



STAFF REPORT
Chief Administrative Officer

Title: 2023-2026 City of Waterloo Strategic Plan
Report Number: CAO2023-022
Author: Sandy Little
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Attachments: Appendix A – 2023-2026 City of Waterloo Strategic Plan
Appendix B – Draft Strategic Plan Comments
Ward No.: All Wards

Recommendations:

1. That Council approve staff report CAO2023-022.
2. That Council approve the 2023-2026 City of Waterloo Strategic Plan.

A. Executive Summary

The strategic plan is an opportunity for our organization to reflect on what is important to the community, Council and staff of the City of Waterloo. The strategic plan allows us to align our resources on targeted outcomes for the current term of Council. The City of Waterloo follows a hybrid approach to strategic planning which means the strategic plan is a plan for the City including Council, leadership and staff as well as for the community. As a result, it was important that this new strategic plan was reflective of feedback received from the City and from community members throughout the process. The foundation of the new strategic plan is rooted in deep, meaningful and targeted engagement which became a defining characteristic in the development of the plan.

The first phase of the process involved the onboarding of Deloitte in September 2022. Engagement was a key component of Phase 2 and spanned more than five months. Council and staff were all engaged throughout the process which included interviews, workshops and an online survey for staff.

In addition to engaging Council and staff, it was also vital to engage the larger community. A variety of engagement opportunities were planned to solicit feedback that would play a strong role in the development of the strategic plan.

In addition to overall community feedback, significant efforts were placed on engaging equity-deserving groups in the community. From the start of the process to develop the City of Waterloo Strategic Plan, staff knew it was important to engage with groups that may not have been involved in City plans and strategies in the past. It was vital that the approach was targeted, thoughtful and ongoing. This was not intended to be a “one and done” approach. The final scan report highlighted key plans and strategies and provided an overview of all of the feedback received throughout the process.

Phase 3 included the draft strategic plan. The draft strategic plan included a new vision, mission, guiding principles, strategic priorities, objectives and actions. The draft strategic plan was made available for comment in advance of the May 8th Council meeting where it was formally presented. Staff wanted to ensure there was sufficient opportunity for the community to provide feedback on a document that was developed through the feedback they provided. Comments received will be discussed below.

This report is the culmination of all of the work from the previous three phases and satisfies Phase 4 – Final Strategic Plan and Implementation Measures. Following thorough review of all of the comments received from conversations and formal comments, the final strategic plan strikes a balance between the feedback we heard from all sources and builds upon all of the work done in the past and previous strategic plans. It is important to view this final strategic plan not as a new start but a continuation of all of the hard work that has been done and will lay the groundwork for a successful three year budget, new round of business planning and ongoing conversations with the community. The final strategic plan can be found in Appendix A.

B. Financial Implications

The 2023-2026 Strategic Plan was funded through the approved 2022 capital budget. The approved 2023-2026 Strategic Plan is one of the key influencers of the proposed 2024-2026 budget to be released in December 2023.

C. Technology Implications

None.

D. Link to Strategic Plan

(Strategic Objectives: Equity, Inclusion and a Sense of Belonging; Sustainability and the Environment; Safe, Sustainable Transportation; Healthy Community & Resilient Neighbourhoods; Infrastructure Renewal; Economic Growth & Development)

(Guiding Principles: Equity and Inclusion; Sustainability; Fiscal Responsibility; Healthy and Safe Workplace; Effective Engagement; Personal Leadership; Service Excellence)

This report presents the 2023-2026 City of Waterloo Strategic Plan.

E. Previous Reports on this Topic

CAO2023-008: 2023-2026 Strategic Plan – MSSA Results Summary

CAO2023-010: 2023-2026 Strategic Plan – Council Workshop #1

CAO2023-012: 2023-2026 Strategic Plan – Council Workshop #2

CAO2023-014: 2023-2026 Strategic Plan – Council Workshop #3

CAO2023-015: 2023-2026 Strategic Plan – Draft Scan Report

CAO2023-019: Close-Out of the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan and the 2023-2026 Draft Strategic Plan



2023-2026 City of Waterloo Strategic Plan CAO2023-022

1.0 Background

The strategic plan is an opportunity for our organization to reflect on what is important to the community, Council and staff of the City of Waterloo. The strategic plan allows us to align our resources on targeted outcomes for the current term of Council. The City of Waterloo follows a hybrid approach to strategic planning which means the strategic plan is a plan for the City including Council, leadership and staff as well as for the community. As a result, it was important that this new strategic plan was reflective of feedback received from the City and from community members throughout the process. The foundation of the new strategic plan is rooted in deep, meaningful and targeted engagement which became a defining characteristic in the development of the plan.

The process to develop the new strategic plan followed four phases:

- Phase 1 – Project Initiation
- Phase 2 – Scan and Engagement
- Phase 3 – Draft Strategic Plan
- Phase 4 – Final Strategic Plan and Implementation Measures

The first phase of the process involved the onboarding of Deloitte in September 2022 and the start of significant work to review key plans and strategies developed and approved in recent years. The review of these plans and strategies helped identify key themes that could play a role as part of the new strategic plan.

Engagement was a key component of Phase 2 and spanned more than five months. Since the City of Waterloo follows a hybrid approach to strategic planning, it was important that engagement involve all of the partners that are affected by the strategic plan. Staff worked closely with Deloitte to design an engagement approach that was targeted and meaningful. Council and staff were engaged throughout the process which included interviews, workshops and an online survey for staff. Since staff play a critical role as part of implementation, it was important to connect with staff to find out about what they are most proud of in terms of the work they do, what they think the City's top priorities should be and what we should be communicating to the community about the work that the City does.

In addition to engaging Council and staff, it was also vital to engage the larger community. The Municipal Services Satisfaction Assessment (MSSA), which was a phone survey of Waterloo residents, was completed in November 2022 and revealed that although there is always room for improvement, **92% of respondents indicated that the quality of life in Waterloo is very high**. More importantly, despite the various challenges we have all faced in the last three years, the survey results largely mirror those that were obtained in 2018. Moreover, strategic partner interviews were also conducted which not only provided insights into the new strategic plan process but also revealed ways that we can continue to build on relationships involving the City and community partners. There was a strong desire to continue to strengthen existing relationships and continue to explore innovative ways to address complex community challenges. A total of five workshops were held throughout the community in a variety of locations, both in person and virtual. The intent of these sessions was to have real conversations with community members focused on the strengths of Waterloo, some of the challenges to obtaining our vision and ways we can look to address barriers. An additional workshop was also held with representation from the City's various advisory committees. This created an opportunity to have numerous perspectives presented at one engagement session which highlighted the interconnectedness of all of the important work these committees do for the City. Furthermore, a free community skate was held at RIM Park in April 2023 which was aimed to engage youth in our community with more than 120 attendees. Staff heard firsthand about what youth in our community love about Waterloo and things they want us to improve on. Finally, a survey was hosted on Engage that garnered hundreds of responses on a number of areas that influenced the development of the strategic plan.

In addition to overall community feedback, significant efforts were placed on engaging equity-deserving groups in our community. From the start of the process to develop the strategic plan, staff knew it was important to engage with groups that may not have been involved in City plans and strategies in the past. It was vital that the approach was targeted, thoughtful and ongoing. This was not intended to be a "one and done" approach. The success of this engagement is based on future and ongoing conversations. The participation from equity-deserving groups exceeded expectations. A summary of the engagement conducted throughout the process can be found in the Final Scan Report in CAO2023-015 which highlighted key plans and strategies and provided an overview of all of the feedback received throughout the process. All of the countless conversations that we participated in helped to inform the final strategic plan.

Phase 3 included the draft strategic plan. The draft strategic plan included a new vision, mission, guiding principles, strategic priorities, objectives and actions. The draft strategic plan was made available for comment in advance of the May 8th Council meeting where it was formally presented to Council. Staff wanted to ensure there was

sufficient opportunity for the community to provide feedback. The comment period lasted four weeks and comments received during this time will be discussed below.

This report is the culmination of all of the work from the previous three phases and satisfies Phase 4 – Final Strategic Plan and Implementation Measures. Following thorough review of all of the comments received from conversations and formal comments submitted, the final strategic plan strikes a balance between the feedback we heard from all sources and builds upon all of the work done in the past which aligned with previous strategic plans. It is important to view this final strategic plan not as a new start but a continuation which will enable a successful three year budget, a new round of business planning and ongoing conversations with the community.

2.0 Final Strategic Plan

The final strategic plan represents the roadmap for the City and the community through to 2026. It represents the city's past, where we are today and our goals for the future. It consists of a brand new vision, mission, guiding principles, strategic priorities, objectives and actions. It is important to note that all of the elements of the strategic plan are interconnected and should not be looked at in isolation and should be examined holistically. The City of Waterloo Strategic Plan is available in Appendix A.

3.0 Comments Received

The City provided four weeks to receive comments from the public on the draft strategic plan. The draft strategic plan was made available on the Engage Waterloo strategic plan project page and was downloaded a number of times which shows interest in the process. A link to the report was also provided to all individuals that participated as part of the community engagement sessions as well as the advisory committee joint engagement session. City staff also provided information related to the draft strategic plan to partners and organizations involved as part of the targeted engagement sessions held with equity-deserving groups.

Comments were received from the following:

- Sustainability Advisory Committee (SAC);
- Waterloo Park Advisory Committee (WPAC);
- Age Friendly Waterloo Committee; and
- Waterloo Economic Development Advisory Committee (WEDAC).

All comments can be found in Appendix B and are summarized below.

The SAC comments included commending the City on taking positive steps towards a sustainable future for Waterloo and embedding sustainability throughout the strategic plan. The SAC made some suggestions for revisions that were considered as part of the final strategic plan. The committee also strongly suggested a clear measurement framework and more clarity regarding the connection between the strategic plan and the business planning process. A measurement framework will be established following approval of the strategic plan and the clarity around the strategic plan and business plans will be provided as the approach to the next round of business plans is developed in the coming months. This will be communicated as part of implementation of the strategic plan, especially during the Community Conversations which is discussed in more detail below.

The WPAC provided comments with a focus on the strategic priorities applicable to their work. Four of the five strategic priorities can be mapped back to the work that is ongoing for the WPAC. Of note is the planned 2025 Master Plan update for Waterloo Park which will support the Reconciliation, Equity, Accessibility, Diversity and Inclusion strategic priority by ensuring decision-making is informed using equity and Reconciliation frameworks. Furthermore, the WPAC highlighted the importance of the various naturalized areas within Waterloo Park to support the city's natural ecosystem, the importance of the park as a public space which contributes to the City's goals towards creating a complete community and the City's ongoing commitment to active transportation connections that include the park.

