



Finance and Corporate Services Committee Agenda

Monday, January 26, 2026, 4:00 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Council Chambers

City of Kitchener

200 King Street W, Kitchener, ON N2G 4G7

People interested in participating in this meeting can register online using the delegation registration form at www.kitchener.ca/delegation or via email at delegation@kitchener.ca. Please refer to the delegation section on the agenda below for registration in-person and electronic participation deadlines. Written comments received will be circulated prior to the meeting and will form part of the public record.

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Chair: Councillor S. Davey

Vice-Chair: Councillor B. Ioannidis

Pages

1. Commencement

2. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof

Members of Council and members of the City's local boards/committees are required to file a written statement when they have a conflict of interest. If a conflict is declared, please visit www.kitchener.ca/conflict to submit your written form.

3. Consent Items

The following matters are considered not to require debate and should be approved by one motion in accordance with the recommendation contained in each staff report. A majority vote is required to discuss any report listed as under this section.

3.1	Cowan Recreation Centre Reserve Fund, FIN-2026-032	3
3.2	Brownfield Remediation Program Application - 161 Ottawa Street South, DSD-2025-463	6

4. Delegations

Pursuant to Council's Procedural By-law, delegations are permitted to address the Committee for a maximum of five (5) minutes. All Delegations where possible are encouraged to register prior to the start of the meeting. For Delegates who are attending in-person, registration is permitted up to the start of the meeting. Delegates who are interested in attending virtually must register by 2:00 p.m. on January 26, 2026, in order to participate electronically.

4.1 Item 5.1 - S. McCormick, M. Klassen and C. MacGillivray, Communitech

5. Discussion Items

5.1	Artificial Intelligence (AI) Education Session, COR-2026-007	60 m	12
	This matter is strictly intended for education purposes.		

6. Information Items

6.1	Strategic Plan Update - Winter 2026 Implementation, CAO-2026-050	14
6.2	Tree Canopy Update, INS-2026-014	27
	The Committee considered Infrastructure Services Department report, INS-2026-014, dated December 17, 2025	

7. Adjournment

Marilyn Mills
Committee Coordinator

Staff Report



Financial Services Department

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REPORT TO: Finance and Corporate Services Committee

DATE OF MEETING: January 26, 2026

SUBMITTED BY: Ryan Hagey, Director of Financial Planning & Asset Management, 519-904-9347

PREPARED BY: Ryan Hagey, Director of Financial Planning & Asset Management, 519-904-9347

WARD(S) INVOLVED: Ward 5

DATE OF REPORT: January 6, 2025

REPORT NO.: FIN-2026-032

SUBJECT: Cowan Recreation Centre (CRC) Reserve Fund

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Cowan Recreation Centre Reserve Fund be approved as detailed in the reserve information sheet attached to report FIN-2026-032.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to approve the creation of a Cowan Recreation Centre Reserve Fund
- The financial implications are \$2.5 million of donated funds will help to offset future capital costs related to the Cowan Recreation Centre
- This report supports the delivery of core services.

BACKGROUND:

Section 290(4)(g) of the *Municipal Act* says that municipalities “may provide for such reserve funds as the municipality considers necessary.” To aid in the governance of reserve funds, Kitchener Council approved policy *FIN-RES-770 Reserve Funds*. This policy indicates that all new reserve funds must be approved by Council.

REPORT:

The Cowan Foundation has pledged to donate \$2.5 million for the development of health and recreation in the City of Kitchener as it relates to the Cowan Recreation Centre (CRC). These funds will be received over the next few years and will be used to maintain and improve the CRC. As well, there are opportunities for the City to receive funds by selling the naming rights of other components of the CRC such as the gym and pool. To ensure donated funds and/or naming rights are retained for the CRC, staff is recommending the creation of a Cowan Recreation Centre Reserve Fund which will ensure they are not used for a different purpose.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report supports the delivery of core services.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Funds from the Cowan Recreation Centre Reserve Fund will help to offset costs related to the facility.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

INFORM – This report has been posted to the City's website with the agenda in advance of the council / committee meeting.

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

- [DSD-2025-398](#) Donation to the Kitchener Indoor Recreation Complex and Indoor Turf

APPROVED BY: Jonathan Lautenbach, Chief Finance Officer, Financial Services

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – Reserve Information Sheet for the Cowan Recreation Centre Reserve Fund

Reserve Information Sheet

Name:	Cowan Recreation Centre
Type:	Discretionary
Category:	Program Specific
Cost Centre:	TBD
Ownership Lead:	Director, Sport

Purpose:

Provides funding for capital improvements/maintenance to the Cowan Recreation Centre (CRC).

Funding Sources (other than interest income):

- Donations/sponsorships from the Cowan Foundation
- Other donations/sponsorships for the CRC
- Naming rights for components of the CRC (e.g. gymnasium, pool)

Funding Uses (other than interest expense):

- Transfers to the capital budget for approved projects related to the Cowan Recreation Centre.

Minimum Funding Target:

Closing balance should not be below \$0.

Rationale: Funds contributed from the reserve should not exceed the revenues received.

Maximum Funding Target:

Closing balance should not exceed \$5 million.

Rationale: This should allow for known donations from the Cowan Foundation (\$2.5 million) as well as other potential revenues like other donations, naming rights of other CRC components, and interest income.

Excess Funds:

Any amounts above the maximum target will remain in the reserve.

Other:

REPORT TO: Finance and Corporate Services Committee

DATE OF MEETING: January 26, 2026

SUBMITTED BY: Rosa Bustamante, Director Planning, Housing Policy, 519-783-8929

PREPARED BY: Scott Van Schyndel, Real Estate Specialist, 519-783-8950

WARD(S) INVOLVED: Ward 9

DATE OF REPORT: January 8, 2026

REPORT NO.: DSD-2025-463

SUBJECT: Brownfield Remediation Program Application - 161 Ottawa St South

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Brownfield Remediation Program Application for 161 Ottawa St South, dated June 4, 2015, be approved; and,

That in exchange for a completed and filed Record of Site Condition for the subject property, the owner(s), Jozo Ilic and Kata Ilic, will be provided a tax incremental grant on the redevelopment of the property in the form of a rebate issued on a proportionate basis, annually, for a period to be prescribed but not to exceed 10 years, on City taxes in an amount equal to 100% of the City of Kitchener Tax Increment; and,

That the City Tax Increment be defined as the difference between the City of Kitchener portion of real property taxes for the 2015 taxation year and the new City of Kitchener portion of real property taxes levied as a result of a new assessment by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) following completion of the project as compensation for the remediation of the above subject lands; and,

That the City property tax increment grant is not to exceed \$62,960 based on the City tax increment; payable in 2026; and,

That the Region of Waterloo Brownfield Coordinator be circulated a copy of any decision made by Kitchener City Council regarding this Application; and further,

That the Mayor and Clerk be authorized to execute an Agreement, subject to the satisfaction of the City Solicitor, with Jozo Ilic and Kata Ilic, to implement the provisions of the Brownfield Financial Incentive Program Application for 161 Ottawa St South, as outlined in the Development Services Department Report DSD-2025-463.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to recommend approval for the Tax Increment Grant (TIG) detailed within this report.
- The financial implications relate to the obligation of the City to pay out the Tax Increment Grant in 2026 for a maximum total payout of \$62,960.
- Community engagement included the report being posted to the City's website with the agenda in advance of the committee meeting.
- This report supports the delivery of core services.

BACKGROUND:

In June of 2015, the City of Kitchener and the Region of Waterloo received a joint Tax Increment Grant (TIG) application from MTE on behalf of the Owners, Jozo Ilic and Kata Ilic, regarding the remediation and redevelopment of the property municipally known as 161 Ottawa St South (See Map Attachment 1). The 0.62-acre property located on the east side of Ottawa Street South and north side of Bedford Road was an industrial tool and die manufacturer. The land has been redeveloped into a low-rise residential development consisting of 20 new residential units.

Corresponding changes to the City's Brownfield Financial Incentive Program were subsequently approved by Council on November 22, 2021. The review resulted in the removal of the 10% allowance for indirect costs. This change in the program is effective for complete applications received after the date of Council approval (November 22, 2021); therefore this application is not grandfathered. The Application was deemed complete in May of 2024.

The Region sent a letter on January 11, 2016, requesting additional information and indicating that staff would move forward with a recommendation to their respective Councils once all the necessary site information is received. The applicant's consultant emailed the Region on October 2, 2023 and acknowledged:

"Comments were received by the Region and City in January 2016, and no additional correspondence between MTE and the Region/City was conducted. Our Client has recently completed the development and occupancy of the Site and has asked us to re-engage regarding the Brownfield Application."

There were some questions about eligibility for the RDC exemption and the outstanding items for the TIG, which were then provided in the package submitted on May 1, 2024.

