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AN ASSET-BASED APPROACH

Since 2004, the City and its many partners have invested heavily in the development of major community assets and catalysts in Downtown Kitchener. These include:

- King Street streetscape;
- WLU Faculty of Social Work;
- UW School of Pharmacy;
- McMaster School of Medicine;
- Communitech Hub;
- Kitchener Market & Marketplace;
- Victoria Park Entrance;
- Charles & Benton Parking Garage;
- KPL Main Library expansion (in progress);
- Consolidated Courthouse (in progress); and,
- Victoria Park Lake (in progress).

These are in addition to existing major assets like Victoria Park, City Hall, Civic Square and Centre in the Square. New private sector developments, such as the Kaufman Lofts, The Tannery, Breithaupt Block, City Centre Condominiums and Arrow Lofts, have created new energy in the core.

And we cannot forget about the softer, less tangible assets - long-standing businesses, new businesses, strong neighbourhood associations and the many arts and culture organizations that center themselves Downtown.

This plan focuses on organizing City and BIA programs, services and resources to leverage these assets and stimulate positive spin-off investment. For example, turning the $10-million streetscape into $50-million worth of private sector investment.

For many, an asset-based approach is a mindset change. It focuses efforts solely on growth of this positive momentum and only on areas where we have a real ability to influence change.

As part of this new approach, the City will begin to explore opportunities to use its land assets as the primary means for creating new major assets and catalysts. This could include, for example, trying to attract a new grocery store or creating new urban neighbourhoods. Yet at the same time, we need to appreciate that incremental change is as important to Downtown’s progress as major change. Every little step counts. Every new event, every new residential unit, every new store, every new customer - they all count.

But above all, people are our greatest asset. It’s imperative that we continue to engage the community throughout the next 5 years, to ensure we stay firmly in the direction they want Downtown to head.
THE OPPORTUNITIES

#1: CONTINUE TO BUILD A STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY

42,300 people live within a 20-minute walk of Downtown. That's more people than the entire cities of Woodstock and Owen Sound. While focus group attendees noted that 'sense of community' is one of Downtown's greatest assets, the challenge is to ensure that all 42,300 people, and those living beyond, feel the same way.

#2: CONTINUE TO GROW THE CITY’S URBAN POPULATION

During the next five years, 21,575 KW residents are expected to consider urban living. These are post-secondary graduates deciding where to put their roots down; young professionals moving to the region; empty nesters deciding whether to downsize their home or not; and, seniors looking to live in a place that is close to necessary shops and services.

Never again will such a significant portion of our population be faced with these decisions. As a result, the next five years present the greatest opportunity to truly intensify the centre of the city. While their decisions to move may take place beyond 2016, the vitality and appeal of Downtown Kitchener over the next five years will no doubt be a major influencer on their decisions.

NUMBER OF STUDENTS STUDYING IN DOWNTOWN KITCHENER

3,640

DOWNTOWN EMPLOYMENT GROWTH

ANNUAL TOTAL DISCRETIONARY SPENDING BY CENTRAL NEIGHBOURHOOD RESIDENTS

$372 MILLION

INVESTMENT IN DOWNTOWN KITCHENER SINCE 2004

$439 MILLION

APARTMENT RENTAL VACANCY RATE IN DOWNTOWN KITCHENER

1.6%

SURVEY RESPONDENTS WHO LIVE IN THE CENTRAL NEIGHBOURHOODS AND WOULD LIKE A DOWNTOWN GROCERY STORE

71%

KW RESIDENTS EXPECTED TO CONSIDER URBAN LIVING 2011-2016

21,575

RESIDENTIAL UNITS PLANNED FOR OR UNDER CONSTRUCTION

1,626
THE DOWNTOWN DISTRICTS

First identified in the original Downtown Strategic Plan, the development of four unique districts, each with their own identities and built form, remains a key approach to creating unique, urban experiences. The City and BIA will support the evolution of each district through coordinated streetscaping/street furnishing, district specific design guidelines, district specific official plan policies and zoning, and effective branding/marketing/placemaking:

CITY CENTRE DISTRICT
The historic heart of the city, this district is evolving into a compact, contemporary urban setting, with taller buildings, lively street activity and a stylish mix of shops, restaurants, cultural and entertainment uses. The pedestrian-first King Street streetscape provides a community focal point for festivals and celebrations. This district is expected to be home to the greatest concentration of high-density buildings in the city.