The Age Friendly Waterloo Committee stressed the importance of building on the progress made with past strategic plans. This is a concept that has been strongly supported throughout the development of the new strategic plan. Although we may be working towards revised or new goals, we are building on the successes and learnings of the past to move the City forward. The committee highlighted several key areas of the new strategic plan that support the work they are doing including the mission, vision and guiding principles. Regarding the strategic priorities, the Age Friendly Waterloo Committee was able to identify a number of alignments with all of the strategic priorities and their mandate. The committee also highlighted the importance of social innovation in the areas of health care and social isolation for older adults.

The WEDAC discussed the strategic plan at their May 16th meeting and passed a motion in support of the draft strategic plan. Although all of the strategic priorities can be mapped back to work related to economic development, the Innovation and Future-ready strategic priority represents a strong focus on economic development and stresses the importance of continuing to invest in a diversified economy.

The work that all of the City's advisory and multi-agency committees do is incredibly important to the City and many of these committees are already seeing how the strategic plan can be used to further their work in their respective areas.

4.0 Staff Engagement

In addition to engaging Council and leadership as part of the strategic plan, it was vital to also engage staff as a lot of the work done as part of implementation of the strategic plan is done by staff. Through sessions held with leadership, Deloitte and staff leading the strategic planning process heard first hand of the ways that staff could be engaged as part of the project which included divisional meeting presentations, in person events and virtual engagement opportunities. Based on various factors, it was decided to focus staff engagement around an online survey in hopes that an in person event could be planned as part of the launch of the strategic plan in fall 2023.

A short survey was created to receive feedback from staff focused on implementation rather than the development of the strategic plan. The reason for this is that given that staff are responsible for implementation, their feedback would play a vital role in designing how best to implement the strategic plan. Furthermore, it was evident throughout community engagement that many community members are not well informed about all of the important work that City staff do on a variety of fronts including sustainability and climate change, affordable housing, planning and development and work related to our active transportation network. Moreover, the hope through the survey was to identify ways to celebrate all of the amazing work done by staff and work on ways of connecting the strategic plan to all of the work staff does.

Based on all of these factors, the survey, which was active from March 21st through to April 19th, included the following key questions:

1. What are you most proud of in terms of the work that you do?
2. What is one area the City should focus on to better serve the residents of Waterloo?
3. What information about your work do you want the community to know and be aware of?

It was evident that staff is most proud of the value that the work they do brings to the residents of Waterloo, the impact on improving the quality of life of Waterloo's diverse community and increasing and strengthening connections within the community. Staff also highlighted the importance of strengthening the connections between staff as part of the work that is done.

In terms of things that the City should focus on to better serve residents, staff feel that barriers should be removed related to red tape and barriers related to diversity, equity

and inclusion to ensure wider participation in City services and programs. There is significant interest in maintaining existing infrastructure and the provision of new infrastructure to meet the needs of the growing community. Staff also highlighted the importance of improving digital services, the provision of City-run creative spaces and continuing efforts to strengthen connections between departments and divisions.

Regarding the information about the work staff does and what they want the community to be aware of, it can best be summarized by saying that the City of Waterloo is made up of a large team of people who work to build a community and improve that community a little bit every single day. Staff are truly dedicated to the work and they work hard to better the community as a whole.

The information obtained through the staff engagement will be used as part of the performance measurement framework discussed below. It will also be used to raise awareness in the community of the work that staff is doing to implement the strategic plan as part of the Community Conversations initiative.

5.0 Performance Measurement

The performance measurement framework can be found as part of the strategic plan in Appendix A. A framework is required as it will help the City to measure and monitor our progress on implementing the strategic plan. With the approval of the Director of Strategic Initiatives as part of the one year budget approved in February, the City now has a permanent position that will oversee the implementation of the strategic plan. This will facilitate an ongoing implementation process. A number of actions will help to implement the strategic plan and they include:

- 2024-2026 Business Plans aligned with the three year budget process;
- Performance metrics; and
- Community Conversations.

The strategic plan, business plan and budget processes are inextricably linked. The three year budget must be aligned with the strategic plan and the business plans must implement the three year budget. There are connections between all three processes and it is vital that these connections be strengthened as we move from the strategic plan to the budget and business planning processes.

In order to be transparent regarding how the City is implementing the strategic plan, staff is recommending an annual progress report. This report will reflect the work of all departments and divisions related to implementation and will include a summary of some of the actions noted above. The first component of the progress report will be a status update on the initiatives contained in the 2024-2026 Business Plans. The

initiatives contained within the business plans directly align with the three year budget which also aligns with the new strategic plan. The status update will provide a snapshot of whether the initiatives are on track, delayed or on hold and will allow us to redirect resources if barriers to action are identified. The second component of the progress report is performance metrics. Upon approval of the strategic plan, staff will work to identify key performance indicators that represent a tangible way of measuring the City's progress. It will be important to work closely with staff to identify the indicators that we may already be collecting data on to minimize duplication of work and choose the indicators that are representative of each of the strategic priorities. It will also be important to utilize, where possible, the indicators and targets used as part of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which will further assist the City in its efforts to localize the SDGs. The third and final component of the progress report and an essential part of implementation is Community Conversations. This component highlights the importance of the intangible measurements of success of implementation and ensures ongoing conversations with members of the community. Through Community Conversations the City will identify how feedback received throughout the process was incorporated in the final strategic plan, highlight the work being done across the corporation related to the strategic plan and have real conversations on further actions we can take. Each Community Conversation will be focused on each of the five strategic priorities with more details to be released in the fall.

6.0 Next Steps

The nature of strategic planning has changed. It goes beyond an approved plan and recognizes that in order to reach a defined set of goals as a community we can take various routes to get there. There is no single journey and in many cases the journey is impacted by challenges we face. This strategic plan is not intended to be a "one and done" approach. The approval of the strategic plan is just another step in this process. Staff will be working to design and develop the final version of the strategic plan to be used across the corporation. Staff will also share some of the feedback we received throughout the process with area municipalities, the Region and key community partners which may help with their respective strategic planning processes. The strategic plan will be formally launched in the fall and will recognize all of the work that went into this process. In terms of implementation, it will be an ongoing set of actions and not limited to a yearly progress report. Staff will commence work on Community Conversations and launch that initiative in the fall and the first progress report will be presented to Council in fall 2024.

It is as a result of collaboration with Council, staff and the community that we have developed a strategic plan that ensures we remain strong, sustainable, together.



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City of Waterloo

2023-2026 Strategic Plan

June 2023

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Introduction

Introduction

Situated in Southwestern Ontario, with a population of 147,350 (2021) the City of Waterloo (“Waterloo”) is located in one of the fastest growing regions in Canada in terms of both population and employment. Home to three leading post-secondary institutions, it attracts some of the best and brightest talent from Canada and around the world. Many people have chosen Waterloo as a place to live, work, play and learn as it offers a harmonious balance of open space, amenities, employment opportunities and a vibrant uptown. However, Waterloo has emerged from the peak of the Covid-19 global pandemic a changed city.

As the city moved through the height of the pandemic, urgent issues such as declining housing affordability, growing awareness related to Reconciliation, equity, accessibility, diversity and inclusion and the increasing urgency for action to address climate change continued to emerge. Waterloo has already taken significant steps to try and address these challenges with the approval of its first Affordable Housing Strategy, the declaration of a climate emergency in November 2019, subsequent adoption of ambitious greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets of 50% by 2030 and 80% by 2050 and the creation of an internal staff team that is enabling the City to address Reconciliation, equity, accessibility, diversity and inclusion within the corporation and the community. At the same time, Waterloo has recognized the importance of growing a diversified economy, providing its residents with a complete community that includes resilient infrastructure and access to safe, sustainable transportation solutions.

There is more that needs to be done and Waterloo has committed itself to an equitable pandemic recovery so that the community can face these challenges with a fully engaged community. Waterloo is working to identify a new path forward to address the challenges ahead and position itself to be future-ready. The development of a new strategic plan is an essential requirement in this process, as it will provide a guide for this new path, which will be based on equity and inclusion and will foster a sense of belonging for the whole community.



Executive Summary

Executive Summary

The City of Waterloo follows a hybrid approach to strategic planning. The strategic plan is for the City of Waterloo and for the community. As a result, it was important that the development of the strategic plan consisted of a balanced approach. The process to develop the new strategic plan is rooted in deep and meaningful engagement. The plan itself includes a strong framework that will enable the City and the community to work together to address the challenges of today while preparing us to be future-ready to face the challenges of tomorrow.

The strategic plan serves as a roadmap for the new term of Council to guide decisions, planning and budgeting for the next four years. The 2023-2026 Strategic Plan, when implemented, will enable Council and staff to advance City and community priorities, strengthen municipal operations, allocate resources effectively and achieve desired outcomes.

The strategy development was designed to be comprehensive, inclusive and transparent. Engagement was completed over the course of a six-month period and included connecting with Council, staff and the community with a heightened focus on equity-deserving groups. Community consultations offered local partners and residents the opportunity to share experiences, knowledge and aspirations.

In addition to engagement, the strategic planning process included a review of key plans and strategies, the development of a community profile based on a variety of socio-economic factors and demographic data and a review of the current community context that was not reflected in the City's policy framework. Challenges such as COVID recovery, housing and homelessness and the urgency of sustainability and climate change are current issues that needed to be considered as part of the process.

Specific ideas for shaping the strategic plan were supplied via 26 one-on-one community and partner interviews, with more than 500 survey responses in the Municipal Service Satisfaction Assessment (MSSA), 340 responses to the Engage Waterloo online survey, a number of community workshops involving nearly 300 participants, a free community skate aimed at engaging youth and community intercept interviews that were held to survey older adults.

The City of Waterloo led a series of community engagement initiatives to ensure the priorities of equity-deserving groups were integrated in the development of the City’s strategic plan. In total, more than 300 children, youth and adults participated in these focused community engagement efforts. These efforts included 50 responses to a tailored survey, eight community workshops involving 240 community members and several one-on-one interviews.

Council also provided meaningful input to the process, reflecting on the observations shared and providing leadership and direction to narrow the focus. City of Waterloo leadership also participated by providing important insights on the vision, mission, guiding principles and strategic priorities. Staff participated in a survey that focused on identifying ways to recognize the hard work involved in implementing the strategic plan and identifying things that the City can do to better communicate the work that the City does. There were also regular updates on the progress of the plan throughout the process.

As a result of the process, a series of foundational statements, strategic priorities, objectives and actions were prepared. The pages that follow reflect the ambitions and aspirations of Council, staff and the community.



Vision: The City's new vision statement showcases a positive perspective on the future, telegraphing hope and optimism:

A leader in sustainability and a future-ready community for all

Mission: The City's mission statement explains the municipality's reason for being:

To actively engage, collaborate with and respond to Waterloo's diverse community through bold leadership, empathy and accountability.