Royal Assent for Bill 60 (the Fighting Delays, Building Faster Act) on November 27, 2025 reinstated the Region's ability to participate in Community Improvement Plans without revision, and therefore the Regional portion of the TIG will be subject to future consideration by Regional Council.

REPORT:

Contamination and Remediation

The Environmental Consultant for this project is MTE. As part of the brownfield re-development process MTE conducted Phase One and Phase Two Environmental Site Assessments (ESA) followed by a Risk Assessment. The comprehensive testing on the property identified contamination in the soil and groundwater. All environmental assessments and remediation activities proceeded in accordance with Ontario Regulation 153/04 (as amended), which concluded with a Record of Site Condition (RSCs) for the property.

The site remediation activities included a combination of Risk Assessment to develop property specific standards and remediation of remaining exceedances in the soil and groundwater. This work has been completed.

Eligible Environmental Remediation Costs

City and Regional Staff are satisfied with the documentation submitted by the applicant estimating eligible remediation costs for the site at \$550,403. Grant proportions determined by the City of Kitchener's share of the municipal taxes levied on the property in the year the application was submitted with approximately 37.9% allocated to the City of Kitchener. The City's share of the eligible Tax Incremental Grant is \$62,960. The payment can be made as the property has been redeveloped and reassessed by the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC).

The (TIG) amount will be cost-shared between the Region of Waterloo and the City of Kitchener, as shown in Table 1. Further details regarding the Tax Increment calculation are provided in Tables 2 and 3.

Table 1: Remediation Cost Recovery

Max Eligible Remediation Cost	\$550,403
Less Region of Waterloo DC Exemption	\$0.00
Max Eligible TIG	\$177,540
Less City of Kitchener TIG	\$62,960
Less Region of Waterloo TIG if approved	\$114,580
Remaining remediation costs paid by the Developer that cannot be recovered through the Brownfield program	\$372,863

As noted above, the maximum eligible remediation cost is \$550,403. This amount, less the City Tax Incremental Grant amount of \$62,960 and the potential Region of Waterloo grant of \$114,580, results in approximately \$372,863 in remediation costs that the applicant is not eligible to recover and the applicant will have to absorb.

As a condition of final approval of eligible costs, invoices are submitted by the applicant and approved for eligibility by the City of Kitchener and Regional staff, which has occurred.

Pre-remediation Assessment and Taxes vs Post Redevelopment Assessment and Taxes

The anticipated joint Tax Increment Grant payments and schedule are determined for each application based on the following steps:

The first step includes a calculation of the anticipated assessment increment. This is based on the pre-remediation MPAC assessment value(s) and the estimated post-remediation and redevelopment assessment value(s) for the development as provided by the Applicant. MPAC has completed their reassessment which is reflected in Table 2 below:

Table 2: Potential Assessment Increment

Assessment Value "Pre"	Assessment Value "Post"	Assessment Increment
\$263,000	\$2,292,000	\$2,029,000

Secondly, the anticipated assessment increment is then used to calculate the expected annual increase in municipal taxes (Region and City) that would be generated by the remediation and redevelopment of the property, referred to as the 'tax increment' (Table 3). The City's Tax Increment represents the annual TIG payment amount.

Table 3: Anticipated Tax Increment

Area Municipality	Municipal Taxes "Pre"*	Municipal Taxes "Post"*	Total Tax Increment*
City	\$1,853	\$8,149	\$6,296
Region	\$3,040	\$14,498	\$11,458
Total	\$4,893	\$22,647	\$17,754

*Tax amounts do not include the education portion of annual taxes levied as the School Boards do not participate in the program.

It is being recommended that the City's portion of the Tax Increment Grant of \$62,960 be paid in 2026.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

The recommendation of this report supports the achievement of the city's strategic vision through the delivery of core service.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The approval of this application will obligate The City of Kitchener to provide a maximum municipal property tax rebate of \$62,960 to be paid in the first year.

The grant amount of \$62,960 will be funded from the Brownfield Capital Grant account.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

INFORM – This report has been posted to the City’s website with the agenda in advance of the council / committee meeting.

This Application has not been circulated to the public. Staff would note that this approval applies only to the City of Kitchener portion of the proposed Tax Incremental Grant. The Region of Waterloo will take a supplemental report forward to their council in 2026 in relation to their portion of the TIG.

CONCLUSION:

Regional Staff and The Brownfield Steering Committee (consisting of the City’s Real Estate Specialist, Director of Revenue, City Solicitor, and Director of Planning and Housing Policy) reviewed the application and are satisfied that the application meets the eligibility and application requirements. Staff support acceptance within the terms and conditions of the Region of Waterloo – City of Kitchener Brownfield Remediation Program.

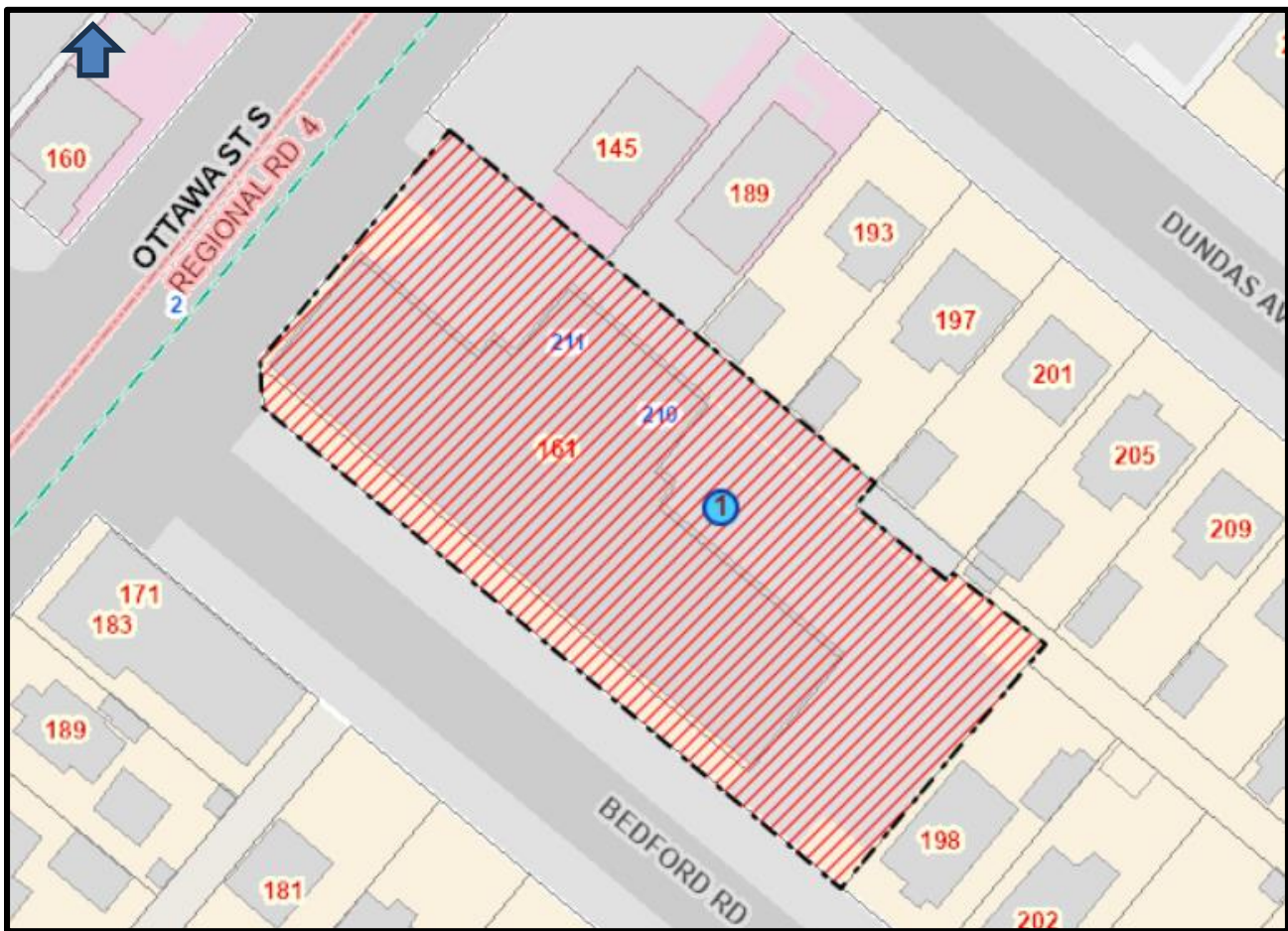
PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

There are no previous reports/authorities related to this matter.

