



Uptown Vision 2030

Uptown Vision Committee

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Photo Credit: Uptown Waterloo BIA



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Vision Statement

In 2030, Uptown Waterloo will be a safe, inclusive and attractive place to live, work, visit and enjoy. Uptown will be a vibrant city centre that showcases what the City of Waterloo has to offer. Waterloo's historical character will be highlighted while embracing its sustainable growth as an environmentally progressive, equitable, innovative and culturally rich community.



Photo Credit: *City of Waterloo*



Introduction

The Uptown Vision Committee was formed in 1992 to create a Vision for Uptown to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the City of Waterloo in 2007. Since then, an update to this Vision was made in 2008 as the Uptown Vision 2025. Today, this document builds upon the previous successes and looks ahead to 2030. The mandate of the Uptown Vision Committee is:

The Uptown Vision Committee will provide input and advice to council and staff on matters pertaining to issues impacting the economic, social, cultural, environmental, physical and educational situation in order to strengthen the Uptown core.

The purpose of this touchstone document is to provide a general vision to help shape Uptown Waterloo in the coming years. The Uptown Vision 2030 builds upon existing policy direction such as the City and Regional Official Plans, Transportation Master Plan, Zoning By-law and Strategic Plan, however it is intended as standalone guidance that can also inform future policy updates.

Vibrant and sustainable communities embrace diversity, respect, compassion and cultural expression. Today, Uptown Waterloo has the opportunity to lead the way in becoming an active and resilient city centre that prioritizes the well-being of its residents and showcases social, environmental and urban design innovation.



Using the Vision

The Uptown Vision 2030 is organized within five perspectives: *Live*, *Work*, *Play*, *Move*, and *Build*. Each perspective includes a summary, general objectives and a series of specific sample projects and initiatives. Rather than being prescriptive, the projects and initiatives listed are meant as examples and inspiration for potential future enhancements to Uptown Waterloo, and should be taken as such.

Live in a safe and complete community that promotes well-being.

Work in a prosperous city-centre that supports a diversified economy.

Play in a vibrant destination that provides passive and active recreation.

Move through a pedestrian-oriented city-centre within a balanced multimodal network.

Build to support a strong sense of place and identity for the community.

To ensure that the Uptown Vision 2030 has meaningful impact, it is recommended that it is used by Council, City staff and other Committees as a guiding vision to inform policy and development planning; parks, streets and open space planning; and economic, environmental, social and cultural development initiatives.



Photo credit: City of Waterloo



Guiding Principles

Each of the five perspectives is intended to encompass the following principles:

Inclusive

A community that welcomes, engages and accommodates people of all ages, incomes, cultural backgrounds, gender identities and abilities.

Equitable

A community that provides opportunities for all, including housing, work, and passive and active recreation.

Diverse

A community that is safe for everyone and is united by respecting and celebrating its diverse residents, visitors and workers.

Collaborative

A community where residents, businesses, organizations and the City work together through transparent and inclusive processes to achieve common goals.

Culturally Rich

A community that embraces its diverse heritage and provides continuous opportunities for artistic expression.

Liveable

A community that fosters a high quality of life by providing a wide range of services and recreation opportunities day and night, and during all seasons.

Sustainable

A community that protects nature, takes action on climate change mitigation and adaptation, enhances air quality, reduces consumption of resources, cares for its residents and is economically resilient.

Complete

A community that provides basic services, recreation, transportation and work opportunities in a compact urban form.

Resilient

A community that demonstrates resilience and collective response to shared challenges.