Guiding Principles: The City's Guiding Principles serve as a lens through which all decisions are evaluated. They represent the values of the municipal corporation:

- **Equity and Inclusion:** We build relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples and equity-deserving groups and embrace Reconciliation, equity, accessibility, diversity and inclusion
- **Sustainability:** We plan for the long term, prioritizing sustainability and take meaningful action to address environmental, social and economic goals
- **Integrity:** We operate with integrity and transparency, we strive for well-considered comprehensive, responsive, diligent and thoughtful decision-making
- **Workplace Wellbeing:** We commit to promoting wellbeing and providing a healthy, safe and enjoyable work environment for all employees and volunteers of the organization
- **Community-centred:** We support strong and liveable neighbourhoods, prioritizing community engagement grounded in empathy and understanding
- **Operational Excellence:** We provide fiscally responsible, exceptional service that meets the needs of residents, partners and equity-deserving groups, employees and volunteers of the City

Strategic Priorities: The collective input from Council, leadership, staff and the community helped to identify five Strategic Priorities to be addressed over the next four years. The following themes are grounded in a collaborative corporate culture, upon which the Strategic Plan is built:

- **Reconciliation, Equity, Accessibility, Diversity and Inclusion**
- **Environmental Sustainability and Climate Action**
- **Complete Community**
- **Infrastructure and Transportation Systems**
- **Innovation and Future-Ready**

Objectives and Actions: The City further developed 17 Strategic Objectives based on the strategic priorities, focusing on the City's ability to influence change. Actions are outlined under the objectives. Each action has been tailored with input from the City to encompass a breadth of issues to be further addressed in separate department and division business plans and other strategies and initiatives.



Project Overview

Project Overview

The strategic plan will form the foundation for day-to-day decision-making by City of Waterloo Council and staff, informing budget processes and business planning in the years to come. The 2023-2026 strategic plan was developed through an extensive community engagement and strategic planning process involving information sharing and conversations with Council, staff and the community.

The engagement approach used to develop this strategy involved Council, staff and the community with a focus on equity-deserving groups. The process also looked at the internal City structure and considered the interconnectedness among and between departments and divisions and enhanced the understanding about roles in relation to the organization's strategic direction. External engagement included key partners from business and industry, education, other levels of government and a variety of sectors.

Approach

The planning approach was to divide this project into four phases in Figure 1 below:



Figure 1: The four phases of the Waterloo Strategic Plan Project from initiation to implementation.

Phase 1: Project Initiation

The project started with the Consulting Team meeting with the City of Waterloo to develop a common understanding of goals and objectives and to identify background documents, reports and strategies for review. This project phase set the stage for clear and consistent communication between all relevant parties.

Phase 2: Scan and Engagement

The Consulting Team undertook a series of scans of other relevant strategies and community, employment and business demographics and then established a scan report that reflected key learnings from the analysis process. Details of the scan report were presented as a separate report and are included in the next section. The scan report included summaries of engagement completed by both the Consultant and the City of Waterloo and provided additional context of the strengths, opportunities and desires of the residents of Waterloo.

Phase 3: Draft Strategic Plan

Community engagement including surveys, discussions and workshops were facilitated from November 2022 through April 2023. All comments received were captured and integrated into a draft strategic plan. A working draft of the strategic plan including all key components was developed. This document served as an input platform with leadership, Council, partners and collaborating organizations. The reporting framework will be based on the strategic priorities, goals and actions and will be developed as part of implementation.

Phase 4: Final Plan and Implementation Measures

The draft strategic plan was presented to Council in May 2023. Once the draft was presented, the City sought feedback regarding the draft strategy from Council and the public over several weeks. The feedback was then incorporated into this final version of the strategic plan.

The final strategic plan was presented to Council by the Project Lead and Staff Lead in June 2023. The presentation highlighted the core elements of the strategic plan and emphasized the important contributions of the internal and external engagement processes. With the approval of the strategic plan, the project moves to implementation, which will focus on ongoing conversations within the City and the community.



Scan Report

Scan Report

Waterloo engaged in the strategic planning process through workshops and focus groups, collaborator and community partner interviews and community surveys. The engagement outcomes, combined with a community profile, including socioeconomic data and reviews of local and regional reports, were analyzed to create a scan report.

The scans and engagement summaries inform the report's SOARR analysis at the community and corporate level by considering the following factors: Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Risks and Results. This foundational information was used to identify priorities, goals, objectives and performance measurement considerations for the City of Waterloo.

Scan Report Highlights

There were notable key themes that emerged throughout the research and engagement process that informed the scan report and influenced the thinking behind the strategic plan. These themes were identified through the policy framework and/or mentioned by residents, community partners and staff through the various types of engagements. These themes, detailed below, were important to many in the community and directly influenced the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.

Reconciliation, Equity, Accessibility, Diversity and Inclusion

Staff at the City of Waterloo led a series of community engagement initiatives to ensure the priorities of equity-deserving groups were evident in the development of the City's strategic plan. In total, more than 250 children, youth and adults attended these focused community engagement efforts.

There was a strong desire from community members for the City to address Reconciliation, equity, accessibility, diversity and inclusion in meaningful ways. Below are the most common recommendations that emerged from community consultations:

- Build strong inclusive communities and neighbourhoods
- Address the affordability crisis and access to social housing, as well as services like childcare and health care
- Increase diverse representation and ongoing skill building to address Reconciliation, equity, accessibility, diversity and inclusion in the community

Affordable Housing

Affordable housing was mentioned frequently by community members as an area of concern. New pressures that the community is facing have increased housing prices, such as an increase in migration from the Greater Toronto Area. The increase in housing costs is a barrier to the city for immigrants and those with lower incomes. Below are the most common recommendations that emerged from community consultations:

- Develop programming to help address increasing housing costs
- Improve housing diversity options across the city
- Increase and communicate the benefit of densification of the city with more mid-rise housing

Climate Action

Climate action is embedded in the City's policy framework and was identified consistently as a priority throughout engagement. There was an awareness around the urgency of environmental sustainability and climate action, however it was not always evident what the City was doing to address this emergency. The community recognizes the importance of the city growing in a sustainable way to ensure our community is a place to call home for all in the future. The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a leading framework to address this area and were mentioned in consultations. Below are the most common recommendations that emerged from community consultations:

- Create a single vision for a sustainable city
- Make the city as sustainable as possible
- Increase the green space and park space in the city

Transportation

Transportation across its many forms was a topic of discussion for many community members related to improving the active transportation network, improving connections to public transit and improving connections with nearby regions for enhanced connectivity. Below are the most common recommendations that emerged from community consultations:

- Improve connections to Toronto Pearson International Airport
- Increase the number of walking and cycling trails in Waterloo to improve the active transportation network
- Create walkable neighbourhoods with local amenities

SOARR Assessment

A Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations, Risks and Results (SOARR) Assessment is a forward-focused model used to reflect on strategic directions. It assembles research, consultation, as well as partner and collaborator insights to outline 'what has been learned' and shift to 'what needs to happen' to set strategic plan goals and objectives. This assessment takes elements of what would traditionally be affiliated with a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis and builds on it through the forward-looking lens of the Appreciative Inquiry approach¹, focusing on the Results and building on what works best to ensure continued success.

Strengths of Waterloo

The strengths of Waterloo identified in the SOARR Assessment included the successful beautification of uptown Waterloo, expansions in the public transit network within the city and with wider transit networks, a vibrant arts and culture scene with well recognized community events run by the City, high satisfaction with overall services including community services and recreational amenities, world-class post-secondary institutions and that Waterloo has a strong, well-educated workforce, including the contributions of post-secondary students in the community and to the economy, among others.

Opportunities for Waterloo

The opportunities for Waterloo identified in the SOARR Assessment included continuing to enhance customer service standards to improve and build on the support for services, align economic development with sustainability goals and manage low land availability, make the most of the momentum being made on building stronger relationships and trust with equity-deserving groups, improve parks with expanded trails systems along rivers, increase connections to the airports and to bring attention and action to housing-related social programming within Waterloo, among others.

Aspirations of Waterloo

Aspirations for Waterloo identified in the SOARR Assessment included to be a leader in actions and policies related to environmental sustainability and set the example for other municipalities and organizations, be an accessibility and inclusion leader, be known as an international hub for innovation, technology, research and education while also growing other sectors, celebrate and grow arts and culture offerings in Waterloo, be known as an excellent place to raise a family and live in strong neighbourhood communities and offer attainable and affordable housing, among others.

¹ Appreciative Inquiry is a strength-based approach to facilitating positive developments for future planning and building capacity in organizations while being aware of risk considerations rather than seeking to overcome or minimize weaknesses. This results in an optimistic perspective to informing next steps instead of a "problem-solving" approach which may be seen as negative by implying criticism and remediation.

Risks to Waterloo

Risks to Waterloo, identified in the SOARR Assessment included increased efforts to recognize equity-deserving groups within Waterloo and the work needed to make progress on Reconciliation, equity, accessibility, diversity and inclusion efforts, support for older adult programming and inclusiveness for aging adults, public concern around what intensification represents for the future of Waterloo, social services and support services for rising homelessness, sufficient transportation within the city and connections to other communities, the relationship between students and the wider Waterloo population and the lack of land in city borders to grow residential or employment lands, among others.

Results Expected of Waterloo

Results that are expected of Waterloo that were identified in the SOARR Assessment included the continued high resident satisfaction rates, carbon emission reduction targets, strategic internal infrastructure and equipment investments, development of partnerships that realize diverse affordable housing options and attainable housing, demonstrated City and community support for equity-deserving groups, employee satisfaction and maintenance of staff engagement, review of an active transportation standard for trails and bike lanes and to partner with relevant organizations for a seamless transit experience throughout the community and to major centres.



Corporate Vision and Mission

Corporate Vision and Mission

Vision Statement

The vision statement for an organization is an aspirational description of what the community would like to achieve or accomplish in the mid to long-term future. It provides the foundation for how to get there through future actions.

A leader in sustainability and a future-ready community for all

What does it mean? Residents of Waterloo and community leadership have emphasized a focus on sustainability and climate leadership as a primary driver for the strategic plan. This was reflected through engagement including the Municipal Services Satisfaction Assessment (MSSA) and workshops with Council and leadership. The vision evokes optimism for the future and a long-term approach to decision-making. Waterloo is also known as an innovative, well-educated community that focuses on doing things differently. The vision closes with the addition of ‘for all’ to ensure the strength of Waterloo’s commitment to building an equitable and inclusive community for everyone.

Mission Statement

The mission statement for an organization outlines its reasons for being. It answers the following questions: What is the organization? Why does it exist? Who are the primary customers? What are the products and services?

To actively engage, collaborate with and respond to Waterloo’s diverse community through bold leadership, empathy and accountability.

What does it mean? City of Waterloo staff are dedicated to delivering service excellence, strive for boldness and complete work that is meaningful to the community. The City of Waterloo remains committed to bold decision-making and delivering programs and services in a way that engages residents and responds to the perspectives of all in the community. The City will continue to respond to the needs of the community while also remaining accountable for the decisions that are made.



Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles

Guiding principles encompass the values of the community and the municipal corporation.