APPROVED BY: Justin Readman, General Manager, Development Services

ATTACHMENTS: Appendix 1 - Locational Map

Appendix 1 - Locational Map



REPORT TO: Finance and Corporate Services Committee

DATE OF MEETING: Monday, Jan. 26, 2026

SUBMITTED BY: Amaral, Nicole, innovation lab director 519-783-8175

PREPARED BY: Amaral, Nicole, innovation lab director 519-783-8175

WARD(S) INVOLVED: All

DATE OF REPORT: December 3, 2025

REPORT NO.: COR-2026-053

SUBJECT: AI education session with Communitech

RECOMMENDATION:

That report COR-2026-007 AI education session with Communitech, be received for information.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the learning that council will gain during this training session.
- The key finding of this report is the importance of developing AI literacy skills that will assist council with making related future decisions.
- There are no financial implications related to this training.
- Community engagement: inform through the posting of this agenda, and also completed with resident, staff and stakeholders as a part of the Digital Kitchener strategy review.
- This report supports the “stewarding a better city together” strategic plan theme and the Digital Kitchener strategy review action within this theme.

BACKGROUND:

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is rapidly reshaping how cities deliver service, make decisions, and engage with residents. This education session builds upon a previous Council education session held on February 12, 2024 at Communitech, where Professor Jimmy Lin provided Council with an introduction to AI.

REPORT:

Staff have partnered with Communitech to deliver a 60-minute training session focused on AI.

In this session, councillors will gain a clear understanding of what artificial intelligence (AI) is, how it works, and why it matters for municipal decision-making. The training will explore

practical examples of AI in public services, outline its benefits and limitations, and highlight key considerations around ethics, privacy, and transparency.

This foundational knowledge is essential as AI increasingly shapes how cities deliver services, allocate resources, and engage with residents.

By building AI literacy, councillors will be better equipped to evaluate technology proposals, set ethical and privacy standards, and communicate confidently with the community. These skills strengthen decision-making, governance, and public engagement, while supporting strategic planning, resource optimization, and future-proof leadership as municipalities adopt more digital and data-driven solutions.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report supports Stewarding a better city together: review of the Digital Kitchener strategy.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

There are no financial implications for this training session. Staff have utilized the City's trusted strategic partnership with Communitech to deliver this training delivered by:

- Sheldon McCormick, CEO
- Matthew Klassen, VP, External Relations
- Carrie MacGillivray, Executive in Residence

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

INFORM – This report has been posted to the City's website with the agenda in advance of the council / committee meeting.

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

FCS-24-068: Digital Kitchener Innovation Lab exploration of AI

APPROVED BY: Victoria Raab, GM – corporate services

ATTACHMENTS: None

Staff Report



Chief Administrator's Office

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REPORT TO: Finance and Corporate Services Committee

DATE OF MEETING: January 26, 2026

SUBMITTED BY: Margaret Love, Director of Strategy & Corporate Performance,
519-783-8951

PREPARED BY: Justin Watkins, Manager of Corporate Planning, 519-783-8185

WARD(S) INVOLVED: All

DATE OF REPORT: December 30, 2025

REPORT NO.: [Report Number]

SUBJECT: Strategic Plan Update – Winter 2026 Implementation

RECOMMENDATION:

For information.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to highlight progress made on implementation of the strategic plan, as of December 31, 2025 (Attachment A).
- The key findings of this report are that 10 actions have been completed since last reported. Fourteen strategic actions have been completed to-date overall. Two strategic actions are delayed.
- There are no financial implications associated with this report.
- Community engagement included posting this report to the City's website with the agenda in advance of the committee meeting.
- This report supports implementation of the 2023-2026 City of Kitchener Strategic Plan.

BACKGROUND:

Kitchener's strategic plan sets priorities and actions to guide progress and resourcing over the term of council towards our long-term community vision. Through extensive engagement with the community and council, an initial set of 30 strategic actions were identified and approved with the new strategic plan in August 2023.

In August 2025, two emerging actions were added to the strategic plan, and two existing strategic actions were referred to the 2027-2030 strategic plan per CAO-2025-312. Progress on strategic plan implementation is reported to council three times per year.

REPORT:

Since the last strategic plan update to council, 10 strategic actions have been completed:

1. Housing For All Implementation (DSD)
2. Localized Transportation Safety Improvement Program (DSD)
3. City-wide Active Transportation Routes (DSD)
4. Pivot: Net-0 (DSD)
5. High Performance Development Standards (DSD)
6. Implement tree canopy target plan (INS)
7. Implement Health/Medical Technology Innovation Campus (DSD)
8. Entertainment Venue Management (DSD)
9. Enhance City's Engagement Practices (COR)
10. Community Centre Operating Model (CSD)

To date, 14 strategic actions have been completed overall. Project details for all strategic actions can be found in Attachment A.

Adjustments in Strategic Plan Implementation Since Last Reported

1. Due to changing circumstances, planned completion dates have changed for the following strategic actions and are **Delayed** (six-month delay or more):
 - Community Grants Review (CSD) – this action has been marked as delayed, having cumulatively adjusted its original planned completion date by 15 months (originally March 2025). The revised planned completion date is now June 2026.
 - Municipal Newcomers Strategy (CSD) – this action has been marked as delayed, having cumulatively adjusted its original planned completion date by 10 months (originally June 2025). The revised planned completion date is now April 2026.
2. New project managers have been assigned to the following strategic actions:
 - Enhance City's Engagement Practices (COR) – Erin Power

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report supports implementation of the 2023-2026 City of Kitchener Strategic Plan.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Capital Budget – The recommendation has no impact on the Capital Budget.

Operating Budget – The recommendation has no impact on the Operating Budget.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

INFORM – This report has been posted to the City's website with the agenda in advance of the council / committee meeting.

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

[CAO-2025-033 Strategic Plan Update – Winter 2025 Implementation](#)

[CAO-2025-214 Strategic Plan Update – Spring 2025 Implementation](#)

[CAO-2025-404 Strategic Plan Update – Summer 2025 Implementation](#)

APPROVED BY: Dan Chapman, CAO

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A: Strategic Plan Implementation Update (Summer 2025)



Building a Connected City Together								
We live in all kinds of neighbourhoods and types of housing. We work together to ensure that we each have secure and affordable homes. We get around easily, sustainably and safely to the places and spaces that matter most to us.								
Strategic Action	Description	Dept & Division	Project Manager	Planned Start	Planned Completion	Implementation Notes	Progress Update	
Housing For All Implementation	Continue to implement the City's Housing For All Strategy, working with other orders of government and a broad range of community partners, to enable the delivery of affordable housing units in our community by removing barriers at the City, advocating on behalf of the City of Kitchener; and implementing incentives that will enable more affordable housing to be built faster.	DSD Planning & Housing Policy	Lucas Van Meer-Mass	Jan 2025	Dec 2025	This is a multi-year strategic action. In 2025, the focus of the action will be advancing work on a housing needs assessment, which will in turn support filling data gaps, an inclusionary zoning assessment, the development of Kitchener 2051, and the development of Housing for All 2.0.	Complete	While a separate and new body of work, Housing for All 2.0 and related housing initiatives have advanced this quarter. The City's 2025 Housing Needs assessment was integrated into policies in the City's draft new Official Plan which was released in November 2025. Staff continue to collaborate with the Lived Expertise Working Group on housing-related work including public engagement related to the Official Plan. Staff advanced work on Inclusionary Zoning, a Community Improvement Plan and a land lease for a non-profit which are all initiatives funded by the Housing Accelerator Fund. With the Build Canada Homes recently released, staff have undertaken early efforts to align future projects with potential funding streams. This work is now operationalized within the Planning & Housing Policy division.
Localized Transportation Safety Improvement Program	Implement targeted, strategic infrastructure changes to make big improvements in the safety and connectivity of the active transportation network. This work is data-driven and community-guided through priorities identified in the Cycling and Trails Master Plan and Vision Zero.	DSD Transportation	Connor Payne	Jan 2025	Dec 2025	This is a multi-year strategic action. In 2025, the focus of the action will be continued implementation Vision Zero, including various safety and traffic calming improvements as identified in the Vision Zero Strategy.	Complete	Vision Zero Improvements for 2025 have all been installed, including 14 Speed Cushions, 17 Speed Humps, one Pedestrian Crossover and one pedestrian refuge island. Collision analysis from 2024 is underway for spring staff report/update and 2026 network screening and program planning has commenced. Safety improvements planned for 2026 will be developed and submitted to council for approval in the first quarter of 2026. In parallel, we are initiating a new research partnership with the University of Waterloo and neighbouring municipalities, focused on advancing road safety at intersections. This work is now operationalized within the Transportation division.
City-wide Active Transportation Routes	Encourage increased use of active transportation that connects neighbourhoods through holistic trail and bike route enhancements that are easy to identify, navigate and use for all ages and abilities.	DSD Transportation	Alison Carlyle	Apr 2024	Sept 2025	This strategic action will be completed in 2025.	Complete	Final infrastructure upgrades for Route 1, from the Boardwalk to Downtown, are currently underway, including signage. An opening celebration event for the first route will be planned for 2026. Work continues to implement the long-term Cycling and Trails Master Plan. This includes starting planning for the second route which will be implemented in 2026 connecting Stanley Park to Downtown. This work is now operationalized within the Transportation division.

