Waterloo Region is one of the fastest growing communities in Canada, and has long been recognized as a leader in technical innovation, environmental protection and growth management. Discover some of our most recent community successes as we plan for a bright and prosperous future.
DID YOU KNOW

THAT WATERLOO REGION HAS A LONG AND SUCCESSFUL HISTORY OF BALANCING GROWTH AND QUALITY OF LIFE?

- North America’s first Blue Box program was launched in Waterloo Region in 1983.
- The Waterloo Regional Heritage Foundation was the first heritage foundation to be set up by a Regional government.
- Waterloo Region was the first Canadian community to implement a comprehensive Water Resources Protection Strategy and the first in Ontario to require watershed planning as a part of the urban development process.
- In 2005, Waterloo Region experienced the second fastest economic growth rate in Canada. A 5.1 per cent growth rate in real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) far exceeded the provincial and national averages.
- The Region was the first mid-sized community in Ontario to appoint a full-time staff member to develop and implement a Transportation Demand Management program that is now being actively promoted through local businesses and schools.
- Since 2000, Grand River Transit has increased ridership by 33 per cent and now carries 13 million riders annually. This number is steadily growing thanks to ongoing, system-wide service improvements and programs like the UPASS that is currently providing transit passes to approximately 9,500 post-secondary students as part of their tuition.
- Grand River Transit was the first transit service in Ontario to install bicycle racks on 100 per cent of its buses, encouraging more residents in the Region to choose sustainable transportation options. The Regional Cycling Network comprises 256 km of bikeways, and is expanded annually by the Region in partnership with Local Municipalities.
- In 2004, Waterloo Region was one of the top three markets for information technology investment in Ontario, along with Ottawa and Toronto, and the fifth most active market in Canada.
- The Region of Waterloo was the first in Ontario to develop a Regional Official Plan. Since 1976, the Regional Official Policy Plan has provided the policies for planning Regional growth management, transportation, water and wastewater and human services.
Our community is experiencing strong growth which comes with both opportunities and challenges. To ensure that our future is planned by design, not by chance, Regional Council adopted the Regional Growth Management Strategy (RGMS) in June 2003. This proactive, long-term strategy is a model of how municipalities can successfully implement Ontario’s recently approved Places to Grow Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

The RGMS was built through extensive consultation with the public and is founded on the following six goals:

- Enhancing our natural environment
- Building vibrant urban places
- Providing greater transportation choice
- Protecting our countryside
- Fostering a strong economy
- Ensuring overall coordination & communication

Waterloo Region has always been a desirable place to live, work and raise a family. We are committed to maintaining the exceptional quality of life this community has come to appreciate and enjoy.

Land use and transportation policies have a direct bearing on public health in Ontario. That’s why the Regional Growth Management Strategy is an important tool to help our community plan for the future.

–Dr. DiAnne Ensing
Regional Growth Management Strategy/Rapid Transit Public Advisory Committee

There are more than 70 projects already in progress that reflect these goals. This brochure highlights some of the exciting initiatives and successes that are helping to shape our community through partnerships and planning for the future. One of these initiatives, the new Regional Official Plan (ROP), is expected to be finalized in 2008 and will reflect the planning policies that will help the Region to continue successfully implementing the RGMS.
Waterloo Region takes its environmental responsibility very seriously. Our growth needs must be balanced with the protection and enjoyment of our precious natural resources.

- The Region owns and manages 16 forests covering 435 hectares (1,074 acres).
- The Region has distributed more than 70,000 backyard composting bins and 28,000 rain barrels in an effort to promote waste reduction and water conservation.
- Residents and businesses in Waterloo Region consistently meet or exceed water conservation targets.
- The Region has recently taken steps to amend its Official Plan to further protect 3,440 hectares (8,500 acres) of land under a new Environmentally Sensitive Landscape (ESL) designation.

"Waterloo Region ... operates on a consensus that growth need not run roughshod over environmental or community goals... The community is also action-oriented — it actually does things, rather than engage in endless debates about change."

- GLOBE AND MAIL REPORT ON BUSINESS
  APRIL 26, 2006
The preservation of agricultural land is vital to the Region’s economy. In fact, agriculture-related businesses employ 11.3 per cent of the Region’s labour force.

- Waterloo Region is famous for its diverse farm communities and unique Mennonite culture. The Region’s Buy Local, Buy Fresh program lists more than 75 locations where residents can support local farmers by purchasing locally grown food.

- In 2006, Regional Council approved an amendment to its Official Plan to redraw the countryside line to protect an additional 202 hectares (500 acres) of environmentally sensitive land that had formerly been designated for urban use. The Region’s Official Plan also has policies that focus new development in existing rural settlement areas to protect prime agricultural lands from development.

- The Region’s Historical Driving Tour covers 373 km of routes throughout our rural townships. By highlighting heritage buildings, landmarks, historic settlements, scenic roads, hiking trails, historic bridges and natural heritage areas, the tours help raise awareness about the need for protection and conservation.

"Waterloo Region is managing its future wisely and boldly using its remarkable tradition of barn building - many neighbours collaborating with different skills and assets to create a more civic and prosperous society."

-David Johnston
President, University of Waterloo
We are creating vibrant and diverse downtown areas where we can all safely live, work and play. Redeveloping and revitalizing our downtowns will bring more business and tourism to our Region, preserve our historic architecture, and create new jobs and housing.

- The Province’s Places to Grow Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe requires that a significant portion of the Region’s population and employment growth be directed to downtown Cambridge and Kitchener and uptown Waterloo. In order to better understand what this growth might look like, Regional staff has completed Phase 1 of the Visualizing Densities project, which provides a pictorial representation of current densities and urban forms. Phase 2 will examine opportunities for both achieving enhanced densities while maintaining excellence in urban design.