They guide the decisions of the organization and outline expected behaviours of its employees and leaders. These principles help guide interactions with internal and external customers and should be considered with every decision made. They support the development of a culture where everyone understands what is important.



Equity and Inclusion

We build relationships with First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples and equity-deserving groups and embrace Reconciliation, equity, accessibility, diversity and inclusion.



Sustainability

We plan for the long term, prioritizing sustainability and take meaningful action to address environmental, social and economic goals.



Integrity

We operate with integrity and transparency, we strive for well-considered comprehensive, responsive, diligent and thoughtful decision-making.



Workplace Wellbeing

We commit to promoting wellbeing and providing a healthy, safe and enjoyable work environment for all employees and volunteers of the organization.



Community-centred

We support strong and liveable neighbourhoods, prioritizing community engagement grounded in empathy and understanding.



Operational Excellence

We provide fiscally responsible, exceptional service that meets the needs of residents, partners and equity-deserving groups, employees and volunteers of the City.



Strategic Priorities

Strategic Priorities

While the vision, mission and guiding principles outline where Waterloo wants to be, why the City does what it does and how it will accomplish the work, the strategic priorities will start to prioritize the direction the City needs to go.

These directions are generally broader themes and will help guide departmental planning and future decision-making. These directions will be used as a foundation for goals and objectives as well as mapping out deliverables and performance metrics throughout all municipal planning processes. These strategic priorities are designed to be interconnected and work together. Actions identified for a strategic priority may support the outcomes of another and should be interpreted holistically.

Reconciliation, Equity, Accessibility, Diversity and Inclusion

Value that an inclusive city is one that recognizes differences and diversity in planning, decision-making and service delivery for all residents to have equal opportunities and benefits. Through a commitment to Reconciliation, justice, equity and inclusion for all, the City will disrupt and dismantle all forms of discrimination and systemic oppression.

Environmental Sustainability and Climate Action

Become a leader in environmental sustainability practices and climate action by making transformational changes related to City operations and services while working with the community towards climate change mitigation and adaptation goals.

Complete Community

Achieve a high quality of life for all residents and overall community vibrancy through strategic density, diverse housing options and equitably available parks, public spaces and other recreational and cultural amenities.

Infrastructure and Transportation Systems

Expand and support infrastructure and transportation systems in an environmentally and fiscally sustainable manner that provides residents with resilient public infrastructure and sustainable transportation solutions.

Innovation and Future-Ready

Demonstrate resiliency and readiness to do things differently, address social developments and integrate new ideas through collaboration with key partners while continuing to grow a diversified economy and innovation ecosystem.



Strategic Priorities and Objectives

Strategic Priorities and Objectives

The vision, mission and guiding principles of the strategic plan set out the desired future of Waterloo, while the strategic priorities connect the actions with the strategic direction and set associated goals to track progress over the period of the strategy.

The City of Waterloo strives to be a leader in sustainability and for future-readiness, to be prepared for the challenges ahead whether known or unknown. The next portion of the strategic plan outlines the strategic priorities, goals and objectives that align with the vision. Measuring these goals and objectives will ensure accountability and awareness of the community's progress and achievements.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the United Nations in 2015, provides a shared blueprint for prosperity for people and the planet, now and into the future. At its heart are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)², which are an urgent call for action. The UN's Department of Economic and Social Affairs³ emphasizes that the principle of "think globally, act locally" is essential and action at the local level by local governments is a critical part of achieving the SDGs. The following figure showcases all 17 SDGs for reference:



The City of Waterloo is in alignment with a focus on economic, social and environmental impacts and the strategic plan goals have been linked back to the SDGs. This will strengthen the City's ongoing work with respect to the localization of the SDGs.

² <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>

³ <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/creation-local-sdg-platform-support-efforts-local-governments-toward-achieving-sdgs#:~:text=Action%20at%20the%20local%20level,a%20platform%20for%20exchanging%20information.>

Strategic Priority 1: Reconciliation, Equity, Accessibility, Diversity and Inclusion



Value that an inclusive city is one that recognizes differences and diversity in planning, decision-making and service delivery for all residents to have equal opportunities and benefits. Through a commitment to Reconciliation, justice, equity and inclusion for all, the City will disrupt and dismantle all forms of discrimination and systemic oppression.

Objective 1: Invest in accessibility and inclusion to enhance belonging

- Leverage the Accessibility and Inclusion Review to create an action-oriented Multi-Year Accessibility Plan.
- Support an enhanced sense of belonging within all City buildings, operations and service delivery in ways that strengthen relationships with and within equity-deserving groups.
- Prioritize the intersectional needs of youth, older adults, women, faith communities, people with disabilities, racialized peoples, Indigenous peoples, people living on low incomes, newcomers and 2SLGBTQ+ through inclusive and culturally responsive programs, services, policies, funding and communication strategies.
- Proactively respond to identity-based discrimination protected under the Ontario Human Rights Code including, but not limited to, ableism, ageism, homophobia, queerphobia and transphobia, and sexism.

Objective 2: Embed Reconciliation, equity, accessibility, diversity and inclusion across the organization

- Advance community priorities by developing and strengthening relationships with equity-deserving groups outside of the organization and take action on their priorities.
- Strengthen alliances with support/service organizations to foster system action.
- Incorporate Reconciliation, equity, accessibility, diversity and inclusion into the organization's policies and practices so that gains achieved are enduring and meaningful across time.
- Implement accountability structures so that the organization is required to take action on disparities that detail inequities for equity-deserving groups.
- Inform decision-making across the organization and review all relevant corporate policies, programs and services using equity and Reconciliation frameworks with a restorative justice approach.
- Become municipal leaders in accessibility and inclusion practices by exceeding minimum Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) standards.

- Collect data to measure disparity and disproportionality within the organization and in the community. Where possible, contribute to data collection of external organizations in meaningful ways.

Objective 3: Advance Reconciliation

- Respond to the 94 Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls to Justice and the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People.
- Strengthen the City's leadership in Reconciliation through becoming trustworthy partners with Indigenous Leaders and their respective communities.

Objective 4: Action anti-racism

- Proactively respond to identity-based hate including, but not limited to, antisemitism, islamophobia, anti-Black racism, anti-Indigenous racism and additional forms of identity-based violence.

Strategic Priority 2: Environmental Sustainability and Climate Action



Become a leader in environmental sustainability practices and climate action by making transformational changes related to City operations and services while working with the community towards climate change mitigation and adaptation goals.

Objective 1: Climate leadership

- Work together with organizational and community champions to align activities and achieve climate action mitigation and adaptation goals to create a more resilient community.
- Continue to work towards the City's corporate greenhouse gas emission reduction goals through the continued electrification of our fleet, low carbon retrofitting of existing facilities and adherence to low-carbon ready new construction.
- Utilize our data-driven solutions to address present and historical impacts of climate change for impacted communities.
- Invest in public open spaces and naturalization efforts to preserve and enhance the natural ecosystems in the city.

Objective 2: Environmentally sustainable economy

- Encourage and cultivate environmentally sustainable development practices including implementation of the environmental sustainability standards for Generation Park Waterloo.

Objective 3: Environmental sustainability mindset

- Embed environmental sustainability into internal operational decision-making and evaluate operational decisions with consideration for the City's greenhouse gas mitigation and adaptation goals.
- Strengthen education and awareness regarding climate change mitigation and adaptation actions within the City and the community to advance climate action goals.

Strategic Priority 3: Complete Community



Achieve a high quality of life for all residents and overall community vibrancy through strategic density, diverse housing options and equitably available parks, public spaces and other recreational and cultural amenities.

Objective 1: Invest in arts experiences

- Invest in arts events and experiences in the city, celebrating diversity and uplifting diverse communities.
- Advance the Museum Strategy to maintain and create safe and vibrant public spaces that will promote opportunities for diverse use including investigating future space needs for the City of Waterloo Museum.

Objective 2: Vibrant public spaces

- Leverage investments in community services and infrastructure to comprehensively plan for context-sensitive intensification.
- Commit to and plan for built environments that reduce reliance on automobiles.
- Plan for welcoming, inclusive and accessible spaces.

Objective 3: Complete neighbourhoods

- Support the Region of Waterloo and collaborate with area municipalities and community partners on housing initiatives in our community including homelessness.
- Implement the Affordable Housing Strategy to increase the supply and mix of affordable housing.
- Carry out and monitor the City's Housing Pledge, planning for 16,000 new residential units by 2031.
- Continue to implement and revise the Neighbourhood Strategy to improve neighbourhood interaction, safety and relationships; promote the Neighbourhood Matching Fund and develop plans for age-friendly initiatives in support of the City's membership in the Global Network of Age-friendly Cities and Communities.

Objective 4: Actions to meet community needs

- Optimize the use of City-owned lands to achieve strategic objectives.
- Ensure community amenities and facilities are welcoming and accessible to all residents across the community.
- Renew the Community Grants Program in order to improve the grant structure and process, with an emphasis on the changing needs and priorities of the community for the greatest impact.
- Develop new program opportunities that offer a variety of accessible and inclusive services, programs and amenities that meet the diverse needs of the community at large.

Strategic Priority 4: Infrastructure and Transportation Systems



Expand and support infrastructure and transportation systems in an environmentally and fiscally sustainable manner that provide residents with resilient public infrastructure and sustainable transportation solutions.

Objective 1: Sustainable infrastructure planning

- Prioritize environmentally sustainable infrastructure development to improve infrastructure resilience in order to meet the needs of future generations.
- Assess and address the infrastructure gap.
- Identify and plan for required operational, maintenance and rehabilitation/replacement needs associated with new and existing infrastructure while considering ways to minimize the impacts of life cycle costs.
- Construct, upgrade and manage essential infrastructure for indoor and outdoor facilities, water, wastewater, stormwater, underground utilities and other municipal assets to support the long-term needs of the community and natural environment.

Objective 2: Mobility and a connected community

- Continue to further Vision Zero, a strategy to eliminate traffic fatalities and severe injuries, while increasing safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all.
- Expand year-round transportation systems to increase connectivity and availability of travel options across socio-economic communities and for persons with disabilities.
- Enhance connections and linkages with external transit systems to support commuting and recreational travel throughout the region and the province while strengthening connections to airports.

Objective 3: Investment in active transportation

- Expand the City's active transportation network to increase community connections and mobility for all.
- Explore ways to improve safety of cycling lanes and pedestrian connections to increase wider utilization.

Strategic Priority 5: Innovation and Future-Ready



Demonstrate resiliency and readiness to do things differently, address social developments and integrate new ideas through collaboration with key partners while continuing to grow a diversified economy and innovation ecosystem.

Objective 1: Support a diversified economy and innovation ecosystem

- Encourage and support a healthy and diverse economy grounded in innovation that embraces partnerships with post-secondary institutions, not-for-profit organizations and businesses to further develop Waterloo's globally recognized innovation ecosystem.
- Support, invest and collaborate with the growing post-secondary institutions through continued and new partnerships that advance our collective strategic priorities. Leverage the strength of the institutions' problem solvers and leaders to find creative solutions that address complex community needs and challenges.
- Collaborate with community partners on workforce development to help attract and retain diverse talent.