KITCHENER'S 2023-2026
STRATEGIC PLAN



Strategic Action	Description	Dept & Division	Project Manager	Planned Start	Planned Completion	Implementation Notes	Progress Update	Strategic Action
Official Plan Comprehensive Update	Undertake a comprehensive review of both the City's Official Plan and Transportation Master Plan in an integrated way, to update the rules around what can be built in Kitchener's neighbourhoods and provide more flexible options for how people get around; and including a focus on encouraging missing middle housing and adapting to climate change.	DSD Planning & Housing Policy	Tim Donegani	Jan 2025	Dec 2025	This is a multi-year strategic action. In 2025, Phase 2 of this action will focus on continued utilization of the community working group to guide engagement, receipt of final deliverables from consultant-led work, and drafting of the new official plan. Phase 3 of this action will begin in 2026.	On Track	<p>The draft official plan was released for community and collaborator conversations in November. Six in person engagement events were undertaken in late November and early December; two lunch and learn sessions were held with the development industry; and an online survey was available throughout November and December providing an opportunity for all to share their thoughts on the draft official plan. Dialogue with Indigenous rights holders is ongoing.</p> <p>In first quarter of 2026, staff intend to send a second draft official plan to the provincial government for feedback. Staff will continue to address comments on the draft official plan with a goal of bringing forward proposed plan for council's consideration in the first half of 2026.</p> <p>The Transportation Master Plan (Connected Kitchener) is Kitchener's study to create a new Transportation and Mobility Plan. Phase 1 of Connected Kitchener launched this fall. Staff plan to bring forward a proposed plan following council's approval of the new official plan.</p>



Cultivating a Green City Together

We follow a sustainable path to a greener, healthier city. We work together to enhance and protect our parks and natural environment while transitioning to a low-carbon future.
We support businesses and residents to make more climate-positive choices.

Strategic Action	Description	Dept & Division	Project Manager	Planned Start	Planned Completion	Implementation Notes	Progress Update	
Pivot: Net-0	Define the City's corporate Climate Action Plan 2.0 to achieve GHG emission reductions generated by City-owned assets, including at least one energy efficiency business case/implementation and 'greening' the City fleet in order to adapt to a low-carbon future and build resilience for climate change impacts.	DSD Office of GM	Anna Marie Cipriani	Jun 2025	Dec 2025	This is a multi-year strategic action. In 2025, the focus of this action will be developing business cases on ice making and fleet electrification.	Complete	Cold water ice pilot business case has completed. Future work includes a fleet electrification business case with a video and summary sheet anticipated in early 2026. This work is now operationalized within the organization.
Clean Energy Transition Strategy	Complete the Kitchener Utilities clean energy transition strategy and implementation plan to shift reliance on conventional natural gas as an energy source in order to transition to a low-carbon future for Kitchener.	INS Office of GM	Kate Daley	Jan 2024	Dec 2025	This is a multi-year strategic action. In 2024-2025, the focus is on evaluation of options and recommending business opportunities to respond to the energy transition. The next phase of this action will begin in 2026.	On Track	Investigations of potential business activities are proceeding across a broad range of areas, with the support of specialist consultants. Simultaneously, a set of tools is being developed to inform decision-making and address the considerable complexity involved in the project. These two components together will enable the development of an integrated business approach in the next stage of the project, in mid-2026. At the same time, opportunities to proceed with "quick win" actions within our existing programming continue to be pursued.
District Energy Business Case	Complete a District Energy business case for the downtown area to explore clean energy opportunities to be a leader as a low-carbon city.	DSD Planning & Housing Policy	Tim Donegani	Jan 2024	Aug 2025	This strategic action will be completed in 2025.	Complete	The business case is complete, and staff will explore funding options moving forward.
High Performance Development Standards	Define and implement high performance development standards for new building construction throughout Kitchener which will ensure they are more sustainable.	DSD Planning & Housing Policy	Janine Oosterveld	Feb 2024	Dec 2025	This strategic action will be completed in 2025.	Complete	In light of changes to provincial legislation, reconsideration of the planned approach will be explored moving forward.

KITCHENER'S 2023-2026
STRATEGIC PLAN



Strategic Action	Description	Dept & Division	Project Manager	Planned Start	Planned Completion	Implementation Notes	Progress Update	
Implement tree canopy target plan	Implement Council-approved investments in tree canopy improvements with a focus on planting more trees, maintenance of existing trees; increase communication and stewardship for residents, institutions and businesses to plant and maintain trees on private property.	INS Parks & Cemeteries	Hajnal Kovacs	Jan 2024	Dec 2025	This is a multi-year strategic action. In 2024-2025, the focus of this action will be tree planting in areas with low equity scores and supporting Reep's private planting program, proactive pruning and maintenance programs, and creating a forestry and natural areas communications strategy.	<u>Complete</u>	The \$2.5 million GCCC (Growing Canada's Canopy Community) investment to double the City's tree planting efforts is well underway, with 910 boulevard trees planted this fall, one third of those in Community Canopy target areas. Some boulevard tree planting has been deferred to spring due to early winter. In partnership with Reep Green Solutions, 138 trees were added on private properties, 92 within Community Canopy zones. Block pruning remains on schedule for all 2025 areas, with some 2024 backlog cleared and over 7,500 trees pruned this year. Work has begun on an invasive species mapping and management plan, and development of a new urban forest map is underway alongside the 2025 canopy cover update. Public educational resources were expanded with updated website content, downloadable specifications, and a species selection matrix to support residents and planners. This work is now operationalized within the Parks & Cemeteries division.
Implementing actions from Parks master plan	Implementing actions from the 'Places' component of the City's 'Spaces and Places' plan with a focus on the quality of park spaces including infrastructure, environment and design, to encourage people to spend more time in parks.	INS Parks & Cemeteries	Mark Parris	Jan 2025	Jun 2026	This is a multi-year strategic action. In 2025, Phase 1 will include obtaining council approval for the Places component of the Spaces and Places Plan and working on the initial priorities of the plan. Tasks will include creating a workplan and communication/engagement strategy, as well as advancing park network improvements for the following parks: Hibner, Breithaupt, Major, Arnold, and Ash Park. Additional projects to be undertaken include the Upper Canada Park accessible sportsfield improvements and amenities as well as splashpad improvements at Chandler Mowat Community Centre.	On Track	Progress continues with the implementation plan set out in Places & Spaces over the 10-year forecast. Parks staff are leading four strategies, 28 capital improvements, and eight new park developments. In 2026, staff will begin an additional three strategies, eight park upgrade improvements and one new park for a total division budget of \$23.9M. In addition, Parks staff are supporting seven DMAF (Disaster Mitigation and Adaptation Fund) projects investing over \$4M in parks assets within those projects.
Parkland Acquisition Strategy	Create a Parkland Acquisition Strategy to support the addition of park space to urban areas, with a focus on underserved areas and updating the funding model.	DSD Development & Housing Approvals	Simon Latam	Jun 2024	Mar 2026	This strategic action will be completed in 2026.	On Track	Council workshops for engagement were completed in October and November. Drafting of the Parkland Acquisition Strategy is currently underway, with planned completion and presentation to council in the first quarter of 2026.
Grand River Park Strategy	Complete a strategy to advance the creation of a significant new park near the Grand River.	INS Parks & Cemeteries	Carol Bacon	Oct 2023	Dec 2025	This is a multi-year strategic action. In 2024-2025, Phase 1 of this action will establish a vision for a Grand River Park, a site inventory and assessment of opportunities and constraints, and recommendations on implementation of land acquisition. Phase 2 of this action will begin in 2025-2026.	On Track	An update to the June 2025 caucus report was completed in November. Staff are proceeding with land acquisitions as directed by council.

KITCHENER'S 2023-2026
STRATEGIC PLAN



Creating an Economically-Thriving City Together

We use our collective strengths to grow an agile and diverse local economy powered by talented entrepreneurs, workers and artists.
We work together to create opportunities for everyone and a resilient future that propels our city forward.