- The Wellington Square project in Cambridge (shown below, middle) is a mid-rise residential development of 161 units built on a formerly contaminated site. The development is built next to the Grand River Transit terminal and is helping to revitalize the downtown. The project was the first to take advantage of Cambridge’s Contaminated Sites Grant program and received Regional, Provincial and Federal funding for 77 rental units that have been designated as affordable housing for the next 20 years.

It is inspiring to be part of an economy characterized by independent, entrepreneurial and homegrown businesses…This community is so successful because it has quality people building great companies, and the supportive associations that bring the community together to seize on the opportunities that abound.

- JOHN BOWEY, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD, DELOITTE & TOUCHE LLP
A strong economy is essential to sustaining the exceptional quality of life we have come to value in our community. Through enhanced infrastructure and new partnerships, we expect to attract new business, improve our competitive advantage and build on our economic strength.

- In consultation with community stakeholders, the Region is now implementing the first phase of its East Side Community Structure Plan and Highway 401/97 Expansion initiatives. These initiatives will bring on 300 hectares (741 acres) in north Cambridge and 100 hectares (247 acres) in the Highway 401/97 area of the Township of North Dumfries to provide large parcels of land for new employment development.

- The grand opening of the Accelerator Centre (top right) was celebrated on May 18, 2006. The Centre provides office space, administrative services and networking opportunities to connect new technology businesses with investors and service providers. The Centre, and the University of Waterloo’s Research + Technology Park where it is located, were both created through a financial partnership between the Region of Waterloo, the City of Waterloo, the University of Waterloo, and the Provincial and Federal governments to augment a strong technology sector and provide new economic benefits to the Region.
The Region is committed to providing a more integrated, sustainable and convenient transportation system. This improved system will provide greater access to jobs and services, improve air quality, and help to address increasing traffic congestion. Overall, it is a critical element of community building that will help us manage future growth.

- The iXpress is a fast, limited-stop bus route, allowing riders to travel quickly and comfortably between Waterloo, Kitchener and Cambridge. Since its inception, ridership has increased from 48,000 weekday boardings per month to almost 75,000. The iXpress is the first step in providing faster and more convenient transit services connecting the Region’s three cities.

- The Region is now undertaking a Rapid Transit Environmental Assessment (EA) to provide for a rapid transit system linking Cambridge, Kitchener and Waterloo. Regional Council approved Phase 1 of the three-phase EA in July 2006. Rapid Transit is designed to be comfortable, convenient and fast in order to be competitive with automobile travel.

“Investment in rapid transit is a key to developing sustainable communities with fast, frequent and reliable transportation options. Rapid transit is a symbol of a growing, vibrant and competitive urban economy that lays the groundwork for future generations.”

-Michael W. Roschlau
President and Chief Executive Officer
Canadian Urban Transit Association

RAPID TRANSIT'S SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON LAND VALUES AND DEVELOPMENT DECISIONS MAKES IT AN IMPORTANT PLANNING TOOL FOR INFLUENCING FUTURE DEVELOPMENT AND INVESTMENT ALONG A CENTRAL TRANSIT CORRIDOR. FOR MORE INFO, PLEASE VISIT THE RAPID TRANSIT WEBSITE AT WWW.REGION.WATERLOO.ON.CA/TRANSITEA.
ensuring OVERALL COORDINATION & COMMUNICATION

Our homes. Our neighbourhoods. Our community. Our Region. Each of us as individuals, homeowners and citizens has an important role to play in shaping our community.

- The development and implementation of the Regional Growth Management Strategy (RGMS) requires continued active collaboration with the seven Local Municipalities who are essential partners to the success of the RGMS.

- The community also plays a vital role in implementing the RGMS - individually and through stakeholder groups like the: Grand River Conservation Authority; Waterloo Regional Police Services; Community Safety and Crime Prevention Council; Prosperity Council and Homebuilders Liaison Committees; RGMS/Rapid Transit Public Advisory Committee; and educational institutions.

- The Reurbanization Conference, the Growth Management Forum and the Grand By Design Community Tour and Education Series are just a few of the many public growth management workshops and events hosted by the Region. As part of its commitment to open consultation, Regional staff will continue to communicate with stakeholders using a wide variety of techniques, including public information sessions and events, websites and media releases.

When you get really bright people together, great things happen. You never know where the next innovation is going to come from.

-Howard Burton
Executive Director, Perimeter Institute

This is an artist’s rendering of the University of Waterloo School of Pharmacy at the Downtown Kitchener Health Sciences Campus. Thanks to an exciting partnership between the Universities, the City of Kitchener and the Region of Waterloo, this campus will also be home to a satellite of McMaster University’s Michael G. DeGroote School of Medicine. The Region has committed $15 million toward the new School of Medicine.
With a current population of more than 500,000, Waterloo Region is currently the fourth largest urban area in Ontario and the 10th largest in Canada. That growth is expected to continue with our population and employment forecast to be 729,000 people and 336,000 jobs by 2031.
Known as Canada's Technology Triangle (CTT), Waterloo Region is an innovative and prosperous community with a unique balance between urban and rural lifestyles, a diverse ethnic makeup and excellent educational, health, cultural and recreational facilities.

This area is central...We're within a 500-mile (800 km) radius of 150 million people and...have the benefit of a diversified economy and a diversified labour force. Really you can’t beat it.

-RICHARD CATER
PRESIDENT,LEROUX STEEL
There are more exciting and innovative growth management projects and studies on the horizon.

For more detailed information on Regional Growth Management Strategy initiatives, or to provide your input on the RGMS, please visit www.region.waterloo.on.ca/rgms or contact:

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