Live



Photo Credit: Uptown Waterloo BIA, Tomasz Adamski

Uptown Waterloo will be a liveable and complete community that enhances the well-being of its residents. Quality of life in Uptown Waterloo should be supported by a range of services, volunteerism, stewardship and housing opportunities that reflect its diverse social fabric, with the specific objectives of:

- A. Supplying a full range of housing types, including affordable and mixed income units, in a variety of unit sizes and layouts to support a diverse mix of residents;
- B. Increase the housing supply in Uptown through sensitive and creative infill principles;
- C. Ensuring the well-being of Uptown residents through the provision of basic services such as groceries, pharmacies, dental and medical offices, parks, schools and entertainment venues;
- D. Provide an inclusive public realm that accommodates passive and active recreation for all users that is vibrant, accessible, properly shaded and lit; and
- E. Promote sustainable development practices recognizing the climate emergency through climate mitigation and adaptation initiatives and projects that enhance the environment and well-being within Uptown Waterloo.



Live Sample Initiatives and Tools

1. Ensure the provision of affordable housing within innovative mixed-use projects on City-owned lands in Uptown Waterloo.
2. Encourage developments that integrate diverse uses such as housing, recreation, gathering space and services for the community (e.g. model hub that combines mixed income and affordable housing, affordable retail, community services and/or amenity space).
3. Encourage the development of a food security plan that considers accessible community vegetable gardens in Uptown, and promotes their adoption by community stewards in accordance with the City's Community Garden Plan.
4. Include provisions for different forms of sensitive residential and mixed-use intensification in future updates to the Official Plan and Zoning By-law.
5. Consider allowing small-scale commercial uses within infill development.
6. Encourage the provision of different unit layouts in new residential development.
7. Protect the public realm for free, open and accessible public use and events (e.g. limiting the space that is allocated to private restaurant patios).
8. Provide incentives for carbon reduction, and climate adaptation and mitigation measures (e.g. Vancouver's Zero Carbon building policies, green infrastructure, greenspace and/or nature-based solutions).
9. Consider incorporating temporary shade features in public space during warmer months.
10. Protect and enhance natural habitats by applying Pollinator Friendly City principles.
11. Encourage and support community building initiatives for all Uptown neighbourhoods (e.g. Neighbourhood Strategy).



Work



Photo Credit: Uptown Waterloo BIA, Darin White, Alexandre Tavares

Uptown Waterloo will be a centre for economically diverse activity that includes services, retail, offices, public institutions, cultural and community organizations. Uptown will continue to be seen as a vibrant technology hub as it evolves into a complete city centre that provides a full range of employment opportunities, and encourages and promotes volunteerism and stewardship, to:

- A. Ensure that Uptown Waterloo is a major employment node and an attractive destination for local, national and global organizations and employers;
- B. Strengthen the network of local business support to increase economic resilience for Uptown businesses;
- C. Continue building on Waterloo's reputation as an Intelligent Community, with Uptown Waterloo as the central innovation hub where technology, social impact, creative, cultural and academic institutions and organizations collaborate;
- D. Promote economic activity and employment growth along the side streets in Uptown, in addition to the King Street corridor, through policy and zoning framework and by attracting a wider range of businesses;



- E. Encourage the provision of innovative, diverse, flexible and affordable spaces to accommodate emerging workplace needs; and
- F. Encourage and support a mix of business that represents and supports a socially and economically diverse community.

Work Sample Initiatives and Tools

1. Support creative place-making initiatives to ensure that Uptown is an active and vibrant centre for people and businesses day and night and in all seasons.
2. Streamline processes for implementing policies and initiatives that support changing community and business needs (e.g. expanded patios, temporary pedestrian streets).
3. Encourage the development of adaptable and flexible spaces that can accommodate different types of work opportunities (e.g. temporary affordable leases of vacant storefronts for pop-ups, spaces that function differently at different times of the day).
4. Consider the development of City-owned lands into flexible, multi-use buildings that include diverse employment opportunities.
5. Continue publishing a regular report about Uptown Waterloo's vibrancy and vitality to better understand how the core is evolving.
6. Develop strategies to attract and support more diverse businesses to Uptown, with particular attention to businesses owned by underrepresented business owners, such as racialized people and people with disabilities.