Strategic Action	Description	Dept & Division	Project Manager	Planned Start	Planned Completion	Implementation Notes	Progress Update	
Accelerate Commercial Business Approvals	Facilitate streamlined business process and approvals for brick and mortar retail business across the City.	DSD Office of GM	Margaret Love	Sep 2023	Apr 2024	This strategic action will be completed in 2024.	Complete	<p>A Lean review of seven processes, administered within five business areas (Building, Licensing, Planning, Legal, and Economic Development), was completed in March 2024. The review resulted in 55 recommendations to streamline processes and help businesses open their doors quicker. The review included engagement with business owners and City staff, including the Waterloo Region Small Business Centre. A report summarizing the review outcomes and requesting funding to begin implementing the recommendations was provided to Finance and Corporate Services Committee in April. The project is now complete, and a two-year implementation plan has been developed.</p> <p>The final report can be found here.</p>
Implement Health/Medical Technology Innovation Campus	Advance the health innovation sector in partnership with local post-secondary institutions and businesses to support innovation and business development in the medical technology field.	DSD Economic Development	Cory Bluhm	Jan 2025	Dec 2025	This is a multi-year strategic action. In 2025, Phase 1 will focus on designing, building, and opening the new WR Small Business Centre space at the Health Innovation Arena and advancing early environmental and geotechnical work for the Bramm Yards.	Complete	A design for the Waterloo region small business centre space at the Innovation Arena has been developed. Staff are currently working with the designer and UW to cost the design in alignment with the approved budget. Environmental and geotechnical work on the Bramm Yards is currently underway. In 2026, the City will continue to operationalize this action by working with key stakeholders to build out the Health Innovation Arena.
Creative Industries School	Collaborate with Conestoga College to build a new, leading-edge Creative Industries school focused on skill building and career development in media, communications, and design.	DSD Economic Development	Lauren Chlumsky	Jul 2024	May 2026	This is a multi-year strategic action. In 2024-2025, Phase 1 of this action will focus on development of a business case to consider an appropriate level of investment. Phase 2 of this action will begin in 2025.	On Track	City staff continue to work with Conestoga College on the future direction of this action.
Special Events & Festivals Action Plan	Develop a strategy for events and community festivals to ensure Kitchener is a destination point for all, with a focus on residents' quality of life, cultural events, and supporting local business, culture and commerce.	DSD Economic Development	Steve Roth	Oct 2025	Dec 2026	This strategic action will be completed in 2026.	On Track	City staff presented an overview of the draft vision and action plan at a strategic session of council in November 2025. Staff intend to bring forward the action plan for council consideration in Q1 2026.
Make It Kitchener 2.0 Scoped Refresh – Supporting Economic Resiliency (CAO-2025-312)	Approaching the mid-way mark of the 10-year Make It Kitchener 2.0 economic development strategy, and given the significant economic factors currently at play, it is essential that the areas of focus be evaluated to determine if they are still relevant and to determine if any new initiatives are required to respond to the current economic climate.	DSD Economic Development	Lauren Chlumsky	Jul 2025	Mar 2026	This strategic action will be completed in 2026.	On Track	Staff are working with a consultant to provide an economic overview of Kitchener's current situation and identifying future areas of growth. The City's Economic Development Advisory Committee has been engaged in discussions on the refresh throughout Fall 2025. Staff anticipate stakeholder and council engagement will occur in January, a strategic session of council in February and a draft strategy in early Spring 2026.

KITCHENER'S 2023-2026
STRATEGIC PLAN



Strategic Action	Description	Dept & Division	Project Manager	Planned Start	Planned Completion	Implementation Notes	Progress Update	
Implementation of the Downtown Safety & Security Action Plan (CAO-2025-312)	A multi-year, collaborative initiative to enhance business vitality in Downtown Kitchener. The plan aims to create a welcoming, vibrant downtown through targeted business support, strengthened enforcement, improved coordination, and proactive promotion.	Office of the CAO	Aaron McCrimmon Jones	Feb 2025	Dec 2025	This is a multi-year project. In 2025, Phase 1 of this action will focus on developing the action plan with partners and initiating quick wins; initiating short-term actions; and implementing a portfolio management structure to organize, prioritize and establish accountability for the action plan over the medium and long term.	On Track	A formalized portfolio management structure has been established to organize, prioritize, and ensure accountability for the action plan. This structure will be sustained over the long term through designated program leads. Leadership of the portfolio will now transition from the CAO's Office to Economic Development. To support a smooth and complete transition by January, portfolio leaders are meeting regularly with a focus on maintaining key relationships and sustaining momentum. The action plan remains on track, with 19 of 20 short-term actions initiated or completed. Focus is now shifting to medium-term actions, and progress has begun on several of these items.
Entertainment Venue Management	Enhance entertainment venue management by working with key stakeholders, businesses and cultural producers across all City-affiliated entertainment venues.	DSD Economic Development	Jeremy Dueck	Feb 2024	Dec 2025	This strategic action will be completed in 2025.	Complete	The Centralized Services Provider team (Arts & Entertainment Venues unit) has worked in collaboration with facilities management and third-party venue operators to complete several capital projects. The Venues unit is also working closely with Centre in the Square on the launch of the Kitchener LIVE destination marketing brand and shared ticketing platform. This work is now operationalized within the Economic Development division.
Implement Arts & Creative Industries Action Plan	Implement the Arts and Creative Industries Action Plan in order to grow arts and culture in Kitchener and become a global leader in creative industries.	DSD Economic Development	Andrea Hallam	Oct 2025	Dec 2026	This strategic action will be completed in 2026.	On Track	City staff presented an overview of the draft vision and action plan at a strategic session of council in November 2025. Staff intend to bring forward the action plan for council consideration in Q1 of 2026.



Fostering a Caring City Together								
We welcome residents of all ages, backgrounds and lived experiences. We work together on the decisions that matter to us and have a meaningful influence in our community. We're healthy and thriving as we easily access the diverse and inclusive programs and services we need to succeed.								
Strategic Action	Description	Dept & Division	Project Manager	Planned Start	Planned Completion	Implementation Notes	Progress Update	
Advance Truth and Reconciliation	Advance meaningful actions to Truth and Reconciliation as identified and through relationship-building with Indigenous communities and rights-holders.	COR EARII	Jaclyn Rodrigues	Jan 2024	Dec 2024	This is a multi-year strategic action. In 2024, intentional and ongoing relationship building with Indigenous rights-holders will continue to be a focus, with emphasis on delivering meaningful actions as identified by and with these communities.	Complete	<p>For the past year, staff have highlighted the Wiijindamaan project; a multi-partner Indigenous land restoration project located within the Pioneer Tower Natural Area. Together, partners involved in the project (Wisahketowinowak Urban Indigenous Garden Collective, White Owl Native Ancestry Association and the City of Kitchener and Conestoga College) are working to help create sustainable, traditional food and medicines, increase biodiversity through habitat restoration and reintroduce natural species into the environment. Progress on this project will continue over several years and will therefore be removed from council's strategic plan implementation updates going forward.</p> <p>Advancing meaningful actions to truth and reconciliation remains a foundational commitment of the City of Kitchener. This work begins with developing meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities and rights-holders, and results in concrete actions, like the Wiijindamaan project. Advancing truth and reconciliation is not time-bound to the traditional reporting cadence of the strategic plan and is not tied to a single project or action. We are committed to demonstrating our continued commitment to truth and reconciliation in greater depth than this format allows at www.kitchener.ca/reconciliation.</p>
Municipal Newcomers Strategy	Create a strategy for newcomers to Canada in Kitchener focused on the role the municipality can play in welcoming newcomers into the community and supporting them where needed.	CSD Office of GM	Olabukonla Mise	Jul 2024	Dec 2025	This is a multi-year strategic action. In 2024-2025, Phase 1 of this action will focus on project scoping, an environmental scan and a community needs assessment. Phase 2 of this action will occur in 2025.	Delayed	<p>Staff have completed a broad engagement process with newcomers, community partners, and City staff to understand needs and priorities. This included input from over 1,100 newcomers and 25+ community organizations, and over 60 members of City staff. Staff have analyzed these insights with the help of the working group and are now engaging internally and with council members for their input. The Municipal Newcomers Strategy will be presented to council in early 2026.</p> <p>The planned completion for this strategic action has been moved from December 2025 to April 2026.</p>

