

— 2023-2027 —

STRATEGIC PLAN **growing** with care



Land acknowledgment

This Strategic Plan is about this community and its future — today, tomorrow and for generations to come. It is about our commitment to all people and the land we share and how this drives everything we do at the Region of Waterloo.

We live on land that has been rich in Indigenous cultures for 10,000 years. We are treaty people, which comes with responsibilities and obligations. The enduring presence and traditional knowledge of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee and Chonnonton Peoples teaches us how to steward the land for future generations. We work to honour the Two Row Wampum treaty and its principles of Friendship, Peace Between Peoples, and Living In Parallel Forever.

On this Plan’s cover, you can spot some of what makes Waterloo Region a wonderful community. Alongside the ION train, construction cranes, Regional Council chambers and our water towers, this graphic also shows the connections that are critical to our community:

- The Grand River that provides drinking water, brings joy, and is home to many living things
- Deer, an example of local wildlife that has been a staple food for local Indigenous people
- Corn, beans and squash, traditional local Indigenous crops. These represent our history of agriculture and teach us about growing together and supporting each other
- The eagle, which represents leadership in Indigenous teaching and watches and warns of threats
- The rising sun represents warmth and new energy, symbolizing the Region of Waterloo’s commitment to new ideas and collaboration with community
- A bridge, which symbolizes our connections and overcoming divisions

The purple rows you see along the bottom of many Growing with Care graphics represents Indigenous and settler peoples traveling side-by-side along the river of life in peace and friendship, honouring our different customs and traditions.

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Message from Karen Redman, Regional Chair



The Region of Waterloo is quickly growing to one million residents, and how we grow matters. It's imperative that as a community, we focus on the future, striving for growth that is sustainable, fair, and inclusive.

In developing this Strategic Plan, we listened to the diverse voices of thousands of residents. We would like to thank everyone who took a moment of their busy day to tell us what mattered to them.

Your feedback emphasized that our community's identity should not solely be defined by growth numbers, but rather by the manner in which we grow collectively. Your vision entails a future where growth is approached with sensitivity—towards both people and the environment we inhabit.

We've heard you, and the result is our new 2023-2027 Strategic Plan, "Growing with Care." This is our shared vision for the community where we all live. It is our guide towards a compassionate community that cares for all people, stewards the land for future generations and where everyone has the opportunity to live a good life.

These are the building blocks for our future. Working alongside community partners and area municipalities, we are proud to continue providing the essential services residents deserve.

Sincerely,

Karen Redman, Regional Chair

Your regional government

We've listened to where the community wants to go. We also know that the journey is just as important as the destination. The Region of Waterloo is working hard to provide the essential services residents need now, and also to build the best community for future generations.

Your Regional Council

Karen Redman - Regional Chair
 Doug Craig - Cambridge
 Rob Deutschmann - Kitchener
 Jim Erb - Waterloo
 Sue Foxtan - North Dumfries
 Michael Harris - Kitchener
 Chantal Huinink - Waterloo
 Colleen James - Kitchener

Jan Liggett - Cambridge
 Dorothy McCabe - Waterloo
 Joe Nowak - Wellesley
 Natasha Salonen - Wilmot
 Sandy Shantz - Woolwich
 Berry Vrbancovic - Kitchener
 Kari Williams - Kitchener
 Pam Wolf - Cambridge

About the Regional Municipality of Waterloo



At the heart of the Region of Waterloo are people who care deeply about the community.



Together we collaborate with community to bring essential services to everyone living, working and visiting here, today and tomorrow.



You will find us providing health services, transit services, seniors' services, paramedic services, waste management services and much more.



Behind each service are passionate and compassionate employees working towards an inclusive, thriving and sustainable future for Waterloo Region.





Waterloo Region is part of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum. This treaty guides our work at the Region of Waterloo as we live out our core value.

- We recognize our shared humanity and land
- We only take what we need
- We leave some for others, and
- We keep the dish clean



Waterloo Region: a place of possibilities

Waterloo Region is one of the fastest growing areas in North America, with a blend of cities, countryside, technology and modern industries. We are thriving, vibrant and will soon be a community of over one million people.

This is a special place. It is a place of hope, for today’s residents and for those traveling from all corners to seek a better life.

Our appreciation for land coupled with our welcoming nature helped create thriving cities and vibrant townships that together provide a unique way of life for those who call Waterloo Region their home.