MARKET DISTRICT
Anchored by the Kitchener Market, this district is home to the region’s most prominent cluster of culturally diverse restaurants and shops. Traditional design elements, smaller scale buildings and a unique collection of converted Victorian homes give the district a village-like setting.

CIVIC DISTRICT
Planned in 1965, the Civic District was imagined as a contemporary urban square with architecturally bold buildings in a park-like setting. Today, the district has become a civic and cultural focal point for the region. Adding new, complementary uses to the district, such as restaurants, coffee shops and/or a hotel would only enhance the cultural experience. Integrating new residential dwellings above cultural uses would add 24/7 life and vitality.

INNOVATION DISTRICT (formerly WAREHOUSE DISTRICT)
Once know as ‘Busy Berlin’, large former industrial buildings are being converted into stylish office space and loft residential units. Carefully weaving new modern buildings among the classical industrial architecture will ensure a distinct sense of place.
THE GOAL

TO ESTABLISH DOWNTOWN KITCHENER AS ONE OF THE BEST DOWNTOWNS IN NORTH AMERICA THAT OFFERS A COMPLETE SENSE OF COMMUNITY WHILE OFFERING COOL, UNIQUE, VIBRANT & ECLECTIC EXPERIENCES.

TO OUR COMMUNITY

A GREAT DOWNTOWN MEANS:

A UNIQUE URBAN FEEL CREATIVE WORK ENVIRONMENTS BUSTLING SIDEWALKS UNIQUE STORES AND RESTAURANTS A LIVE MUSIC SCENE A STRONG SENSE OF COMMUNITY ATTRACTIVE BUILDINGS & STOREFRONTS COLLABORATIVE WORK SPACES STREET FESTIVALS A VIBRANT ARTS & CULTURE SCENE INNOVATIVE HOUSING OPTIONS ECO FOCUSED LEADING EDGE CULTURALLY DIVERSE & ACCESSIBLE

OUR COMMITMENT

WHEN YOU’RE DOWNTOWN, YOU WILL HAVE A TRULY UNIQUE, CREATIVE, ENERGETIC AND WELCOMING EXPERIENCE.

LRT & MULTI-MODAL STATION

THE FUTURE LIGHT RAIL TRANSIT LINE AND MULTI-MODAL STATION WILL NOT ONLY TRANSFORM THE REGION, BUT WILL SIGNIFICANTLY TRANSFORM THE DOWNTOWN. THIS PLAN ASPIRES TO CREATE THE TYPE OF URBAN ENVIRONMENT THAT WILL ACT AS THE TRUE EPICENTRE OF THE SYSTEM.
CORE AREAS OF FOCUS

1. AN AMAZING KING STREET EXPERIENCE
2. NEW URBAN NEIGHBOURHOODS
3. AN INNOVATION DISTRICT
4. FOSTER A COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY
1 - An Amazing King Street Experience

2 - New Urban Neighbourhoods

3 - An Innovation District

Downtown Boundary as defined by the Official Plan

10-minute walk from Downtown
### COMMUNITY ASSETS
- KING STREET STREETSCAPE
- CIVIC SQUARE
- SPEAKER’S CORNER
- THEMUSEUM & CONRAD CENTRE
- KITCHENER MARKET
- MARKET PIAZZA & MARKETPLACE

### FUTURE ASSETS
- CITY CENTRE CONDOMINIUMS
- MAYFAIR HOTEL

### LAND ASSETS
- LOTS 3, 6 & 16
- THE LEGION

### PROGRAMS & SERVICES
- SPECIAL EVENTS
- RETAIL ATTRACTION
- BEAUTIFICATION INITIATIVES
- PATIO PROGRAM
- FACADE GRANT PROGRAM
- DOWNTOWN LIVE
AN AMAZING KING STREET EXPERIENCE

