, and trust.

By using AI to help create the strategy itself, we model the future we envision: a city where human insight and artificial intelligence work together to deliver bold, people-centred innovation.





#DigitalKitchener

Kitchener.ca/DigitalKitchener