

Appendix A: Proposed 2025 Annual Business Plan Initiatives

The Region's 2023-2027 Strategic Plan, Growing with Care is the collaborative vision of Council, staff, and community members. During the development of this plan, we listened to and engaged with thousands of residents across the region. Over the next four years, the Region will grow with care by making progress in the following four priority areas:

- Homes for all
- Climate aligned growth
- Equitable services and opportunities
- Resilient and future ready organization

To implement this plan, an annual plan and budget is proposed each year to specify the initiatives and investments needed to maintain services and further Growing with Care priorities. The following summarizes the proposed 2025 initiatives and service expansions in each priority area that would support the region to grow with care.

Homes for All

We will invest in affordable homes and economic opportunity 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. People 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.

However, Canada has some of the highest housing prices in the G7 and OECD countries, rising rental prices, and growing homeless encampments. A proactive approach is needed and the whole community has a role to play.

Our path forward includes affordable housing for everyone including the most vulnerable, the end of chronic homelessness, and homes that address the diversity of resident needs, with higher density, walkable neighbourhoods, and proximity to services. These are complex challenges that require the contributions and efforts of many. Innovative ideas and increased investment over the coming years will help ensure that existing and new infrastructure continues to serve our community and planet well.

To advance this priority, the following actions and investments are planned for 2025:

1. Move quickly to create affordable, accessible and equitable housing by:
 - Expanding the Building Better Futures Plan to grow affordable housing options across the region
 - Exploring options for reducing property taxes for multi-residential properties, affordable housing, and rent-geared-to-income housing
2. Eliminate chronic homelessness and reliance on traditional shelter models by:
 - Advancing the Plan to End Chronic Homelessness

3. Invest in upstream solutions to reduce housing and economic precarity by:
 - Expanding innovative and equitable approaches to employment services
 - Finalizing the 20-Year Airport Master Plan to guide future growth, incorporating best practices in sustainability
4. Unlock Region-owned land that supports community growth by:
 - Increasing the supply of land to support the growth of affordable housing and employment
 - Supporting the transition of planning approval authority and long-range land use planning responsibilities

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.

Waterloo Region is situated within a rich natural environment and flourishing biodiversity that includes rivers, farmland, community trails, and more. Each of these are needed to sustain our health and wellbeing now and into the future.

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

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

To advance this priority, the following actions and investments are planned for 2025:

1. Use a climate adaptation lens to re-imagine infrastructure, land and services for growth by:
 - Developing a climate adaptation plan to manage the impacts of climate change on Region of Waterloo infrastructure and assets
 - Improving the climate resiliency of transportation infrastructure by prioritizing adaptation initiatives through the climate resiliency strategy
 - Reducing greenhouse gas emissions and increase the use of sustainable energy sources across the corporation and the community
 - Updating the emergency response plan to enhance emergency preparedness within the Region of Waterloo and broader community
2. Foster car alternative options through complete streets and extended alternative transportation networks by:
 - Advancing the design and construction of the Kitchener Central Transit Hub to support the Region's integrated sustainable transportation networks

- Collaborating with municipal partners to deliver a shared e-bike and e-scooter micromobility program and integrate with transit
 - Completing the integrated mobility plan to improve active and public transportation networks and support resident's sustainable transportation choices
 - Completing the Grand River Transit Business Plan to guide annual transit investment priorities
 - Expanding and enhancing GRT's facilities, stations, and fleet to better serve and enhance the customer experience
 - Implementing GRT's 2025 service strategy focusing on core network improvements and demand-based in-year adjustments to address on-time performance, overcrowding, growth, and increase MobilityPLUS capacity
 - Finalizing the ION stage 2 initial business case to expand the network to Cambridge
3. Steward our natural environment and shared resources as we grow
- Advancing progress on the region's Water Supply Strategy to optimize existing and new water sources, and conserve more water as the region grows
 - Conducting a strategic review of the region's waste management services to project future service needs, explore innovative waste diversion and circular economy programs, and further reduce emissions and energy consumption
 - Commencing the Wastewater Treatment master plan to identify long-term strategies, programs, and infrastructure needed to meet growing wastewater servicing needs
 - Developing an urban forest management plan to sustain our natural heritage and vegetation

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.

Waterloo Region is located on the traditional territories of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe and Chonnonton Peoples. On these lands, a diversity of people, communities, and cultures contribute to Waterloo Region's rich multicultural heritage. Among the fastest growing regions in Ontario, Waterloo Region continues to welcome newcomers and immigrants to settle here, and our mix of diverse communities and cultures make us stronger.

However, we know that many residents experience barriers due to their ethnicity, culture, race or skin colour, sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, geography, or income. Systemic barriers and discrimination limit people's opportunities and equitable access to the supports they need to achieve health and well-being.