Turn King Street into a true regional destination and ‘the place to be and be seen’ through the following:

a) Create unique, urban experiences:
   i) Turn Civic Square into a true European-style square (ex: surrounded by restaurants) that is the region’s true epicentre and meeting place;
   ii) Develop daily food & performance programs on Civic Square;
   iii) Close sections of King Street for frequent, small events;
   iv) Grow the cafe/patio culture through business friendly policies;
   v) Explore options for a visual civic tribute along Gaukel Street that celebrates our history;
   vi) Explore opportunities to develop a winter ‘festival of lights’ program; and,
   vii) Explore opportunities for a mid-week market.

b) Significantly grow foot traffic after 5pm and on weekends:
   i) Explore the potential to attract high traffic generators as part of mixed-use developments on City-owned lands;
   ii) Foster, facilitate and/or develop new, small scale events after 5pm, including grass roots/community-driven events;
   iii) Facilitate community building programs (ex: business networking events, intellectual lectures, etc.);
   iv) Explore options for creating wifi hot spots;
   v) Build an engaging, contemporary Cube program; and,
   vi) Explore opportunities to program the Market Piazza on Saturdays.

c) Foster a live music scene:
   i) Grow Downtown Live as a platform for fostering live music and showcasing local talent; and,
   ii) Develop partnerships with local restaurants, bars and coffee shops to facilitate more live music.

d) Attract unique stores and restaurants:
   i) Continue the BIA/City partnership to attract new stores/restaurants with a focus on micro-chains & independents;
   ii) Consider OP policies and zoning bylaws that focus destination retail uses on King Street; and,
   iii) Explore partnerships that enable artists and entrepreneurs to rent vacant retail space.

e) Enhance the physical experience:
   i) Continue to encourage and regulate high quality storefront, facade and sign design through bylaws, guidelines and grant programs;
   ii) Undertake aggressive enforcement of property standards;
   iii) Implement a sophisticated street furnishing program for King Street within the Market District;
   iv) Plan for the conversion of small, underutilized parkettes into creatively designed, funky spaces;
   v) Explore options for enhanced cleaning/maintenance on King; and,
   vi) Work with existing land owners to facilitate infill development of vacant lots.
NEW URBAN NEIGHBOURHOODS

Plan for up to 3 new neighbourhoods that redefine urban living, where urban living is seen as one of the best ways to live, through the following:

a) A Sustainable Neighbourhood - in partnership with the Region of Waterloo, and in consultation with the larger community, develop a mixed-use master plan for all City-owned lands surrounding the Victoria Park entrance; this would include the timing, method and process for disposition and development;

b) A Mixed-Use Neighbourhood - in partnership with land owners, develop a master plan or site specific design study for under-utilized lands on King Street, south of Cedar;

c) A Vibrant Arts, Culture & Entertainment Neighbourhood - in partnership with Centre In The Square, and in consultation with the Civic District Visioning Committee and the larger community, develop a mixed-use master plan for all City-owned lands surrounding Centre In The Square; this would include the timing, method and process for disposition and development;

d) Explore opportunities for encouraging cycling to-and-from the Downtown (such as wayfinding signage, bike lanes, etc.);

e) Explore partnership opportunities for attracting a major urban format grocery store; and,

f) Develop a design brief for new high-density, mixed-use developments to ensure new development, not on City-owned lands, will be of a high quality, attractive design.
AN INNOVATION DISTRICT

CORE AREA OF FOCUS

COMMUNITY ASSETS
- UW SCHOOL OF PHARMACY
- MCMASTER SCHOOL OF MEDICINE
- THE COMMUNITECH HUB
- KAUFMAN LOFTS
- THE TANNERY
- 72 VICTORIA