KITCHENER'S 2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN



Strategic Action	Description	Dept & Division	Project Manager	Planned Start	Planned Completion	Implementation Notes	Progress Update	
Enhance City's Engagement Practices	Enhance the City's engagement practices to increase diverse representation, with a focus on including more deliberative/collaborative/entrust/co-creation approaches; and include a specific focus on developing capacity to promote, facilitate and coordinate ongoing relationship-building and connection with equity-deserving communities.	COR Office of GM	Erin Power	Jan 2025	Dec 2025	This is a multi-year strategic action. In 2025, Phase 2 will focus on an external public engagement campaign to gather feedback on foundational elements of the policy, followed by drafting the policy for council approval.	<u>Complete</u>	<p>Following Council's direction, staff updated the Community Engagement Policy based on findings from a review that included extensive internal and external engagement. The review confirmed the need to align the policy with current industry standards and best practices. The updated policy introduces guiding principles shaped by public input, aligns with the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) frameworks, and expands roles and accountabilities to strengthen engagement practices. A final report was submitted for council endorsement on November 20. As part transitioning this action to ongoing practice, staff will develop a corporate strategy to support implementation, including updated procedures, toolkits, training, and resources.</p> <p>The final report can be found here.</p>
Community Centre Operating Model	Modernize the City's community centre operating model to increase the number and diversity of programs and other supports provided at community centres, with a specific focus on centres located in under-served neighbourhoods.	CSD Office of GM	Elin Moorlag	Apr 2024	Dec 2025	This is a multi-year strategic action. In 2024-2025, Phase 2 of this action will focus on development of EDI training for affiliated neighbourhood associations and development of EDI and reinvestment policies for affiliated neighbourhood associations.	<u>Complete</u>	<p>EDI and reinvestment policy templates were developed in collaboration with affiliated Neighbourhood Associations and were distributed in the Fall of 2025 as part of the re-affiliation process for 2026, with the understanding that affiliated NAs who meet the requirements will develop and publish their own policies based on the template provided. The EDI training for NA board members has been developed and will be distributed through an online training platform for 2026 as a requirement for affiliation.</p> <p>This work is now operationalized within the Community Services department.</p>
City-led Recreation & Leisure program review	Review how the City provides direct recreation and leisure programming across all age groups to better position the municipality to respond to changing community needs.	CSD Office of GM					Refer and revisit as part of the 2027-2030 Strategic Plan (CAO-2025-312)	Due to limited development charge funding and the significant financial and staffing commitments required to open and operate the new Kitchener Indoor Recreation Complex (KIRC), the City is unable to proceed with new growth-related indoor recreation projects or comprehensive program reviews in the short to medium term. Revisiting these reviews as part of the next strategic plan will allow time to assess KIRC's impact on city-wide programming and ensure future planning is informed by evolving community needs.
Sport and Recreation Master Plan	Update the City's Sport & Recreation Master Plan including a focus on the provision of recreation and leisure that meet increasingly diverse needs of the community.	CSD Office of GM					Refer and revisit as part of the 2027-2030 Strategic Plan (CAO-2025-312)	Due to limited development charge funding and the significant financial and staffing commitments required to open and operate the new Kitchener Indoor Recreation Complex (KIRC), the City is unable to proceed with new growth-related indoor recreation projects or comprehensive program reviews in the short to medium term. Revisiting these reviews as part of the next strategic plan will allow time to assess KIRC's impact on city-wide programming and ensure future planning is informed by evolving community needs.

KITCHENER'S 2023-2026
STRATEGIC PLAN



Strategic Action	Description	Dept & Division	Project Manager	Planned Start	Planned Completion	Implementation Notes	Progress Update	
Community Grants Review	Change how the City utilizes its community grant program to better support community groups working on priorities that are aligned with the City's Strategic Plan.	CSD Office of GM	Elin Moorlag	May 2024	Dec 2025	This strategic action will be completed in 2025.	Delayed	<p>A comprehensive review of the City's Community Grants Program was completed throughout 2025. The review included the perspectives of 90+ Kitchener community organization grant recipients through online surveys, focus groups, and interviews, the design and implementation of 40 other Canadian municipalities were studied for comparisons, benchmarking and best practices. Staff will bring a report to council in 2026 with a series of recommendations for changes to the grant program based on the research and data collection gathered throughout the review.</p> <p>The planned completion for this strategic action has been moved from December 2025 to June 2026.</p>

KITCHENER'S 2023-2026
STRATEGIC PLAN



Stewarding a Better City Together We, the City's employees, are stewards of Kitchener's present and its future. We're responsive, innovative, diverse and accountable public servants who work together efficiently to serve residents. We remove barriers and champion residents' collective vision for a better city and a better world.								
Strategic Action	Description	Dept & Division	Project Manager	Planned Start	Planned Completion	Implementation Notes	Progress Update	
Strengthen employer identity/value proposition	Strengthen the City of Kitchener employer identity and employee value proposition to remain a competitive employer in order to attract and retain top talent.	COR Human Resources	Janette MacDonald	Jul 2025	Mar 2026	This is a multi-year strategic action. In 2025-2026, Phase 3 of this action will focus on the development of a refreshed People Plan, the City's strategy for attracting and retaining a highly qualified workforce to serve the evolving needs and priorities of our community	On Track	Substantial staff engagement has been completed to identify the City's competitive position as an employer. This input will help shape a consistent and compelling identity for Kitchener as an employer of choice. A vision statement and key messages are finalized, and work is underway to develop visual identity concepts. The next phase includes refreshing the People Plan to ensure the City's strategy for attracting and retaining a highly qualified workforce aligns with the updated employer brand.
Procurement innovation	Create innovative procurement opportunities to better engage with local start-ups and provide more opportunities for companies to propose creative ways to improve city service delivery.	FIN Financial Operations	Ryan Scott	Jan 2024	Mar 2025	This strategic action will be completed in 2025.	<u>Complete</u>	A communications notice regarding the Pitch Kitchener awards, which have been granted to three companies, is complete. The necessary agreements have been finalized with these companies, and the pilot phase for the technologies is set to begin and conclude this year. Beyond 2025, the intent is to continue the Pitch Kitchener program within regular City operations. A link to the Pitch Kitchener website can be found here .
Implement City-wide Data Strategy	Implement a City-wide Data Strategy to build foundational, organization-wide data practices to scale across the City, in order to deliver better services for residents.	COR Office of the GM	Linnea Scian	Jun 2025	Mar 2026	This is a multi-year strategic action. In 2025, Phase 2 of this action will focus on developing a data governance framework, piloting the framework with staff, designing data training, and drafting an open data policy. Phase 3 of this action will occur in 2026.	On Track	Initial data governance framework and guidelines (data labelling, data collection and access, and system permissions) will be presented to the City's Corporate Leadership Team in early 2026. Data literacy, governance and storytelling training are recommended to be included in the City's staff training catalogue in early 2026. Development of a data policy, which will include open data, data inventorying, and demographic data collection and use is underway.
Digital Kitchener Strategy	Refresh the City's Digital Kitchener strategy with a focus on investigating and adopting technologies including artificial intelligence, and innovations that improve service delivery for residents.	COR Technology Innovation & Services	Nicole Amaral	Jan 2025	Jun 2026	This strategic action will be completed in 2026.	On Track	Phases 1 and 2 of engagement (internal and external) have been completed and phase 3 (internal) has started. Feedback and research has informed a set of actions, opportunities and initiatives which the project team are currently reviewing to develop a set of final recommendations.
Support a Psychologically Safe Workplace	Identify and implement actions to support a psychologically safe workplace to enhance employee wellbeing, productivity and innovation.	COR Human Resources	Dimetra Resendes	Jan 2025	Dec 2025	This is a multi-year strategic action. In 2025, Phase 1 of this action will focus on project scoping, preparing a request for consulting support, reviewing and analyzing internal psychological safety data, and an environmental scan of municipal implementations of the 13 factors of Psychological Health and Safety.	On Track	Workplace wellbeing experts from Public Services Health and Safety Association (PSHSA) will complete focused engagement sessions with staff beginning in January. PSHSA will use insights from staff engagement combined with existing organizational data to develop an action plan that will support a psychologically safe workplace. Phase 2 of this action will take place in 2026.

Staff Report



Infrastructure Services Department

www.kitchener.ca

REPORT TO: Community and Infrastructure Services Committee

DATE OF MEETING: January 26, 2026

SUBMITTED BY: Joshua Shea, Manager of Forestry and Natural Areas Management,
519-783-7930

PREPARED BY: Hajnal Kovacs, Forestry Project Manager, 519-783-8864

WARD(S) INVOLVED: Ward(s) – All

DATE OF REPORT: December 17, 2025

REPORT NO.: INS-2026-014

SUBJECT: Tree Canopy Update

RECOMMENDATION:

For Information.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to share an update on the various activities to achieve long-term tree canopy goals of 30% canopy cover in each ward by 2050 and 33% city-wide by 2070 and to present the 2025 tree canopy cover data.
- The key finding of this report is that Kitchener's tree canopy cover is 26% which is a decrease of 1% from the previous 27% in 2019 assessment.
- There are no financial impacts associated with this report.
- This report supports **Cultivating a Green City Together: Focuses a sustainable path to a greener, healthier city; enhancing & protecting parks & natural environment while transitioning to a low-carbon future; supporting businesses & residents to make climate-positive choices.**

BACKGROUND:

Since 2014, the City of Kitchener has tracked changes in urban tree canopy cover using LiDAR surveys, an advanced imaging technology that helps measure how much area is covered by tree canopy cover. In 2022, Council set canopy targets to achieve 30% canopy cover in each ward by 2050 and 33% city-wide by 2070. These goals reflect Kitchener's commitment to urban forestry, climate resilience, and community well-being.

This report provides an update on the 2025 tree canopy coverage and Kitchener's progress toward these canopy targets.

REPORT:

This report provides an update on the tree canopy initiatives and measures to achieve the tree canopy targets approved by Council. It is recognized that the targets are ambitious yet achievable and provide long-term objectives that require near-term and ongoing investments.