Objective 2: Partner for social innovation

- Identify opportunities and advocate for new and accessible health care services, including a new hospital in Waterloo Region.
- Collaborate with social enterprises to advance the City's strategic priorities, in association with for-profit entities and post-secondary institutions.
- Implement and build on the recommendations of Waterloo Region's Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan framework and other related action plans.

Objective 3: Digital opportunities for the future

- Identify and evaluate digital opportunities for services with an intent to improve customer service and ensure coordination across the organization.
- Align digital service projects and programs with inclusion efforts, prioritizing accessibility for all residents in the community.



Performance Measurement

Performance Measurement

Performance measurement is a diagnostic tool that focuses on energy, attention and effort, helping to support the City's commitment to its guiding principles and strategic priorities. Throughout the life cycle of the strategic plan Council, staff and community members will seek to evaluate the quality and effectiveness of the City's ability to implement the strategic plan. Through an annual strategic plan progress report staff can apply an implementation framework and determine the best ways to implement the strategic plan.

Strategic Plan Progress Report

The strategic plan provides a road map for Council, staff and members of the community by identifying strategic priorities for the new term of Council. It is important that a performance measurement framework is designed to measure and monitor the City's progress on implementing the strategic plan. Implementation of the strategic plan will be done through a variety of actions including:

- 2024-2026 business planning coordinated with the three-year budget;
- The application of performance metrics; and
- An initiative called Community Conversations.

The strategic planning process does not end with the approval of the strategic plan. It is a process that includes a final strategic plan but also focuses on how to implement that plan throughout its life cycle. Implementation of the strategic plan needs to be transparent and include progress reporting which reflects the work of all departments and divisions to implement the strategic plan. The annual progress report will include three components that all connect to create the new performance measurement framework for the City's strategic plan.

Business plans are developed by each department and division in the City. The 2024-2026 Business Plans will be approved in early 2024 and will implement the strategic plan and align with the three-year budget.

The first component of the progress report will include the status of business plan initiatives which allows the City to identify possible barriers to progress and takes a solutions-oriented approach. Business plan initiatives will be categorized to represent actions that are completed, on track, delayed or on hold.

- **Completed** – These initiatives have been completed as per identified targets in the business plan.
- **On Track** – These initiatives have progressed on schedule and are on track to be completed as per identified targets in the business plan.
- **Delayed** – These initiatives are still in progress but have been delayed for various reasons.
- **On Hold** – These initiatives have not been started or have been stopped due to specific reasons and there is a high probability the initiative will not move forward.

The second component of the annual progress report will focus on defined indicators and targets. These indicators and targets are used to identify opportunities for additional focus or targeted resources. Staff are exploring how the indicators and targets used as part of the United Nations SDGs can contribute to progress reporting. The indicators and targets are being discussed and will be determined in the months following approval of the strategic plan.

The third and final component of the progress report will be focused on Community Conversations to introduce a strong human element to the reporting framework. It is vital that implementation of the strategic plan not solely be measured according to tangible data. The City's strategic plan process was rooted in deep and meaningful engagement with a focus on equity-deserving groups and staff want to ensure the new strategic plan is a starting point for continuing conversations. These sessions will be themed around each of the five strategic priority areas. Each session will include people from the community that have a vested interest in each of the strategic priority areas. Community Conversations will be a joint effort with Council, staff and willing members of the community for ongoing discussion of how the City can continue to work to meet the needs of all members of the community. The progress report will provide an overview of the Community Conversations and the feedback received through the sessions.

In addition to engaging the overall community throughout the process, the City also engaged with staff. This engagement was focused on reflecting on what staff is most proud of, determining areas of focus for the City and sharing ideas on what to share with the community in terms of the work the City does. The feedback received from staff will play an important role in the Community Conversations and will be an opportunity to share the work that the City is doing with respect to each strategic priority area and how the City is implementing the strategic plan.

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Feedback on the 2023-26 Draft Strategic Plan

Prepared by the Sustainability Advisory Committee

Summary

Overall, the Sustainability Advisory Committee (SAC) of the City of Waterloo would like to commend the City staff and Council for the development of the 2023-26 Draft Strategic Plan. There are many themes and inclusions that are positive steps for the City to strive for a prosperous, equitable, and sustainable future that we hope to see retained in the final version. And there are several areas where SAC would suggest improvements.

Several areas that SAC was particularly supportive of, included:

- SAC is very supportive of seeing sustainability as part of the vision statement. We strongly encourage this to be retained in the plan's final version, as it is an anchor for everything else. We also encourage the City to interpret “sustainability” in this statement holistically - referring to integrated economic, social, and environmental wellbeing.
- We are encouraged by how sustainability is woven through the document - including deeper connections to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), and clear sections on climate, environment, and sustainable transportation.
- SAC is impressed by the deep level of engagement presented that went into the consultation for the plan, particularly with an effort to connect with marginalized and equity-deserving groups. SAC applauds this commitment from staff and Council.
- We welcome a section and clear focus on climate action; as a high priority that will need to be rallied across all City activities, it requires and has been given strong placement in the Draft Strategic Plan.

Several areas where SAC would encourage improvements or revisions would include:

- Recommend the City remove the reference to SMART goals, or turn them into SMART goals. As currently listed, none of the objectives are “SMART” goals. That is; they are general objectives rather than specific goals, outcomes do not have a measurable component, and there are no timelines associated. These are finely crafted, broad statements of action and priority, but SMART goals would be distinct from broad objectives.
- Notwithstanding the previous comment, SAC would strongly encourage the City to develop a clear and transparent measurement framework that complements the goals and objectives of the Strategic Plan. Using the previous Strategic Plan as an example, including in comments made in the introduction and context for the 2023-26 plan, it is difficult to see how progress was made against the Plan’s commitments and priorities, and SAC sees a risk of a similar gap and/or inability to adequately monitor progress beyond specific actions that are “completed or ongoing.” Sustainability commitments

should be grounded in measurable/verifiable progress indicators publicly available to the community.

- Flowing from this, SAC expresses some concerns about the precision of language throughout the draft Strategic Plan - where wording such as *continue to work towards*, *acknowledge*, *encourage*, *align*, etc. can be very broad and potentially very low-impact depending on how they are interpreted. Again, a robust measurement framework would strengthen this.
- Finally, SAC hopes that the City can clarify how the Strategic Plan will inform business unit decision-making, and what the financial and human resource implications are to see this fully achieved.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments, and we hope the above is taken as helpful commentary. Additional detail on the above points can be found in appendices 1, 2, and 3 below.

Should staff or Council wish, SAC would happily provide further information or feedback.

We look forward to providing support for the implementation of this exciting vision.

Sincerely,

City of Waterloo Sustainability Advisory Committee

APPENDIX 1 - Supportive Comments

- Thrilled to see sustainability core to the vision
- The vision is inspiring “A leader in sustainability and a future-ready community for all.”
- the specific targets toward meeting sustainability goals mentioned in the second paragraph “and the increasing urgency for action to address climate change and ensure community sustainability continue....the declaration of a climate emergency in November 2019, and through the adoption of ambitious greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets of 50% by 2030 and 80% by 2050.”
- There are a lot of sustainability-related tie ins across the priorities, and the continued emphasis is very encouraging
- Glad to see engagement efforts that reached quite a few people (I admit I had not heard of them myself until SAC) - and very much appreciate the additional focus on engaging equity-deserving communities. Kudos to the City for prioritizing that
- “The process to develop the new strategic plan is rooted in deep and meaningful engagement.” The fact that I can provide my comments on the strategic plan draft proves this statement. Also, community engagement efforts are well-structured and represented in the introduction on p.140
 - I second this comment! It is encouraging to see such a comprehensive and inclusive engagement process
- Transportation p.148: “Improve connections to Toronto Pearson International Airport”, this is an excellent point- the whole point of Waterloo’s connection to neighbouring cities should be revisited. Also, train tickets are expensive for students and buses are time-consuming.
- I like the photo of people swinging at the beginning of the document because this is one of the places in Waterloo that I sensed livability and dynamics of a space p.137
- “Aspirations for Waterloo identified in the SOARR Assessment included to be a leader in actions and policies related to environmental sustainability and set the example for other municipalities and organizations” p.149: I strongly agree that Waterloo can achieve this goal and set an example for others due to its social structure and urban setting. The same applies to obj 2: “minimum accessibility for Ontarians with disabilities” p.158
- I am happy to see “faith communities” included with the diverse segments of the community p.158. The same applies to obj4: p. 158: action anti-racism
- Happy to see ‘sustainability’ is a leading value in the strategic plan, and presented through several lenses, including the environment, economy and community. Recognizing that community and economic activity occurs within environmental, or ecological, limits.
- I like the empathetic and inclusive tone
- A leader in environmental sustainability - beauty!

- Sustainability is a core goal that guides all the aspects of the Strategic Plan, which is fantastic.
- Appendix J: The feedback from the city staff is overall very encouraging, with staff envisioning a more sustainable and healthier city. p.128
 - Agreed - it was encouraging to see how city staff prioritized environmental sustainability in their feedback.
- Not part of the Strategic Plan, but I was very excited to see the 7km MUP encircling Laurel Creek Conservation Area on the agenda.
- Under Objective 1 - Climate Leadership, the objective to “Strengthen education and awareness regarding climate change mitigation and adaptation actions within the City and the community to advance climate action goals” is excellent. However, it could be strengthened, as noted below.

APPENDIX 2 - Things that could use improvement:

- Page 23 states that SMART goals are a best practice, but almost none of the goals/objectives listed throughout the following section are actually SMART goals. Many are actions, not outcomes, and are extremely broad. This may be fine if the idea is to simply map out action/focus areas, but they shouldn't be confused for SMART objectives. For many, it is not clear how it will be determined whether the goals have been met or not met.
 - As a follow-up to this, in the previous strategic plan close-out, it states that of the 79 initiatives from *business plans*, 81% had been completed *or remained ongoing*. I'm honestly not sure how to interpret that - is there a description of those somewhere? How do we know?
 - I had the same comment on the SMART goals, and how it rounded to SDGs. I appreciate the SDGs; however, I was excited to see the SMART goals, which would be customized and contextualized to Waterloo. We have to acknowledge that SDGs is a global and extremely broad framework to work with. We can still show that SMART goals align with SDGs with a diagram (infographic).
- In the activities listed under various goals, I see a lot of “stretch” verbs - things that are, again, impossible to measure and are sort of weasel-words in some senses. Things like “continue to work towards,” “acknowledge,” “encourage”, “strengthen” “work together with,” and “align.” None of these are very descriptive, and a lot of the language could mean anything you want to mean or be interpreted however it is wanted to be interpreted.
 - For example, under Objective 1: Climate leadership: this could be translated into several meaningful, and pretty close to SMART statements (also aligned with TransformWR objectives)
 - Implement actions from Waterloo's CORCAP + ECDM plan to achieve an X% reduction in emissions from city facilities by 202X, including from fleet and buildings.