Play



Photo Credit: Uptown Waterloo BIA, Austin Gibson, James Jackson

Uptown Waterloo will be a lively destination for recreational and leisure activities; arts and culture; shopping and dining; and distinctive events and festivals, aimed at engaging a diverse audience. Uptown will celebrate Waterloo's diverse culture through a vibrant and safe public realm, while providing recreational opportunities in inviting, sustainable green spaces. The objectives for this perspective are:

- A. Ensure Uptown Waterloo remains a vibrant and attractive focal point for the City that includes a variety of spaces for active and passive recreation, and cultural enjoyment throughout the year;
- B. Embrace and celebrate Waterloo's diversity by encouraging and providing public space and opportunities to showcase many forms of cultural expression that reflect a range of stories and experiences and engage a diversity of audiences;
- C. Continue to encourage public and private sector art installations and exhibitions within Uptown;
- D. Ensure access to nature, as well as passive and active recreation opportunities, to promote healthy lifestyles;



- E. Expand Uptown's vibrancy beyond King Street to create a wider, more culturally active city centre (e.g. Caroline and Regina Streets);
- F. Continue to work to enhance safety of Uptown by promoting the Community Safety and Well-being Plan; and
- G. Continue to recognize the importance of Waterloo Park and enhance its connection to Uptown.

Play Sample Initiatives and Tools

1. Ensure that public space throughout Uptown is safe, welcoming and maintained through a well-designed and coordinated approach.
2. Provide accessible amenities such as seating, drinking water stations, public restrooms and welcoming spaces for rest and passive recreation throughout Uptown, and ensure ongoing year-round maintenance.
3. Aim for a balance between green space and creative hardscape to provide continued access to nature.
4. Continue to encourage active use (both programmed and spontaneous) of the Waterloo Public Square.
5. Continue to promote Uptown as a hub for festivals and events throughout the year and encourage its use by community partners.
6. Ensure space and a range of opportunities are available to support the local arts community through temporary exhibitions and public art to encourage installations that reflect a range of stories and engage diverse audiences.
7. Streamline and simplify the approval process for public art and murals.
8. Continue to promote and enhance the Uptown Visitor Centre as an anchor to the Cultural District (e.g. through cultural programming) and as a gateway to Waterloo Park.
9. Encourage coordinated wayfinding programs within Waterloo Park and Uptown to facilitate use and movement.
10. Incorporate "Winter City" strategies to increase activity during the colder months.
11. Ensure the availability of recreational facilities and programs for families and individuals of all ages, incomes and abilities.
12. Increase shade in parks and in the public realm.



Move



Photo Credit: Tomasz Adamski, James Jackson, Region of Waterloo

Uptown Waterloo will be pedestrian-oriented while being easily accessible by all modes of transportation. A high quality public realm will support a multimodal transportation network that is welcoming, safe and accessible to all. Effective design and year-round maintenance will consider the comfort and mobility needs of people. The following modes of travel are prioritized based on vulnerability:

1. People with specific mobility needs (e.g. people with disabilities, older adults, children and their caregivers)
2. Pedestrians without mobility restrictions
3. Cyclists and other active modes of transportation
4. Micro-mobility users (e.g. e-scooters, e-bikes)
5. Public transit vehicles
6. Delivery and service vehicles
7. Personal vehicles



The objectives of the Move perspective are:

- A. Vision Zero: zero injuries caused by motor vehicles;
- B. Prioritize pedestrian movement throughout Uptown by providing connectivity that follows natural movement paths (desire lines), ensuring ease of movement between amenities, basic services (e.g. parks, groceries, pharmacy) and surrounding neighbourhoods;
- C. Ensure pedestrian and active transportation crossings are designed effectively, are highly visible, incorporate appropriate safety precautions (e.g. signals, bump outs, signage, raised crossings), and are placed at natural movement paths;
- D. Ensure that sidewalks, bicycle lanes and major trails are safe and accessible all seasons by ensuring they are well maintained year-round;
- E. Foster a vibrant pedestrian experience that supports an active Uptown for residents, businesses and visitors alike;
- F. Provide a seamless, connected bicycle network throughout Uptown that connects bicycle lanes to all trails and integrates design features intended to mitigate conflict with pedestrians and vehicular traffic; and
- G. Encourage opportunities for temporary pedestrian streets.

