

Downtown Kitchener **Vision and Guiding Principles**



Vision and Principles

Downtown Kitchener (aka DTK) is at a critical point in its evolution and growth. To ground new and ongoing City initiatives in equity, experience, growth and sustainability, the City of Kitchener initiated the development of a comprehensive vision and set of guiding principles.

Community members from diverse backgrounds were engaged in a collaborative and expansive process to gather input on their experiences with and aspirations for DTK.

After consulting with nearly 3,000 individuals the following key messages emerged which have informed the final vision and principles:

The importance of vibrant streets, public spaces and green space, especially as growth occurs in the downtown.

Strong support for more connected and continuous active transportation and public transportation networks.

The need for community-building efforts, strengthening the connection between neighbours.

Greater efforts to support the unhoused/precariously housed and those in crisis who live in Kitchener.

Downtown Kitchener was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and requires investment and rejuvenation to support existing local businesses and attract new ventures

The importance of integrating climate adaptation and resiliency actions into the city's day-to-day functions.

Strengthened support, advocacy and action towards an inclusive, equitable and accessible downtown, that also helps to advance Truth and Reconciliation.

Engagement Process



95
Participants
11 Do-it-Yourself
Workshop



1,857
Participants
6 Community Pop-ups



7
Participants
1 Downtown Action and
Advisory Committee Meeting



30
Members
15 Downtown Community
Working Group Meetings



4
Organizations
1 Service Provider
Workshop



11
Participants
2 Council Workshops



2
Meetings
With Local Indigenous
Organizations



940
**Participants in Online
Engagement**



1,591
**Project Webpage
Views on Kitchener.ca**



60,216
**Social Media Ad
Impressions**



6,212
**Project Webpage
Views on Engagewr.ca**

A Vision for the Future

The places we connect to and care about aren't just destinations. DTK is no exception. Downtown Kitchener has a distinctive energy that makes it unique, special and instantly recognizable to all who know and love it.

A strong vision statement is a short mantra that tells everyone who reads it not what DTK is now, but what impact it intends to make in the future. This vision will guide DTK towards an exciting future that everyone in Kitchener will embrace.





Downtown Kitchener

The
Heart
of the **City**
that
Excites,
Supports,
and **Unites.**

Connecting Vision and Guiding Principles

The vision and guiding principles are related-but-distinct.

You can think of DTK's vision as the North Star, serving as a bright, unwavering beacon that guides the community towards an ideal future state. The guiding principles are a set of navigational tools that keep DTK oriented and moving towards the vision.

1 Guiding principles are statements that feel authentic to people's experiences with DTK and what they know it's capable of achieving. Much like the vision, they are future-forward statements of what DTK can be.

2 The guiding principles are intentionally not rooted in action. They exist to provide the City with a bold, progressive and consensus-built GPS to navigate the considerable work of building a resilient downtown that endures for the foreseeable future.

3 The guiding principles are grounded in disrupting the status quo, challenging conventions, and inspiring action that makes a long-lasting impact. To that end:

- Imagine a DTK that exudes a feeling of liveliness and vibrancy every day of the week.
- Imagine a DTK where everyone can easily connect to the people, services and spaces they need.
- Imagine a DTK where people from all walks of life feel like they truly belong.

DTK would be considered a bold example of a thriving downtown if these three things were true. The guiding principles exist to keep everyone on the same page to get there.





DTK Principle: **Radiating Vibrancy**

DTK pulses with a positive energy that makes it feel alive – from workdays to date nights and every moment in between. It's not just about lively programming; it's about people, places and spaces that hum with purpose.

In DTK, sustainable streetscapes blend familiar landmarks with deliberate new designs. Independent shops and restaurants flourish alongside well-known brands in DTK.

It's the place where world-class cultural institutions leave lasting impressions. It's where innovation takes root. It's where learning never stops, work feels welcoming and creativity flows naturally.

At its core, DTK is more than a desirable destination. It's an unmistakable feeling that even if something awesome isn't happening right this minute, it's just around the corner.

"Vibrancy is both the programming AND the place."