- Complete implementation of all City-focused actions under the TransformWR framework
 - Similarly, under objective 2: Environmentally sustainable economy,
 - Implement the approved environmental sustainability standards for the development of Generation Park, Waterloo
 - Develop requirements and standards to guide net-zero, sustainable, and ecologically appropriate development practices
- Again, it is OK that statements are broad, but they must be helpful in driving decision-making. Perhaps this is a “clarification” question, but I have no idea how to interpret the following statements. How will those drive decisions? What actions will flow from them?
 - “Acknowledge the needs of communities most impacted by climate change to ensure our data-driven solutions address present and historical impacts.” I fully understand and am incredibly supportive of the concept, but I have no idea what the City will do with a statement like this
 - “Invest in public open spaces and more living streets to preserve and enhance the natural ecosystems in the city.” There are some buzzwords here that sound good, but again I have no idea what they mean absent any other context. Are these renaturalization projects? Parks? “Complete streets”? Boulevard wilding? All of the above?
- While I appreciate the focus on climate change, as it is by far the most material, would there not be a benefit in calling out other activity areas that contribute to climate change beyond fleet and buildings? These are things like procurement (MASSIVE impact, especially in embodied carbon), waste, biodiversity, local food systems, water management, etc.
 - Agreed! There are many high-impact areas that must be actioned (and measured!) - stronger connections with existing plans may help to build a more comprehensive document.
- Not sure clumping “environmental and economic” here makes it clear which goal is prioritized. Would ideally reiterate the commitment and prioritization to reaching the greenhouse gas reduction target. “We plan for the long term, prioritizing sustainability, and take meaningful action to address environmental, social, and economic goals.” Under Guiding Principles, page 153
- Page 155, perhaps, and the word “including by” after “becoming a leader in environmental sustainability..” - “Becoming a leader in environmental sustainability practices and climate action by making transformational changes related to City operations and services while working with the community to work towards greenhouse gas (GHG) mitigation and adaption goals.”
- The four phases of the project p.144: the diagram needs to be more complex, non-linear and provides a timeline for the phases.
- Transportation p.148: “Increase the number of walking and cycling trails in Waterloo to improve the active transportation network.” What about introducing a “park n’ ride” system? From a personal point of view, as an international student, I find it difficult to owe and be responsible for a bike. I am thinking about a system like the one in London, UK.

- “measure disparity and disproportionality in the community” p.158 can we use this objective to address international students’ struggles with IRCC. There are some horrific stories and I have been living one of them. If we think about capacity building and skills development, we have to take care of the students’ wellbeing.
- Social, economic and environmental conditions determine community well-being. It is integrated loosely into Strategy, however. I would like to see it explicitly stated by incorporating a Health in All Policies” (HiAP) approach that systematically considers the health and social implications of policies contemplated by all departments of the municipality to minimize social and health-related harms
- Housing is a key social determinant of health, and happy to see it included in the strategy. However, further emphasis on the other social determinants of health is required, with a particular emphasis on food security, income and education.
- The strategy notes operational excellence as an essential principle. This could be further enhanced by noting the need to qualify operational excellence through meaningful indicators/measurements that would be regularly monitored, development of service performance standards, develop key tracking performance indicators against goals and reporting results, identify best practices and appropriate benchmarking.
- Happy to see ‘sustainability’ is a leading value in the strategic plan, and presented through several lenses, including the environment, economy and community. Recognizing that community and economic activity occurs within environmental, or ecological, limits. However, when presented in the priorities section,, it reverts to only ‘environmental sustainability’ - this needs to be considered by including an economic and community sustainability lens.
- The strategy states that the “The City’s Guiding Principles serve as a lens through which all decisions are evaluated” and represent the values of the municipal corporation. I think critically, decision supported by evidence and data is missing. Recommended including ‘evidence-informed.’ This will help inform the decision-making process and separate personal beliefs vs objective beliefs from the decision-making process.
 - I would like to emphasize the above point as crucial.
- The strategy promotes innovation and future-ready - who develops this? The staff and volunteers. Therefore there has to be commitment and investment from the city in human capital to ensure staff are supported, and have the skills and resources to do the work - I acknowledge this is from an internal lens, but in my mind, it is critical. As an employer, you want to employ people who make a positive difference by attracting, retaining and developing highest quality staff.
- The ‘Complete Community’ section is missing programs and services and the importance and role of businesses in the City supporting and promoting well-being (economic, access to goods and services).
- Throughout the document, a lot of verbiage or jargon is used to limit actions and claim results achieved that are entirely subjective. I would like to see more concrete examples of programs and projects or benchmarks to guide and prove success.
- Affordable Housing Strategy Discussion Paper is shown to not include “some content relating to the theme” of “Health and Wellbeing”, p.44. Housing has a well-established

role in the social determinants of health, to not recognize this is to fundamentally misunderstand the importance of housing for all

- Transportation Master Plan 2020 Update is shown to not include “some content relating to the theme” of “Health and Wellbeing” and “Climate Change and Environment” p.44. Active transportation is mentioned many times in the Strategic Plan, yet the city is not connecting the dots here that a more active city is healthier. Climate change (mental/emotional stress, heat waves, more severe and higher intensity snow and thunderstorms, etc.) will all play a role in the health of every resident. Decreasing needs on automobile (EV and ICE) will reduce the amount of particulates in our urban air, reducing several chronic respiratory and other chronic ailments.
- p.49 “a green City with healthy green spaces, land, water and clean air”
To achieve this, the city needs to actively support residents to do away with lawns, aggressively restore the green wooded spaces we have (remove invasives such as Garlic Mustard, Common Buckthorn, Periwinkle... and plant only native plants in natural areas and planned garden landscaping). Healthy green spaces require interconnectedness and support a diverse ecological landscape from the ground up. To help do this the city should focus on fostering community stewardship of our greenspaces. Perhaps create and advertise the formation of community groups within or a part of neighbourhood associations, such as a new Friends of Forwell Creek or Friends of Sugarbush Park. This could be in conjunction with an expanded Pollinator Working Group and the Parks Department. Again, more concrete examples or benchmarks of what a “green City with healthy green spaces, land, water and clean air” means.
- Re: p. 25/182 - “The City of Waterloo’s new strategic plan will balance innovation with sustainability, and a vision of service excellence with fiscal responsibility” - this presents a false dichotomy. Should we not create a strategy where innovation, sustainability, service excellence and fiscal responsibility are optimized, not positioned as a “this or that”?
- Under Strategic Priority 2, Objective 1 - Climate Leadership, the objective to “Strengthen education and awareness regarding climate change ... within the City. Hopefully this includes every department having a sustainability liaison that helps to consider everything the City does through an environmental lens. And have those liaisons regularly report to the CAO on progress, barriers, and opportunities to move the City forward.
- When the City declared a climate emergency in November 2019. Council directed the City to reduce its emission of greenhouse gasses by 80 percent by 2050. The city also committed to investigate ways to help limit global warming, and to measure and report on progress.

Searching the City website no explicit link to “climate emergency” could be found. Digging deeper, the Climate Adaptation Plan and an ENERGY CONSERVATION AND DEMAND MANAGEMENT PLAN (2019) were found. The ECDM Plan, under 12.0 Monitoring & Implementation contains an initiative “To track and report on the progress

of the ECDM Plan initiatives.” Again no report on progress or otherwise was found on the City’s website.

Following these commitments and reporting on progress would provide feedback to the community on measurable and time sensitive goals under Strategic Priority 2 in the new Strategic Plan

APPENDIX 3 - Things needing clarification:

- On pages 10 and 13-15 (144 and 147-149) of the Strat Plan there is talk of the Scan Report. While I appreciate there is more background in a separate report, as mentioned, there could be some clarity in this as to what the Scan Report is. It should be stand alone and not assumes the reader is aware
- In the previous Strat Plan, the broad goals/objectives were to be translated into the business plans of the operational units. I don’t think there was ever transparency in how that developed - I may be wrong, but really there was no clear reporting framework on the actions taken to advance the strategic plan? And is the same approach being followed here (broad statement translating to business unit plans/actions)? If so, SAC was very frustrated with this last time, for a number of reasons, but primarily because of transparency, dilution, and lack of strategic clarity.
 - As precedence, in searching through the previous strat plan updates to council, the most recent one I found (based on the 2023-26 documentation) was a Sept. 12 2022 report listing all initiatives aligned with the strategic plan. While I acknowledge this may not be exhaustive... of the objectives that were completed, the green fleet procurement seemed the only one really strongly aligned with sustainability. I counted maybe 6-7 others that still had ongoing action, but no mention of ECDM plan, CORCAP, or any other translation of strategic plan themes/objectives that was translated into a business plan *that was reported on*. We know activities happened! But my point is that it’s unclear why these aren’t being rolled up into those strat plan objectives more directly, and I’d be worried about the same happening for 2023-26?
- The sentences at the start of each priority area goal/objective section are quite a mouthful... I had to reread some of them several times to grapple with the sentence structure
- Page 149, more clarity on “align economic development with sustainability goals and manage low land availability”
- Community engagement cycles of feedback and implementation and future plans of engagement needs to be clarified. Why? Because according o the document, community engagement is well-embedded in the new strategic plan.
- On the socioeconomic level: what is missing is a strategy (or maybe a clear and identified goal with objectives and actions) for the capacity building and skills development. Since Waterloo is the home of 3 world-class educational institutions and it

attracts international students, capacity building needs to be taken into consideration. I have to note that efforts exist, however, we need to see them incorporated into the plan.

- Climate action p.148: “Create single vision for a sustainable city, Make the city as sustainable as possible” – very broad sentences and lack scope and details- maybe we should mention real problems from the community answers.
 - Building on above, there are a few instances of statements that are ‘broad’. Another example is in the Mission Statement (p. 17 or 151) under “what does it mean?”. In this section the phrases ‘strive for boldness’ and ‘committed to bold decision-making’ are present. What exactly is meant by ‘bold’. For example, bold can be considered obnoxious if not done appropriately. Not sure how to address this, but it needs clarity.
- P. 21 or 155. There should be mention that the Strategic Priorities are interconnected, right at the beginning. As an example, need to recognize that (for example), deliverables associated with Infrastructure will also improve Climate Action. State right at the beginning that these ‘work together’.
- The Vision Statement: “To be a leader in sustainability” p.141, what is the city actually doing to be a leader? What does the city mean by leader? Is the city following other cities on programs and strategies or is the city willing to take risks on new and innovative ideas of sustainability (environment, land use, building codes, neighborhoods...)?
- Re: p 16/182 - the previous strategic plan close-out states that of the 79 initiatives from *business plans*, 81% had been completed *or remained ongoing*.. This is vague and potentially confusing (a more transparent metric may include the percentage of projects that had been completed and the percentage of projects that remained ongoing, which can be found in the progress report on p. 48/182) - given that just 20 of 79 projects had been completed, additionally, how will these “ongoing projects” be incorporated in the 2023 - 2026 plan?
- Use of the terms “sustainability” and “environmental sustainability” needs to be clear and consistent - consider clarifying early on in the plan.
- Re: p 151/182 - the vision and mission state that we will be “a leader in sustainability.... respond with bold leadership....and accountability”... in what way does this plan position us as a leader? I am confused by the promise of “bold leadership” (what does that mean?) and accountability... as MT mentioned above, accountability requires measurable goals. The use of ‘stretch verbs’ used throughout the strategic priorities along with “nice-sounding” actions (and a lack of SMART goals) moves us away from accountability!
- Opportunity to more clearly connect how strategic priorities are connected to and localize the SDGs

Other observations/interesting notes

- Encouraging to see that climate and bike lanes were identified by residents as opportunity areas for improvement, and a lot of sustainability-aligned themes in the survey.