Ours is a community of collaborators, where people love to listen and learn from one another. Here, we take bold action towards the things that matter most. Invention and ambition is in our DNA. Together, collaborators and disrupters tackle local challenges and further global progress.

Most importantly of all, Waterloo Region is a caring community, a place of safety, where you are valued for who you are.

Growing with Care

The Region of Waterloo is on an exciting journey of growth. As we grow with care, we have a new vision, mission and core value to reflect who we are and how we will work alongside our community partners.

These statements describe the future that residents want for themselves, one grounded in compassion and equitable opportunity for all. They speak to the Region’s vital role to serve a growing and diverse community across all corners of Waterloo Region. Our core value is at the heart of how we, as employees, will carry out this work. It also signals a deep commitment to continue our journey towards meaningful Reconciliation and equity.

Vision

Waterloo Region is a compassionate community that cares for all people, stewards the land for future generations and where everyone has the opportunity to live a good life.

Mission

To provide essential services that support quality of life for each and every person in Waterloo Region.

Core Value

Care for people and the land we share.

Where we are,
where we're going



674,000

Waterloo Region’s population in 2023

925,000

our expected population by 2051

14 years old and younger

make up **17%** of people in Waterloo Region
(Expected to **decrease** by 2041)

65 years old and older

make up **16%** of people in Waterloo Region
(Expected to **increase** by 2041)

27.5%

of our population was part of
a racialized group in 2021
(59% **increase** between 2016 and 2021)

Our 2023-2027 Strategic Plan

Our Strategic Plan ‘**Growing with Care**,’ gives the Region of Waterloo four key priority areas to guide our work together as our community grows over the next four years.

Vision

Waterloo Region is a compassionate community that cares for all people, stewards the land for future generations and where everyone has the opportunity to live a good life.

Mission

To provide essential services that support quality of life for each and every person in Waterloo Region.

Core Value

Care for people and the land we share.



Homes for all

We will invest in affordable homes and economic opportunity for all that are part of inclusive and environmentally sustainable communities.

- Move quickly to create affordable, accessible, and equitable housing
- Eliminate chronic homelessness and reliance on traditional shelter models
- Invest in upstream solutions to reduce housing and economic precarity
- Unlock Region-owned land that supports community growth

Climate aligned growth



As we grow, we will support a healthy environment where communities can thrive. Through intentional collaboration and creativity, we will support sustainable community growth.

- Use a climate adaptation lens to re-imagine infrastructure, land and services for growth
- Foster car alternative options through complete streets and extended alternative transportation networks
- Steward our natural environment and shared resources as we grow



Equitable services and opportunities

Through collaboration and innovative design, we will provide equitable, accessible services across Waterloo Region that support the social determinants of health, safety and complete communities as we grow.

- Ensure services are inclusive, accessible, culturally safe and appropriate
- Design equitable Regional services that meet local community needs
- Explore new models of service through community collaboration and partnerships

growing
with care

Resilient and future ready organization



The Region of Waterloo is a great place to work, where everyone is valued, feels they belong and where they have the supports and tools they need to do a great job. We will be prepared for the future by providing a safe space for bold ideas and experimentation, based on data and other ways of knowing.

- Foster an empowered, people-centred culture
- Reconcile past injustices to advance our future together
- Explore new service models and partnerships to achieve fiscal resilience and better service



Homes for all



We will invest in affordable homes and economic opportunity for all that are part of inclusive and environmentally sustainable communities.

A home is more than rooms, bricks and mortar. It is a place where people feel secure and welcome. We feel at home in a community that is connected and safe, when equity and inclusion matter, when the land, air and water are clean, and when everyone has what they need to live.

Growing with Care is our path towards creating homes for all. Together we will advance this priority over the next four years by:

1. Moving quickly to create affordable, accessible, and equitable housing

We will increase equitable access to affordable homes that cost less than 30% of household income across the region. We will also work to ensure these homes reflect the present and future needs of residents, with a variety of options across the region.

2. Eliminating chronic homelessness and reliance on traditional emergency shelter models

We will work in collaboration with area municipalities, community partners, and other levels of government to reduce, then eliminate, chronic homelessness by advancing new long-term housing solutions that enable people to have safe, permanent homes.

3. Investing in upstream solutions to reduce housing and economic precarity

To properly address the complexity of the housing crisis for current and future generations, we will extend our focus beyond the traditional domain of housing solutions and focus on preventative interventions and continue to deliver wrap-around supports.