- Downtown Community Working Group member

DTK Principle: **Cultivating Connection**

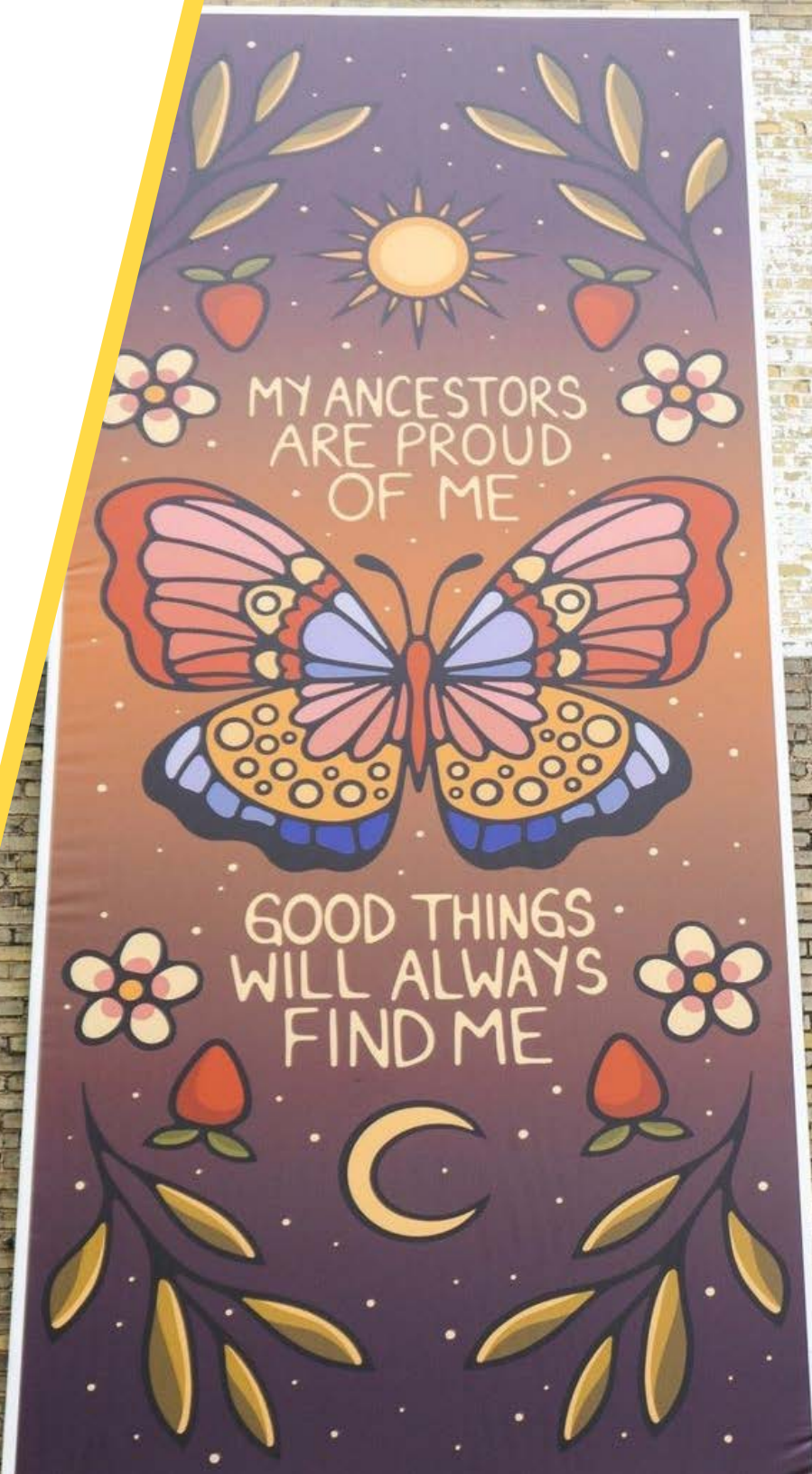
In DTK, people routinely bump into someone they know well or someone they'd like to get to know better. From solo excursions to group events, DTK fuels shared experiences that leave a lasting impression.

DTK prioritizes pedestrians while making sure smart transportation choices abound. It's the place where accessibility is never an add-on but baked in from the start. In DTK, everyone can easily get where they need to go, within and beyond the core.

DTK is the place to recall fond memories and make new ones. It's where planning draws from rich roots to fortify the future. It's where creating thoughtful public spaces is at the forefront, not an afterthought. It's where being green isn't a talk track, it's a natural choice. It's the place where people form those magnetic bonds that keep drawing them back to the heart of the city.

"I love the word connection because it can be social, physical, geographical, historical or ecological."

- Downtown Community Working Group member





DTK Principle: **Belonging**

People feel seen in DTK. The Downtown community respects and accepts every person for who they are. DTK provides the comforting feeling that they are meant to be here.

Whether simply passing time or on a mission to get things done, DTK makes it easy for people to find support for their goals and acknowledgement of their progress.

Working and living in DTK is not an either/or proposition. Housing is deliberately designed for the diverse majority, not the privileged few. DTK embraces a mix of residents who seek security and take care of their neighbours.

“It’s not just where you want to be but where you feel accepted and know it’s okay to be there.”

- Downtown Community Working Group member

Where Do We Go From Here?

Over the coming years this vision and guiding principles will come to life through action. We will engage with colleagues and stakeholders to ensure all work is aligned in support of this new direction.

The vision and guiding principles will inform far-reaching initiatives, with current examples including land use and zoning framework for the Major Transit Station areas, Civic District Master Plan, District Energy, Bramm Yards Master Plan, Arts and Culture Strategy, Inclusionary Zoning, Places and Spaces, City-owned Lands Plan and the City's updated Official Plan.

We are committed to working collaboratively and with partners to ensure all future DTK initiatives are evaluated through the filters of vibrancy, connection and belonging so we can continue to build the heart of the city that excites, supports and unites.



Have Questions or want to learn more?
We would love to hear from you:
downtown@kitchener.ca

**DOWNTOWN
KITCHENER**

TOGETHER WE OWN IT

WWW.DOWNTOWNKITCHENER.CA

@DTKITCHENER

#DTKLOVE