- Some comments on the presentation of the document: 1- The City Guiding Principles lens in p.141: needs a visual representation 2- Guidelines priorities objectives actions p.142: needs a sort of a visual map 3- Visual aid to represent the SOARR assessment results p.149 4- SMART goals alignment with SDGs diagram p.158 5- SDGs icons size and arrangement throughout the document p.158-163
- Under Strategic Priorities (p. 21 or 155) I appreciate the description of Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. However, Under Guiding Principles (p. 19 or 153) there is a focus under Equity and Inclusion on First Nations, Metis and Inuit. Equity seems to reference other 'deserving communities'. No concerns with the focus, but think may want to add some descriptors as to what 'deserving communities' means. Could explain that this could be cultural, social, religious etc. Seems to limit the way it is written
- "plan for context-sensitive intensification" This could be reasonable or a purposeful framing of allowing a few noisy "NIMBY" residents to blockade much-needed intensification. p.160
- "Low land availability", p.149. Is there low availability or just poor use of the land we have? Uptown as an example has an incredible abundance of surface area dedicated to parking.
- No mention of community stewardship to help grow communities and develop programs or initiatives to protect and improve natural areas and community groups.
- Despite repeated mentions of improving and protecting the natural environment and our green spaces, the opportunity to acknowledge and work towards the goals of the COP15 Montreal agreement (2022 United Nations Biodiversity Conference) that Canada signed on to and that we are in the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration.

Sandy Little
City of Waterloo Strategic Plan
100 Regina Street South
PO Box 337, Station Waterloo
Waterloo, ON N2J 4A8

By e-mail: strategicplan2023@waterloo.ca

May 31, 2023

Dear Ms. Sandy Little,

The Waterloo Park Advisory Committee would like to thank Council and City of Waterloo staff for the opportunity to review and provide feedback on the Draft 2023-2026 Strategic Plan. Our comments are provided with acknowledgement of the Committee's mandate to advise council on matters pertaining to the implementation of the master plan associated with Waterloo Park.

Our comments on the draft Strategic Plan as they relate to Waterloo Park are as follows:

Strategic Priority 1: Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

Waterloo Park offers a safe and supportive environment for diverse equity deserving communities. It provides opportunities for youth, older adults, women, faith communities, people with disabilities, Indigenous peoples, people living on low incomes, newcomers, and 2SLGBTQ+ to gather as a community in recreation and celebration or to quietly contemplate nature as individuals. The planned 2025 Master Plan update for Waterloo Park will support Strategic Plan Priority 1 by ensuring decision-making is informed using Equity and Reconciliation frameworks. It will also offer an opportunity to consider how future park planning can demonstrate leadership in accessibility and inclusion practices by exceeding minimum Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) standards, as well as responding to the 94 Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action, the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls to Justice, and the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous People.

Strategic Priority 2: Environmental Sustainability and Climate Action

We recognize that the draft Strategic Plan identifies an "increasing urgency for action to address climate change and ensure community sustainability", as well as "ambitious greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets of 50% by 2030 and 80% by 2050". As such, the Waterloo Park Advisory Committee would like to suggest that the City of Waterloo consider utilizing Waterloo Park as a demonstration area for implementing best environmental management practices, new green infrastructure and technologies, and sustainable materials that showcase the City's climate action leadership. We would also suggest investing in the natural ecosystems found within Waterloo Park, recognizing the important role that the forests, wetlands and natural riparian areas play in mitigating the impacts of climate change, and maintaining biodiversity. These future habitat restoration efforts, as well as landscaping should prioritize the use of native and pollinator friendly species.

As the City's premier park, we believe that there is a unique opportunity to utilize Waterloo Park to exemplify the City's commitment to taking action on climate change and sustainability by ensuring that the design and construction of all new capital and park infrastructure renewal projects, as well as the day-to-day operations of Waterloo Park, achieve climate action mitigation and adaptation goals to create a more resilient community. This would include electrification of the Park's operational fleet vehicles, ensuring that operational decisions meet the City's greenhouse gas mitigation and adaptation goals, low carbon retrofitting of existing facilities, and adherence to low-carbon new construction. We also believe continued efforts should be taken to expand tree cover and improve the natural areas, so that Waterloo Park can reduce the urban heat island effect in Uptown Waterloo, aid in upstream floodwater attenuation, promote groundwater recharge, and contribute to carbon sequestration. Furthermore, with its central location and high community usership, Waterloo Park could be used to educate and bring awareness to climate change mitigation and adaptation actions being implemented by the City and serve as a call to action for the broader community to advance climate action goals.

Strategic Priority 3: Complete Community

We recognize the important part that Waterloo Park can play in demonstrating the City's priority of creating a complete community. The City of Waterloo has established numerous events for residents that take place in Waterloo Park which increase the connectedness between individuals in the community and improves the overall quality of place for the city. This includes the Movies in the Park summer event series, the July 1 Community Picnic, Show Me the City Virtual Walking Tour of Waterloo Park, Day of Play, Lumen, Waterloo Park Art Walk, Wonders of Winter, Centennial Celebrations, as well as many events hosted by Friends of Waterloo Park.

We hope that the City will continue to recognize the importance of Waterloo Park as a vibrant public space and a place for continued investment in arts events and experiences in the city; activities which celebrate diversity and uplift diverse communities. We believe that with continued investment, Waterloo Park can be further enhanced to ensure that is a welcoming, inclusive and accessible space for all residents from across the community: an outdoor space that offers the potential for new program opportunities which are accessible and can meet the diverse needs of older adults and the community at large.

Strategic Priority 4: Infrastructure and Transportation Systems

The upcoming Waterloo Park Master Plan update will consider the need to assess and address the infrastructure gaps and prioritize the development of environmentally sustainable infrastructure within the park which address the needs of future generations and improve the Park's the natural environment. We also believe that the planned Waterloo Park Circuit project, which is currently underway, will help to address the community priority and Strategic Plan objective of ensuring mobility for all by providing a connected, accessible community. The City's investment in this project will expand community trail connections in Waterloo Park to support Waterloo's Active Transportation network and to provide safe, healthy, equitable mobility for all. It will also facilitate improved access to the park by providing nearby neighbourhoods more opportunities to enter and exit the Park, enhance connections to regional trail systems, and provide linkages to external transit systems.

In conclusion, we would like to commend City staff for their comprehensive and timely consultation process which provided a variety of modes to elicit feedback, such as the “Community Skate and Strat Chat”, both in-person and virtual group sessions, as well as one-on-one community and partner interviews. We believe it was a very ambitious and comprehensive consultation process and applaud the City and its consultant’s ability to achieve this level of consultation over a six month timeframe. With the impending update of the Waterloo Park Master Plan, we would welcome the opportunity to discuss the lessons learned from this endeavour so that it may inform our own future community consultation process.

The Waterloo Park Advisory Committee also acknowledges some of the key findings of the Strategic Plan consultation process that will be considered in the upcoming Waterloo Park Master Plan process, noting that when asked about their vision for the community of Waterloo in 5-10 years survey respondents most commonly mentioned that they hoped for a walkable/accessible City (31%), as well as more green spaces and improved parks/trails (28%). The committee also recognizes that the Children and Youth Engagement Summary identified the importance of recreation opportunities for outdoor sports facilities such as basketball courts, soccer fields, pools, and winter activities such as sledding and skiing, plus their enjoyment of City parks such Waterloo Park, with its playgrounds and trails.

We look forward to the presentation to Council on June 26, 2023, and the report with details regarding the launch of the plan, a reporting framework, and implementation. We would welcome the opportunity to have a continued discussion with City staff about moving forward with the new strategic plan, particularly as it relates to the pending update to the Waterloo Park Master Plan, the community consultation process, and its subsequent implementation.

Gordon Greavette
Chair
Waterloo Park Advisory Committee

Age Friendly Waterloo Committee

Comments on Draft City of Waterloo Strategic Plan 2023-2026

May 25, 2023

1. Introduction

On behalf of The Waterloo Age Friendly Multi-Agency Committee, we would like to thank you for this opportunity to comment on the Draft City of Waterloo Strategic Plan 2023-2026. A Strategic Plan is the most important document for a City as it sets out a clear direction for the community. This document will help guide the decision makers, set clear expectations for those implementing the plan and inform the citizens of what they can expect in the next 3 years. We believe this draft document is well conceived and speaks to the needs of our community. We strongly support this draft Strategic Plan and have provided some comments that we hope will enhance it even further.

2. A Little bit about our committee

The Waterloo Age Friendly Multi-Agency Committee, more informally known as Age Friendly Waterloo, is a committee of volunteer citizens whose role is to:

- provide advice to Council;
- provide outreach to the community; and,
- be advocates for the city's older adult population.

The committee is linked to International, Federal, Provincial and Regional networks and organizations that promote healthy and active ageing.

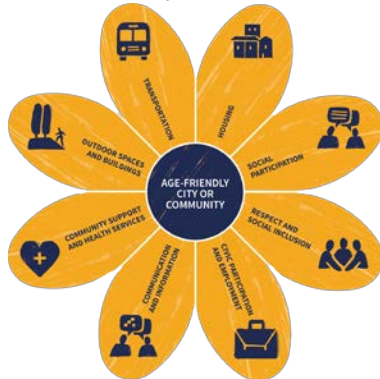
The City of Waterloo was recognized by the World Health Organization's (WHO) age-friendly city designation in 2012. This designation recognizes the City of Waterloo as a place where all residents could age safely, enjoy good health, and participate fully in a vibrant and inviting community.

Age-friendly environments enable all people to:

- ✓ Age well in a place that is right for them.
- ✓ Continue to develop personally.
- ✓ Be included.
- ✓ Contribute to their communities.
- ✓ Enjoy independence and good health.