4. Unlocking Region-owned land that supports community growth

We will make land available across the region appropriate for affordable housing, shovel-ready employment lands and other supportive infrastructure designed for families and future needs.



We will monitor progress on our **Homes for All** priority through:

- Equitable housing
- Affordability
- Social and economic supports and opportunities
- Homelessness
- Using land effectively





Equitable services and opportunities



Through collaboration and innovative design, we will provide equitable, accessible services across Waterloo Region that support the social determinants of health, safety and complete communities as we grow.

Our community is only complete when everyone is included, and can enjoy health, safety and equity.

Here in Waterloo Region, our mix of diverse communities and cultures makes us stronger. People thrive when they have the opportunities and supports they need. We know that many residents experience barriers due to their ethnicity, culture, race or skin colour, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, geography, or income.

The Region will be vigilant that our services work for everyone. Over the next four years, we will advance this priority by:

1. Ensuring services are inclusive, accessible, culturally safe and appropriate

The Region will work to ensure the services it delivers are safe, culturally appropriate, inclusive and empowering to communities.

2. Designing equitable services that meet local community needs

We will work to ensure people have access to the services they need when, where, and how they need them most.

3. Exploring new models of service through community collaboration and partnerships

To best meet people's needs, we will work with community partners, community members, and across Regional departments to co-design safe, fiscally responsible and culturally appropriate service improvements and policies.



We'll monitor progress on our **Equitable Services and Opportunities** priority through:

- Social and economic wellbeing
- Service experience and equity
- Diverse programming
- Community partnerships





Climate aligned growth



As we grow, we will support a healthy environment where communities can thrive. Through intentional collaboration and creativity, we will support sustainable community growth.

We must prioritize a healthy environment for all residents to thrive. This means working together to protect clear air, water, biodiversity and land, and expanding climate-friendly ways to get around the community.

The natural world is under pressure as our region grows and the climate crisis worsens. For the people of Waterloo Region, climate change means adapting to more frequent storms and flash flooding, heat waves, air quality alerts, and different agricultural production.

Over the next four years, we will advance this priority alongside community partners by:

1. Using a climate adaptation lens to re-imagine infrastructure, land and services for growth

We will work collaboratively with TransformWR, area municipalities, businesses and community partners to integrate infrastructure planning and adaptation — improving how services, assets, and infrastructure mitigate and adapt to climate change.

2. Fostering car alternative options through complete streets and extended alternative transportation networks

By expanding equitable public and active transportation networks across the region, we will make it easier for people to get around and make climate-friendly choices.

3. Stewarding our natural environment and shared resources as we grow

We will work alongside Indigenous communities and community partners to protect the region’s natural environment, biodiversity, trees, and water.



We'll monitor progress on our **Climate Aligned Growth** priority through:

- Greenhouse gas emissions
- Energy utilization
- Car alternative options
- Active transportation
- Health and sustainability of natural resources





Resilient and future ready organization



The Region of Waterloo is a great place to work, where everyone is valued, feels they belong and where they have the supports and tools they need to do a great job. We will be prepared for the future by providing a safe space for bold ideas and experimentation that transform services based on data and other ways of knowing.

Our people are critical to delivering excellent services. Prioritizing diversity, equity, inclusion, and employee wellbeing will ensure we attract and retain talented, experienced staff. Improving how we use data and technology (like AI and automation) will help us work efficiently and make better evidence-based decisions. We can't do this alone. Working with community partners will help us innovate and improve our services in a more fiscally sustainable way.

We will advance this priority over the next four years by:

1. Fostering an empowered, people-centred culture

Our people are critical to delivering services for the community. We will work to ensure present and future staff feel valued, respected and have the tools, support, processes and agency they need to make a positive impact.

2. Reconciling past injustices to advance our future together

To meaningfully advance our future, we must acknowledge and learn from our past injustices, and act. This includes centering the voices of those traditionally discriminated against in policy decisions, staffing decisions and service delivery. It also means exploring new approaches to community-centred decision-making, and how we attract, value, and support Indigenous, Black and racialized communities.

3. Exploring new service models and partnerships to achieve fiscal resilience and better service

Working together, we will identify and invest in new approaches that support our future fiscal resilience. We will support staff and the community to drive service transformation that is culturally appropriate, safe and inclusive through co-design, data-driven decision-making, innovative digital tools, and other ways of knowing.