Tree Canopy Initiatives

Tree Planting: The Growing Kitchener's Urban Canopy project, funded through the City's existing budget and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, is doubling tree planting efforts in 2025 and 2026. Kitchener planted 1,400 large trees in boulevards in 2025 and will plant an additional 3,000 in 2026. Council's previous investments in tree planting has enabled timely replacement of individual trees that have been removed from boulevards and contributes greatly to the resiliency and sustainability of the urban forest.

Tree Maintenance: The proactive block pruning program has maintained over 7,500 trees annually since 2024 (the annual goal of pruning 1/10th of inventoried trees) while the woodlot maintenance program removes hazards from woodlots (2,400 trees in 2025). The shared resources between these two programs creates some trade-offs between enhanced street tree care and backyard hazard tree removal.

Partnerships and Education Resources: Kitchener partners with REEP Green Solutions to expand urban tree cover on private properties. Since 2019, over 820 trees have been planted at subsidized rates. Since 2024, Kitchener's Community Canopy program has focused on planting new trees in low tree equity neighborhoods, offering the first tree for free to residence. REEP supports this program by organizing and coordinating the planting. REEP also fosters community engagement through guided Tree Walks, connecting residents with nature. Since 2023, Kitchener has collaborated with Sustainable Waterloo Region and Trees Canada to host 2-3 volunteer planting events annually, creating new canopy in parks and public spaces while strengthening community participation.

Tree Canopy Coverage

Tree canopy coverage exhibits natural year-to-year variability due to several factors so to account for this and ensure reliable trend analysis; canopy measurements are conducted on a five-year cycle.

Between 2014 and 2019, Kitchener's urban tree canopy cover increased from 25% to 27%. The 2025 assessment indicates a decline in tree canopy cover to 26%.

While existing trees have continued to grow and expand the canopy, these gains were not sufficient to compensate for the tree losses incurred since 2019. Where conditions permit, City trees are replaced when removed however the benefits of these new plantings take time to materialize. Young trees require 5-10 years before their canopy meaningfully contributes to overall coverage, making early and consistent replanting essential. Council's commitment to dedicated maintenance funding has been the cornerstone of the return on investment from retaining and maintaining the City's mature trees, ensuring the health and longevity of our urban forest. Without sustained, and ideally expanded, funding for both maintenance and planting, we

risk reversing these hard-won gains. Every dollar invested today accelerates canopy recovery, strengthens climate resilience, and enhances community livability for decades to come.

Canopy growth, largely driven by the expansion of existing trees, contributes to the greatest canopy gains but also creates vulnerability: losses of large, mature and aging trees due to various reasons can significantly reduce overall canopy coverage. There has been notable canopy losses since the last canopy survey in 2019, for reasons including:

- Ash dying from the invasive Emerald Ash Borer (Attachment A),
- Storm damage from major storm events in May 2021 and July 2022, (Attachment B)
- Hazard trees identified for removal based on risk assessment inspections, and
- Site alterations and construction projects.

These reasons have also led to some of the canopy cover variation across the wards. Other factors influencing canopy variations across wards include:

- Young trees in new developments or re-plantings have not yet contributed significantly to canopy cover (Attachment C), and
- Limited planting space in some areas like industrial areas which are dominated by impervious surfaces.

The 2025 ward-level canopy cover presented in Kitchener ranges from a high of 36% (Ward 4) to a low of 17% (Ward 5), seeFigure 1: Overview of the 2025 Tree Canopy Percentage per Ward compared to the City wide average. Figure 1. Over the most recent five-year period, none of the wards have seen canopy gains sufficient to give them an overall increase in tree canopy cover. Some Wards have decreased in canopy cover up to 3% since 2019. Five wards currently fall below the city-wide average of 26%, while 5 wards exceed it .

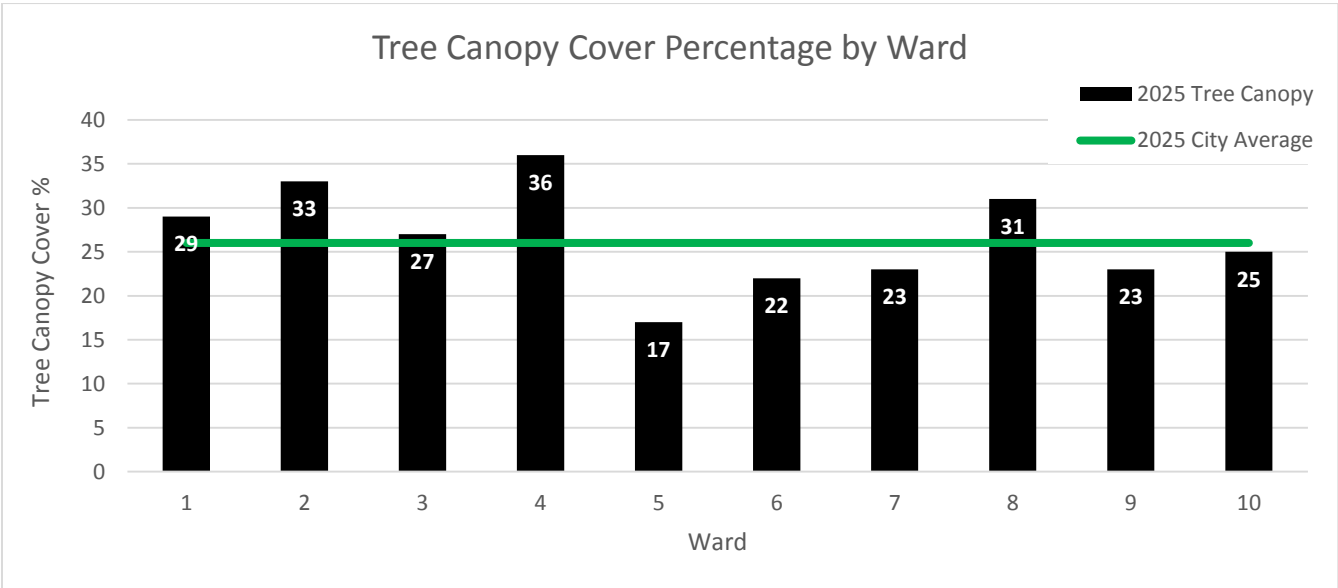


Figure 1: Overview of the 2025 Tree Canopy Percentage per Ward compared to the City wide average.

Tree Canopy Ownership

Tree canopy cover distribution in the City is almost evenly split between private land and public land:

- 49% of the canopy is on private land (down from 50% in 2019),
- 49% is on public land (up from 48% in 2019), and
- The remaining canopy falls in areas with an unknown ownership

The trend shows a small shift of canopy cover from private to public land since 2019. This could indicate:

- Increased planting or preservation efforts on public property,
- Possible loss of or slower growth of trees on private property, or
- City acquisition of natural area properties through the subdivision development process and other acquisition opportunities.

Staff recently reviewed tree conservation processes and are implementing improvements to strengthen protections and compensation for public trees. Staff are in the process of reviewing opportunities to enhance private tree conservation through the bylaw, policies, education, and community engagement, ensuring all neighbourhoods contribute to a thriving urban forest.

Next Steps and Strategic Opportunities

To increase our tree canopy immediately by just 1% (1.38 km²), we would need to plant 1.3 million new trees to realize the growth immediately, whereas allowing trees to grow over 20 or 40 years we would only need to plant 40,000 or 18,000 trees, respectively. This difference highlights the value of long-term planning and proper tree maintenance. Continued investment in tree maintenance, health and survival today ensures that fewer newly planted trees are needed to achieve canopy goals, saving resources and maximizing overall benefits.

Tree canopy growth is about sustainable, long-term gains. While fluctuations happen, our commitment ensures steady momentum toward our goals. Kitchener residents consistently support a greener, healthier city. As we work toward our 2050 and 2070 canopy targets, protecting and maintaining existing trees is one of the most effective strategies. Recent findings reinforce the need for proactive preservation, strategic replacement, and sustained investment in planting and care to ensure long-term urban forest health and expand canopy coverage citywide.

The next tree canopy assessment is scheduled for 2030 and a report will be brought forward to Council at that time to share an update on progress in achieving our tree canopy target.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report supports **Cultivating a Green City Together: Focuses a sustainable path to a greener, healthier city; enhancing & protecting parks & natural environment while transitioning to a low-carbon future; supporting businesses & residents to make climate-positive choices.**

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Capital Budget – The recommendation has no impact on the Capital Budget.

Operating Budget – The recommendation has no impact on the Operating Budget.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

Staff continue to utilize a variety of social media, website content and other communications tactics to regularly engage with the community including social media videos, surveys, promotions etc. around the Forestry program.

INFORM – This report has been posted to the City's website with the agenda in advance of the council / committee meeting.