FUTURE ASSETS
- BREITHAUPT BLOCK
- MULTI-MODAL STATION

LAND ASSETS
- BRAMM YARDS

PROGRAMS & SERVICES
- BROWNFIELD PROGRAM
AN INNOVATION DISTRICT

Rebrand and foster the lands within ~500m of King & Victoria (formerly the Warehouse District) as an Innovation District:

a) As described in KEDS.11, in consultation with stakeholders, develop an overall brand/marketing strategy for the Innovation District;

b) Develop a master streetscaping plan (banners, benches, entrance features, etc.) as one tool for implementing the district brand strategy;

c) Utilize the Bramm Yards as an interim parking solution to facilitate employment growth in the District;

d) In consultation with the larger community, develop a long-term master plan for the development of the Bramm yards as a future urban business park; this would include the timing, method and process for disposition and development;

e) Through the Official Plan Review, ensure policies encourage 24-7 vitality, such as a diversity of uses and amenities;

f) In partnership with the Region of Waterloo, develop a design brief for the future multi-modal station and surrounding area; and,

g) Encourage new landing pads (office space for startup companies leaving the HUB) throughout the Downtown.
FOSTER A COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY

Continue to foster collaboration and innovation through the following efforts:

a) Facilitate networking events in the Downtown that encourage cross-sectoral collaboration among local companies, students, artists, entrepreneurs, retailers, etc.;

b) Through the Retail Attraction Strategy, encourage likeminded companies to explore collaborative working environments as a leasing alternative.

c) Work with operators of existing collaborative work spaces to provide enhanced services for their users, that will encourage greater participation of small companies in collaborative work environments;

d) Reserve Lot 19 for a major future arts, culture or civic facility, as per the Civic District Vision & Master Plan;

e) Continue to engage other agencies (not-for-profits, social services, police, etc.) on fostering a safe and healthy community; and,

f) Work with the Region and local businesses to ensure the implementation of LRT compliments the goals of this plan.
STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES

To effectively implement this strategy, the following imperatives are key:

a) Brand Development & Marketing - negative perceptions continue to be a challenge for Downtown. As such, the City and BIA will develop and implement a comprehensive Downtown Brand Strategy to guide marketing, social media and program development initiatives. A key initial focus will be placed on engaging residents of the Central Neighbourhoods;

b) Community Building - a strong sense of community is one of Downtown’s key attributes. The City and BIA will foster this sense of community through a variety of processes and programs. These could include events such as the Downtown Employee Appreciation Day, or engaging the community on an annual report card on the progress of this plan;

c) Partnership Building - many of the actions within this plan require the participation, support and investment of numerous agencies, downtown businesses, neighbourhoods and the development community. The City and BIA will continue to build strong partnerships with key stakeholders;

d) Building Owner Engagement - the Downtown ultimately cannot succeed without the willingness and commitment of building owners to enhance their properties. The City and BIA will work to foster strong relationships with and among building owners;

e) Financial Incentives - with a focus on four new areas of focus, the City will review its financial incentive programs to ensure they support and enable the achievement of these objectives. For example, ensuring that all programs stimulate only high quality design and architecture;

f) Avoid Over-Gentrification - rising property values, lease rates and rental rates are common results of downtown revitalization efforts. However, rapid increases can lead to the displacement of the pioneering people and businesses who are critical to the revitalization process. The City and BIA will closely monitor the gentrification effects, and where possible, undertake measures to retain Downtown’s early adopters.

g) Promoting a Pedestrian Lifestyle - ultimately the downtown is about people, not cars. The City will continue to encourage alternative modes of transportation while endeavouring to enhance the overall walkability of the Downtown and surrounding neighbours.
CITY-OWNED LAND ASSETS

- Lots 3, 6 & 16
- Civic District Lands
- Bramm Yards
- Lot 19
- Lot 9
- The Legion
- Lots 3, 6 & 16
- 44 Gaukel, Lots 15 & 20

Downtown Boundary as defined by the Official Plan
10-minute walk from Downtown
For More Information

Contact:

Cory Bluhm
Manager, Downtown Community Development
519.741.3400 ext. 3375
cory.bluhm@kitchener.ca
@DTKitchener

Mark Garner
Executive Director, Downtown Kitchener BIA
519.744.4921
mgarner@kitchenerdowntown.com
@myworlddowntown