Message from the Regional Chair and the Chief Administrative Officer

The Region of Waterloo’s Strategic Plan identifies the organization’s focus and guides priority-setting for the four year term of Council. The Plan was developed in consultation with residents, community partners and stakeholders. There has been significant progress during the 2015 - 2018 term of Council and this report provides highlights of the actions taken as we work to shape a prosperous community for everyone.

We would like to recognize the commitment and tireless work of Regional Council, Regional staff and many of our community partners who have helped achieve our objectives over the past four years. In addition to delivering all of our ongoing programs and services, Council and staff have provided the energy and dedication to identify creative solutions to the community’s most critical needs. We also continue to benefit greatly from ongoing partnerships with many groups and individuals including the area municipalities, community partners, advisory committees and other orders of government.

Waterloo Region is a thriving community and a place we can all be proud to call home. We will continue to plan carefully and engage with residents in order to ensure that we provide quality services to the people who live, work and play here.

As you read through our progress report, please take a moment to think about what priorities you would like the Region to focus on over the next four year term of Council (2019 - 2022).

Sincerely,

Ken Seiling,
Regional Chair

Mike Murray,
Chief Administrative Officer

Regional Council

Regional Council is elected by the residents of Waterloo region to establish policies, priorities and oversee the many services provided by the Region of Waterloo. Regional Council is the policy-forming and decision-making body of regional government and also serves as the Region’s Board of Health.

Regional Council is comprised of:

- Sixteen Councillors of which eight are directly elected at large from the urban municipalities as follows: Cambridge (2); Kitchener (4); and Waterloo (2).
- 7 area municipality mayors automatically sit on Regional Council, as elected from within their lower-tier municipality.
- The head of Regional Council is the Regional Chair who is elected at-large across the entire region.

Regional Councillors for 2015-2018 Term of Council:

Ken Seiling, Regional Chair
Sue Foston, North Dumfries Township, Mayor
Sandy Shantz, Woolwich Township, Mayor
Les Armstrong, Wilmot Township, Mayor
Joe Nowak, Wellesley Township, Mayor
Doug Craig, City of Cambridge, Mayor
Karl Kiefer, Cambridge
Helen Jowett, Cambridge
Berry Vrbanovic, City of Kitchener, Mayor
Tom Galloway, Kitchener
Geoff Lorentz, Kitchener
Karen Redman, Kitchener
Elizabeth Clarke, Kitchener
Dave Jaworsky, City of Waterloo, Mayor
Jane Mitchell, Waterloo
Sean Strickland, Waterloo
Making our Vision a Reality

About the Region of Waterloo’s Strategic Plan

The Region of Waterloo engages in a strategic planning process for each term of Council. The Strategic Plan describes a future that the Region of Waterloo aspires to achieve, and provides a common focus for Council and staff. The Plan helps guide priority setting and ensures that our programs and services address the changing needs of our community. The Region’s Department and service plans are aligned with the Strategic Plan, and support a wide range of services and programs the Region provides to the community.

Public engagement is an important element in the Region’s Strategic Plan. In 2015 the Region created opportunities for community members, partner organizations and customers of Regional services to provide input on key issues that matter to the community. During our “Strat Chat” campaign, participants were invited to participate and engage with the Region and were made aware through Facebook and Weather Channel advertisements, bookmarks in township and city libraries, bus advertisements and displays at local events. Conversations took place through focus groups, online, telephone and paper surveys, community meetings and through an online discussion forum. The Region also engaged with staff to help develop actions for the Plan that would have the most beneficial impact on the priorities the community identified.

During the public engagement process, the Region took the opportunity to inform participants about our programs and services while also collecting input about key issues facing the community from over 3100 residents. Based on extensive public input and through Council and staff deliberations, the 2015 - 2018 Strategic Plan was created.

Strategic Plan Framework

The following section describes the framework of the Strategic Plan.

Our Vision: (What we aspire to)
Waterloo Region: a community where people matter and ideas grow.