In response, the Region will focus on ensuring equitable access to critical goods and services, so no one is left behind. This often means focusing on pockets of our communities that need the most support so that everyone can flourish and thrive.

To advance this priority, the following actions and investments are planned for 2025:

1. Ensure services are inclusive, accessible, culturally safe and appropriate by:
 - Collaborating on the design of an Indigenous Landscape Strategy at Waterloo Region International Airport
 - Collaborating with Indigenous partners to create Indigenous led child care
 - Reinventing Doon Heritage Village to reflect the diverse heritage of our community
 - Repositioning Ken Seiling Waterloo Region Museum to reflect the diverse and deep history of Waterloo Region

2. Design equitable services that meet local community needs by:
 - Conducting a feasibility study for growth and renewal of Seniors' Services
 - Downloading Part III Prosecutions from the Province to the POA
 - Engaging community in exploring rural traffic calming solutions in Waterloo Region's Townships
 - Expanding childcare spaces across the region
 - Establishing a capital planning prioritization process to optimize resources and ensure equitable delivery of services through the region's capital plan
 - Expanding the Municipal speed camera program with our Area Municipal partners to improve road safety
 - Implementing an Administrative Penalty Program to improve community safety
 - Piloting new road safety designs at roundabouts
 - Supporting the growth of the region's Provincial Offences Act Court Services
 - Updating Region of Waterloo Public Health programs and services to meet new Ontario Public Health Standards

3. Explore new models of service through community collaboration and partnerships by:
 - Advancing the community's health and wellbeing through the Waterloo Region Integrated Drug strategy, Building Safer Communities, and the HART hub initiative
 - Continuing to implement the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan, where innovative, accessible and culturally safe models of services are co-designed through community collaboration and partnerships
 - Engaging First Nations on key cultural and land management projects
 - Establishing a youth focused substance use prevention strategy to enhance the health, safety, and wellbeing of the region's youth
 - Supporting youth-led action for community change through an intergenerational model of young people partnering with community organizations

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.

Ontario municipalities are currently experiencing significant challenges with growing community needs, a shifting mandate, and compounding fiscal constraints. Facing an increasingly complex future will require new thinking, skills, collaborations, data and technologies, such as AI and automation. It will also require investing in people and organizational culture through increasing diversity and the capacity of employees to work collaboratively with each other, community, and partners in other sectors.

To advance this priority, the following actions and investments are planned for 2025:

1. Foster an empowered, people centred culture by:
 - Advancing the employee health and wellbeing strategy
 - Equipping paramedics with the capacity, supports, and resources they need to deliver critical health services to the community
 - Implementing the Digital Service Transformation Strategy so employees have access to data, tools, and technology they need to deliver human centred services
 - Providing employee growth and development opportunities that align with the Region's core value
 - Reviewing and implementing various tactics, policies, and practices to equitably attract and retain top talent

2. Reconcile past injustices to advance our future together by:
 - Advancing the Public Health Reconciliation and Health Equity Strategy to embed reconciliation, equity, diversity, and inclusion into Public Health services and approaches
 - Implementing the Region of Waterloo Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion plan and Indigenous Reconciliation Plan to ensure Regional services meet the diverse needs of the community

3. Explore new service models and partnerships to achieve fiscal resilience and better service by:
 - Beginning to implement a cybersecurity maturity assessment to ensure the continued operation of the region's water and wastewater facilities
 - Continuing to implement long-term financial sustainability measures
 - Continuing to make it easier for residents to receive information and engage with the Region
 - Completing a Regional Development Charge Background Study
 - Creating a project management office to improve the delivery of capital projects that support community growth
 - Enhancing cyber security measures and preparedness to ensure secure and resilient Public Health data, technology, and services
 - Ensuring the security and continuity of regional services and data by securing the Region's information assets from cyber attack
 - Investing in technology and software that will improve access to key transportation data
 - Implementing a new Development / Infrastructure Tracking System to streamline and accelerate development approvals, including for new housing projects

- Implementing Miovision technology at intersections to improve traffic flow and safety
- Implementing the Growing with Care Strategic Plan to prioritize community need while ensuring Regional services are efficient, fiscally sustainable, and accountable
- Improving the sustainability and longevity of transportation assets and infrastructure through use of assessment software
- Streamlining legal administration through technology
- Strengthening the Region's ability to respond to outbreaks, infectious disease threats, and other surge demands in Public Health
- Supporting health system partners in creating alternative destination options for paramedic patients to ensure more timely access to appropriate care
- Supporting the region's ability to sustainably deliver critical services and advance the growing with care strategic plan by increasing partnerships and funding from other levels of government
- Transitioning the Region's core IT infrastructure to a world class third-party co-location facility to increase resiliency and ensure uninterrupted access to necessary applications and communications