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

- [INS-2022-002 Tree Canopy Target for Kitchener](#)
- [INS-20-017 – Kitchener Urban Forest Canopy - Update](#)

APPROVED BY: Denise McGoldrick, General Manager, Infrastructure Services

ATTACHMENTS:

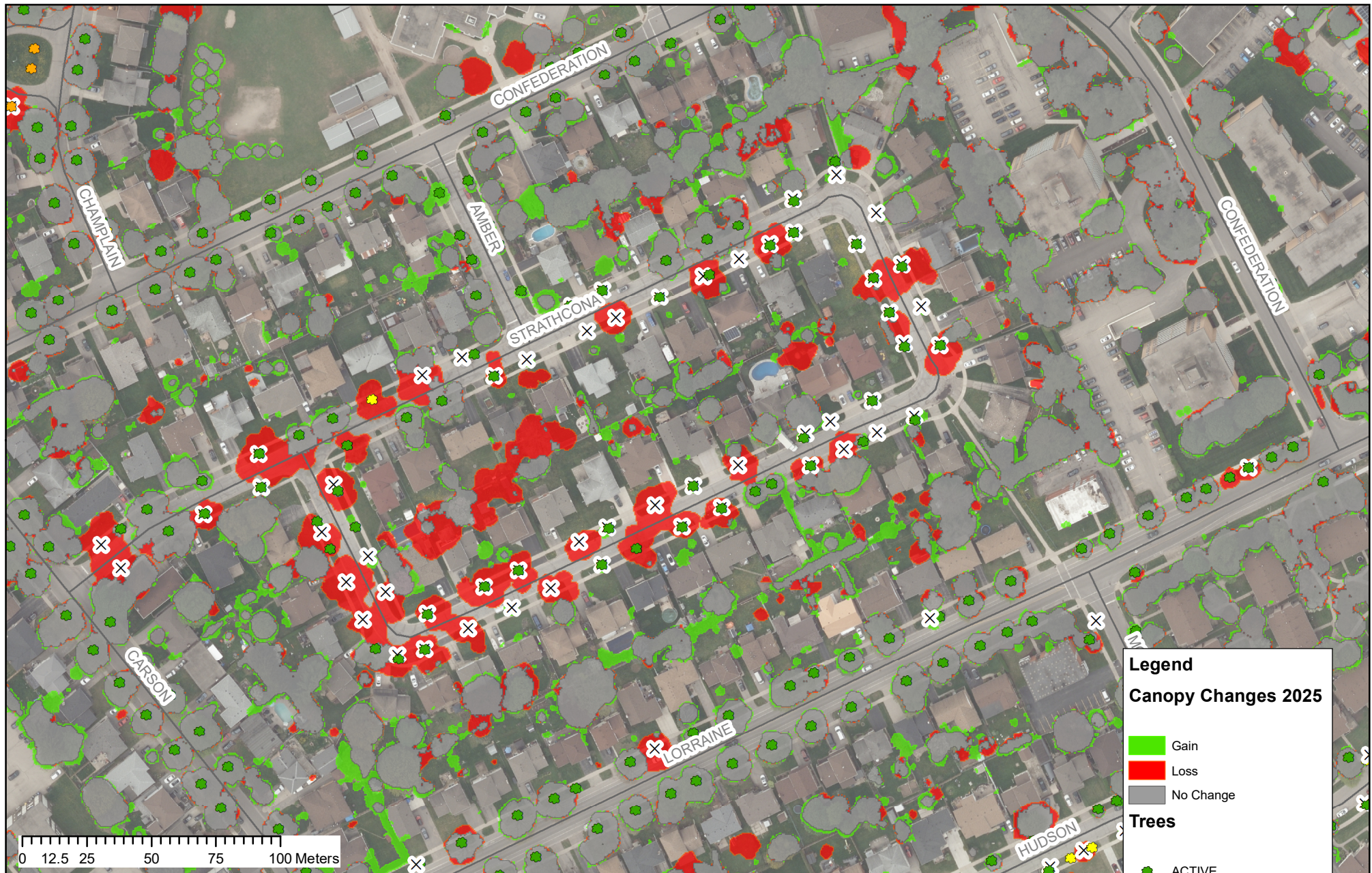
Attachment A – Map of Example Ash Loss

Attachment B – Map of Example of Storm Damage

Attachment C – Map of Example of New Tree Canopy

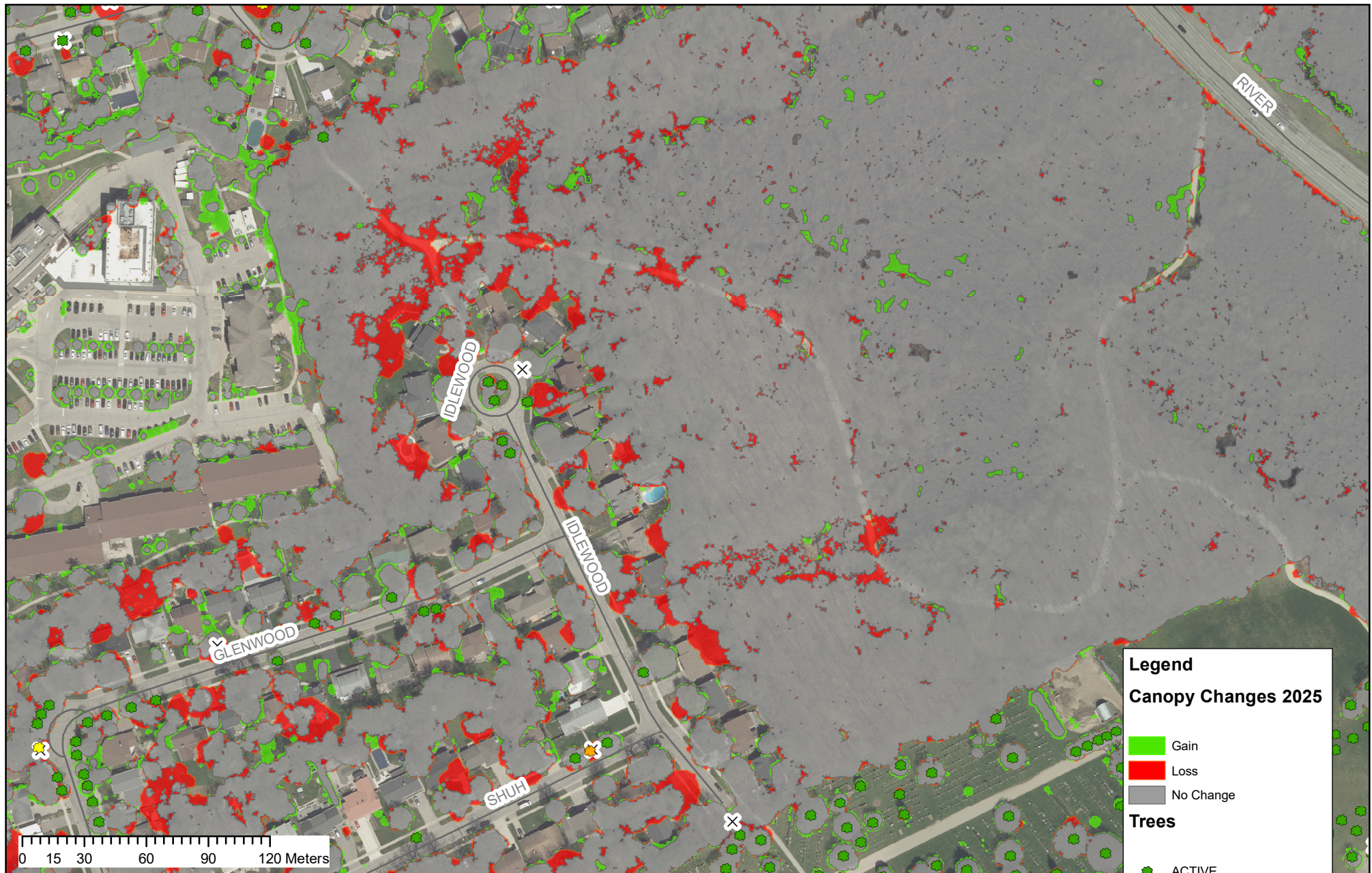
TREE CANOPY CHANGE SINCE 2019

Ash tree canopy loss, replanting vs. other maintained tree canopy



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TREE CANOPY CHANGE SINCE 2019 Canopy loss in storm areas vs other maintained tree canopy



Legend

Canopy Changes 2025

Gain

Loss

No Change

Trees

ACTIVE

FIELD MISTAKE - DELETE

PLANNED PLANTING

POTENTIAL PLANTING

REMOVED

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TREE CANOPY CHANGE SINCE 2019

New trees take years to meaningfully contribute to canopy surveys



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Legend Canopy Changes 2025

- Gain
- Loss
- No Change

Trees

- ACTIVE
- ◇ FIELD MISTAKE - DELETE
- ★ PLANNED PLANTING
- ★ POTENTIAL PLANTING
- × REMOVED