We'll monitor progress on Resilient and Future Ready Organization through:

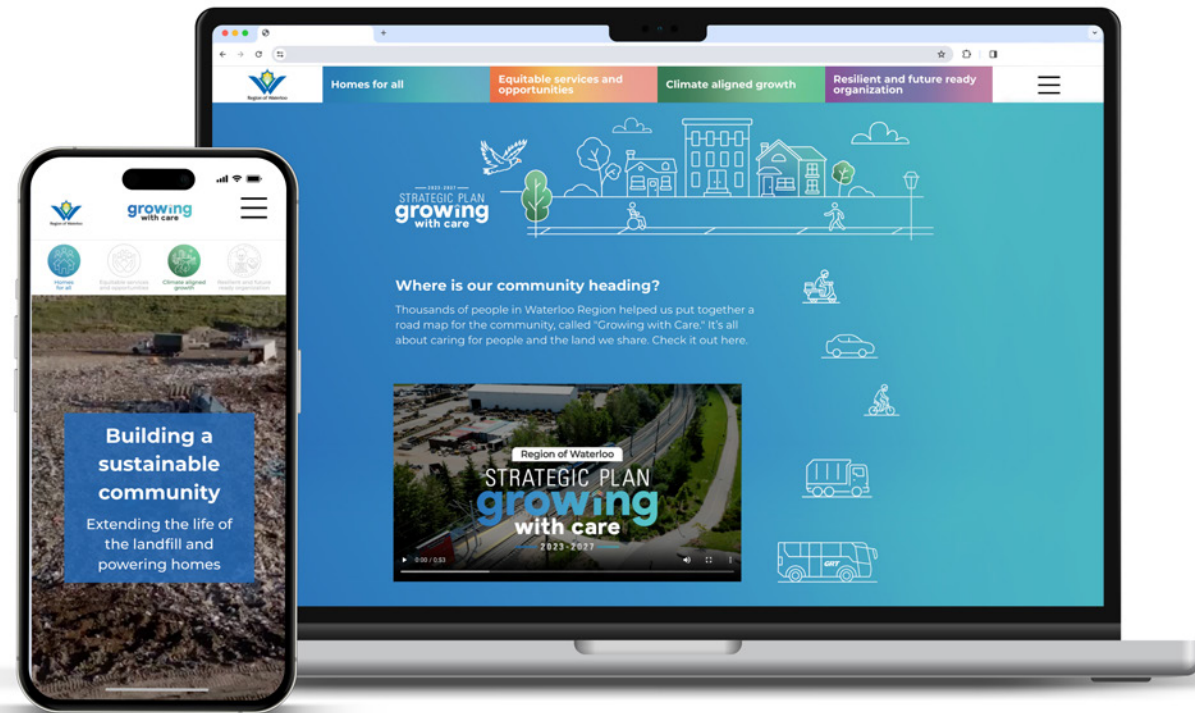
- Employee retention and wellbeing
- Leadership and staff diversity
- Anti-oppressive policies and services
- Healthy workplaces
- Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action
- Digital and data-informed services
- Compassionate and human-centred services

Accountability: showing you results



Growing with Care is our commitment to community, and we want community to see the results. When we report back, we will be open about our progress as we work to make a difference in the lives of all residents.

This commitment means allocating resources through our annual Plan and Budget process to the things that matter most to you. It means being fiscally responsible, working with partners and being accountable to you.



We will share our progress with you through stories, reports, online data and other various formats. Learn more at regionofwaterloo.ca/strategicplan.

Acknowledgments

Deep thanks and gratitude to the people of Waterloo Region who offered their time and wisdom to help shape this Strategic Plan.



Community Connectors who had on-the-ground conversations with people across the community.

Youth who participated in workshops to help imagine the future they'll inherit and lead.

Community Partners who lent their wisdom and experience through workshops and surveys.



The many diverse residents who told us about the future they see for the community they call home.

Region of Waterloo staff who worked hard to shape this Strategic Plan, and to the colleagues who offered their ideas to innovate our services.



Learn more about the Region of Waterloo's Strategic Plan at:
regionofwaterloo.ca/strategicplan

Region of Waterloo

150 Frederick Street, Kitchener, Ontario N2G 4J3

Phone: 519-575-4400 | (TTY): 519-575-4608

Contact us to request this information in an alternate format.