As established by the World Health Organization, eight Age-friendly Domains guide the work

of an age-friendly committee. We note that many of these eight domains nicely fit with the Draft City of Waterloo Strategic Plan 2023-2026.



The Age Friendly Committee's spheres of concern include everything from ensuring transportation options are accessible for all ages and abilities, to promoting inclusive communities, and equitable housing options.

3. Link to 2019-2022 Strategic Plan

As one Strategic Plan comes to its end the next one needs to pick up where the last one left off. This allows the plans to build upon one another, rather than being a series of one-off plans. This ensures that our community continues to meet the needs of its citizens in a planned and orderly manner.

The Age Friendly Waterloo Committee prepared a Strategic Plan in 2020 that aligned with the City Strategic Plan. By ensuring alignment, we were confident that the things we were working on were things the City and Community wanted worked on. One of the goals of the previous City Strategic Plan was "Equity, inclusion and a sense of belonging - strengthen Waterloo as a diverse and inclusive community." Objective 3 under this goal stated "Address the needs of an aging population through responsive development, programming and communications strategies." Since an aging population is specifically identified, it was clear that there is a need in this age group now and in the future. Some of the key strategic accomplishments include:

- The new 25,000 square foot senior pavilion at the Waterloo Memorial Recreation Complex.
- Program Review of staff structure to deliver recreation programming, including programming for older adults; some realignment did happen to ensure our community receives high quality service.
- Increased attention to equity, diversity and inclusion in program delivery – recognition that older adults have multiple identities and ensure that programs are welcoming to all.
- Age Friendly committee input into the Affordable Housing Strategy.

We are pleased to see that the Draft City of Waterloo Strategic Plan 2023-2026 continues this theme in "Strategic Priority 3: Complete Community, Objective 3:

Complete Neighbourhoods” where it states “... and develop plans to reflect the direction of the Age Friendly Committee of Waterloo.” Further, “Objective 4: Actions to meet community needs” states the following: “Develop new program opportunities that offer a variety of accessible and inclusive services, programs, and amenities that meet the diverse needs of older adults and the community at large.” These key statements are strongly supported by our committee and are vital in the continued progression of having an Age Friendly City.

4. Demographics

The data provided in the Deloitte report, titled “City of Waterloo Strategic Plan: 2023-2026, Final Scan Report, April 2023” identifies that in 2021 the following: Late Career & Early Retirement (55-64) cohort represents 11.7% of Waterloo’s population; Young Senior (65-74) cohort represents 8.4%; Elderly (75+) cohort represents 7.1%. Together this group is also known as 55+ age group which represents 27.2%. In other words, in 2021 more than a quarter of Waterloo’s population was 55+. This information is backed up by recent demographic analysis by the Waterloo Public Library in April 2023. It finds that in 2022, 33,253 people or 26.92% were 55+ and by 2026, 35,731 or 28.05% will be in the 55+ cohort.

The Age Friendly Waterloo Committee had a similar analysis completed under the guidance of Dr. John Lewis from the University of Waterloo. In 2016 there were approximately 25,600 older adults in Waterloo. By 2026 that number is expected to grow to almost 40,000 and will continue to rise. To put this in perspective, the older adult cohort is growing faster than any other cohort group, and by 2030 older adults will be the dominate cohort. It is clear that one of the fastest growing segments of our community are those aged 55+.

These trends have been recognized by Federal and Provincial authorities resulting in policy directions to accommodate this growing age group, sometimes called the “Grey or Silver Tsunami”. These demographics illustrate the need to plan for and provide support and services for older adults now and in the future.

5. Comments on the DRAFT City of Waterloo Strategic Plan 2023-2026

An age-friendly community builds on the World Health Organization’s (WHO) Active Ageing Framework, by:

- recognizing the wide range of capacities and resources among older people,
- anticipating and responding flexibly to aging-related needs and preferences,
- respecting residents’ decisions and lifestyle choices,
- protecting those who are most vulnerable, and
- promoting older adults’ inclusion in and contribution to all areas of community life.

Based on this internationally recognized and respected framework we are pleased to provide our thoughts. The comments provided in this section should not be read in isolation, but rather, considered as a part of this entire submission as we feel this document needs to be read as a whole. We will provide comments for each section of the Plan from an Age Friendly Waterloo perspective and will resist the urge to wordsmith.

Vision Statement:

“A leader in sustainability and a future-ready community for all.”

- We support this statement.
- Key words are “future-ready” because it speaks to the demographics of our community and the need to plan for its aging population.

Mission Statement:

“To actively respond to our diverse community with bold leadership, empathy, and accountability.”

- We support this statement.
- Key words are “diverse community” and “empathy” because it recognizes the diversity in our community be it age, gender, cultural, race, backgrounds, interests and beliefs and the need to be empathic when addressing these diverse needs.

Guiding Principles:

Equity and Inclusion

- We support this statement.
- The phrase “equity deserving communities” seems vague and could benefit from further clarification.
- “equity, diversity, and inclusion” are key elements for an Age Friendly City.
- Older immigrants are at greater risk of social isolation.

Sustainability

- We support this statement.
- “plan for the long term” and “take meaningful action to address social goals” are important statements that can help address ongoing needs of an aging population.

Integrity

- We support this statement.

Workplace Wellbeing

- We support this statement.
- Recognition of “volunteers” is important as seniors can bring wisdom and experience.

Community-centred

- We support this statement.
- “livable neighbourhoods”, “empathy and understanding” are key phrases that recognize the diverse needs of a community.

- We believe that there is a need to bring an Older Adult Lens to community planning initiatives.
- Seniors can play an active role within a community, but they can also be overlooked leading to social isolation and deteriorating health.

Operational Excellence

- We support this statement.

Strategic Priorities and Objectives:

1. Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion

- a. **Objective 1: Invest in communities to enhance belonging.**
- b. **Objective 2: Embed REDI across the organization.**
- c. **Objective 3: Advance Reconciliation.**
- d. **Objective 4: Action anti-racism.**

Comment:

- We strongly support this section as equity, diversity and inclusion are all important elements for an Age Friendly City.
- It recognizes that individual needs are varied and require unique solutions.
- Objective 1 recognizes “older adults” as a priority group.
- Objective 2 speaks to “strengthening relationships with groups outside of the organization” – Age Friendly Waterloo does this now and looks to expand with other partners.
- Objective 3 Advance Reconciliation - Age Friendly Waterloo supports this action and had organized a Metis Art Class to promote intergenerational and cultural integration.
- Objective 4 We suggest that “Ageism” be added to those already listed.

2. Environmental Sustainability and Climate Action

- a. **Objective 1: Climate leadership.**
- b. **Objective 2: Environmentally sustainable economy.**
- c. **Objective 3: Environmental sustainability mindset.**

Comment:

- We support this section recognizing the importance of the environment and climate action; however, we do recognize that these objectives do not directly speak to Age Friendly Waterloo.
- Recognizing that seniors make up over 25% of the population, we would suggest that you draw on this group’s experience to help activate these objectives.

3. Complete Community

- a. Objective 1: Invest in arts experiences.**
- b. Objective 2: Vibrant public spaces.**
- c. Objective 3: Complete neighbourhoods.**
- d. Objective 4: Actions to meet community needs.**

Comment:

- We strongly support this section as a “high quality of life for all residents” is key for an Age Friendly City.
- Objective 1 – Art can take many different forms and also play an important role in celebrating our diversity.
- Objective 2 – well planned cities can benefit all groups; we have often said “if you plan for youth, you exclude the elderly; if you plan for the elderly, you include everyone.”
- Objective 3 – Complete Neighbourhoods is a key element in an Age Friendly City. We strongly support the Affordable Housing Strategy as housing is identified by the World Health Organization as one of its 8 key domains. Affordable housing for seniors had been identified as a critical issue since the Age Friendly Waterloo Committee was established.
- “Develop plans to reflect the direction of the Age Friendly Committee of Waterloo”: this strong statement reflects the importance of the committee as it plans for an ageing population.
- Objective 4 – states “Develop new program opportunities that offer a variety of accessible and inclusive services, programs, and amenities that meet the diverse needs of older adults and the community at large.” This strong statement is well worded as it speaks to the varied needs of our diverse and growing older adult population.

4. Infrastructure and Transportation Systems

- a. Objective 1: Sustainable infrastructure planning.**
- b. Objective 2: Mobility and a connected community.**
- c. Objective 3: Invest in active transportation.**

Comment:

- We support this section as city infrastructure and transportation are the backbone to a city. Without properly built and maintained infrastructure and transportation networks a city cannot function.
- Objective 2 – “expanded year-round transportation systems” speaks to the need to provide fully accessible opportunities.
- There is a need to work with Grand River Transit (GRT) to provide creative solutions to gain better service to facilities (e.g., Waterloo Memorial Recreation Complex and Pavilion)

and increase the ease of ridership for seniors (e.g., free fares and educational opportunities).

5. Innovation and Future-Ready

- a. Objective 1: Support a diversified economy and innovation ecosystem.**
- b. Objective 2: Partner for social innovation.**
- c. Objective 3: Digital opportunities for the future.**

Comment:

- We support this section as innovation, partnerships and digital accessibility will strengthen an Age Friendly City.
- Objective 1 - Age Friendly Waterloo has embraced its relationship with post-secondary institutions and not-for-profit organizations.
- Objective 2: Partner for social innovation – Health care and social isolation are top concerns for older adults so we strongly support any efforts in these areas.

6. Conclusion

The Age Friendly Waterloo Multi-Agency Committee strongly supports the Draft City of Waterloo Strategic Plan 2023-2026. We feel the guiding principles and strategic priorities and objectives laid out in this document are appropriate and suggest that the above noted items be given further consideration given the special needs of an aging population. Once the City has finalized the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan, the Age Friendly Waterloo Committee will update its strategic plan to ensure alignment.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on this important document and we would be happy to discuss any of these items further if you so need. Please keep us informed as this project proceeds to Council for final consideration.

Respectfully submitted by,

Age Friendly Waterloo Multi-Agency Committee.

“...intergenerational programming can be a way of tapping into the resources of people of all ages, mobilizing the wisdom and experience of seniors and the energy of youth to meet the new challenges of culturally diverse communities.”



Thursday, May 25, 2023

Mayor McCabe and Members of Council
City of Waterloo
100 Regina Street South
Waterloo, Ontario
N2J 4A8

Dear Mayor McCabe and Members of Council,

Re: City of Waterloo 2023-2026 Strategic Plan

Please be advised that on May 16, 2023, the Waterloo Economic Development Advisory Committee passed the following motion:

Moved by Blaine Gray, Seconded by Michelle Grimes:

"That WEDAC supports in principle the draft City of Waterloo Strategic Plan, as presented to WEDAC on May 16, 2023"

All in Favour, Motion Carried

Respectfully Submitted,

David Werezak
Chair, Waterloo Economic Development Advisory Committee (WEDAC)

CC: Tim Anderson, CAO
Sandy Little, Director, Strategic Initiatives