Move Sample Initiatives and Tools

- 1. Identify pedestrian movement routes and create an inventory of desire lines that could be formalized as pedestrian routes or crosswalks.
- 2. As a major transit hub, ensure that the ION Stations within Uptown are seamlessly connected to pedestrian and cycling routes.
- 3. Ensure that parking is provided in a balanced manner, with particular attention to parking for users with accessibility needs, and the inclusion of bicycle parking facilities.
- 4. Review parking requirements for new development to promote walkability and active transportation, such as by establishing parking maximums (instead of minimums).
- 5. Encourage the creation of active transportation routes (e.g. trails) that are well defined and signed to connect people to sites of interest, parks and amenities.
- 6. Ensure maintenance of sidewalks, trails and public spaces year round.



7. Work with the applicable authorities to improve complicated intersections (such as Erb and Caroline), consider traffic calming measures and remove pedestrian movement impediments (e.g. 'beg buttons').
8. Work with the applicable road authorities to consider potential conversion of one-way roads into two-way streets to reduce speeds and improve connectivity.
9. Encourage the testing of mobility and transportation pilot projects and ensure clear communication of programs with the broader community.



Photo Credit: Tomasz Adamski



Build



Photo Credit: Alexandre Tavares, City of Waterloo, Tomasz Adamski, Christopher Cyrne

The *Build* perspective encompasses infrastructure, facilities and development opportunities that are needed to support the *Live, Work, Play* and *Move* perspectives. Uptown Waterloo will protect and highlight the built form that encompasses its sense of place, diversity and heritage, while promoting human-scale, sustainable, accessible and vibrant design in new developments. New public spaces and built projects should contribute to the overall liveability of Uptown by:

- A. Providing high-quality design without compromising functionality, accessibility, sustainability and flexibility;
- B. Ensuring that Uptown remains welcoming and has mixed and balanced uses to serve the needs of a diverse population;
- C. Ensure development on City-owned lands supports the vision of an inclusive, liveable and environmentally sustainable city;
- D. Encouraging sensitive and creative intensification that respects and enhances the neighbourhoods throughout Uptown; and
- E. Highlight, enhance and educate about Uptown's diverse heritage.



Build Sample Initiatives and Tools

1. Promote efficient pedestrian movement and connections between amenities.
2. Consider celebrating good design in new construction, restoration and renovation through recognition or awards.
3. Organize design idea competitions for new public spaces or buildings (e.g. student idea competitions for new public spaces).
4. Develop programs to share and celebrate Uptown's built heritage (e.g. signage, digital).
5. Promote sustainability and climate change mitigation initiatives in built projects through building emissions reduction targets, reduced carbon limits, ecological landscaping and green practices to reduce water use and encourage storm water infiltration (e.g. green roofs, rainwater capture and absorbent gardens).
6. Provide a suitable transition between higher and lower densities (e.g. encourage mid-scale development).
7. Ensure the provision of affordable housing on City-owned lands in Uptown in accordance with other City strategies developed to support affordable housing.
8. Develop an overall strategy for the City-owned lands in Uptown that prioritizes benefits to the community (e.g. model hub that combines mixed income and affordable housing, affordable retail, community services and/or amenity space).
9. Support intensification that maintains pedestrian and cyclist movement throughout construction.
10. Ensure plenty of varied bicycle parking types are considered in new developments to meet the needs of cyclists.
11. The City will continue to take a leadership role in adopting low-carbon or zero-carbon targets for city holdings/activities, existing and new community buildings and transportation.