Our Mission: (What we do)
- We serve with caring and responsible government
- We engage by listening and responding to community needs
- We inspire with new ideas and creative solutions

Our values: (How we work)
- Service: Satisfy and build confidence
  We provide excellent public service and strive to understand and meet the needs of all those we serve.
- Integrity: Instil Trust
  We practice high standards of ethical behaviour and conduct ourselves with an openness and transparency that inspires trust.
- Respect: Value and recognize
  We create an environment where people are included, valued and treated with dignity.
- Innovation: Make ideas happen
  We foster an environment of leadership, excellence and creativity.
- Collaboration: Involve and engage others
  We build internal and external relationships to achieve common goals and resolve differences.
Our Focus Areas (Our priority areas of focus)

Five focus areas were developed for the 2015 – 2018 term of Council, each with unique objectives and actions. These strategic priorities provided a common focus for Regional Council and staff and this report highlights the progress on many of the actions found in the Strategic Plan.

- Thriving Economy
- Sustainable Transportation
- Environment and Sustainable Growth
- Healthy, Safe and Inclusive Communities
- Responsive and Engaging Government Services

It is important to note that the 2015 – 2018 Strategic Plan actions are not an inclusive list of everything the Region does in the community. Rather, the actions have identified new or ongoing initiatives that the organization would like to focus on in order to respond to the priorities included by Council and the community through the strategic planning process.

Progress on the Five Strategic Focus Areas

The Region has made significant progress on the objectives and actions set out in the Strategic Plan. Over the past four years the Region has tracked and monitored progress on each of the actions found in the Strategic Plan. In addition to the actions summarized in this report, great progress is being made on many of the other Strategic Plan actions. A comprehensive overview of progress on all of actions in the plan can be found on our Strategic Plan progress reporting website at: https://www.regionofwaterloo.ca/See-Our-Progress/

The following sections provide highlights on progress in each of the focus areas.
The Region works with many partners to enhance our community’s economic prosperity. The Region plays a significant role in planning and providing the infrastructure and services necessary to create the foundation for innovation and economic success. Some accomplishments from this focus area include the following:

- The Office of Regional Economic Development (ORED) and Waterloo Region Economic Development Corporation (WREDC) have established strategic priorities that have allowed WREDC to focus on lead generation and foreign direct investment. Since its inception, and working closely with the Region and other community partners, WREDC has had considerable success helping attract over $422,000,000 in investment and 2,000 new jobs. In recognition of this success, in 2018 the Region and all seven area municipalities renewed funding and support for WREDC for another five years. The Region continues to support WREDC with operational and logistical assistance as well as data to support a range of business retention and attraction activities.

- The Airport Master Plan was approved by Regional Council in 2017. The Master Plan includes new strategies to attract additional air service to the airport, and a long-term investment strategy to expand airport infrastructure as passenger levels reach certain “trigger points”. Staff are now working on implementing the initial planning and design work identified in the Master Plan.

- The Region continues to plan for the maintenance and replacement of aging infrastructure as well as the provision of new infrastructure needed to support growth and economic development. The Region has made significant progress on the following: infrastructure studies and planning to support the development of the “East Side” strategic employment lands; the implementation of an enhanced and comprehensive approach to asset management; and the development of improved infrastructure financing policies.

- Public art is a key element of creating vibrant urban spaces. Over 2017 and 2018, the Region approved an increase in the Public Art budget ($50,000 in 2017, increasing to $100,000 in 2018) and commissioned a number of new public art installations including ten for Stage 1 ION locations.

Did you know?

The region’s manufacturing sector is the fourth largest in Canada, employing 49,300 people across 1,850 companies with annual revenues exceeding $6 billion.

The ION corridor is the fast-growing urban spine of Waterloo Region. From June 2011, when rapid transit was approved by Region of Waterloo Council, to year-end 2016, over $2.1 billion in building permits were issued within the corridor. The corridor also includes 52 per cent of the region’s restaurants, as well as 271 arts and culture establishments.
Sustainable Transportation

The Region strives to ensure that our transportation system is integrated, accessible, and sustainable and that it supports all modes of travel including vehicles, transit, cycling and walking. Some accomplishments from this focus area include the following:

- The Grand River Transit Business Plan was approved by Council in 2017. The Plan identifies continued increase in transit service over the next five to seven years as well as significant enhancements to transit technology, customer service and marketing. The integration between conventional transit and LRT is a key priority of the business plan. Recently implemented service improvements including 10 minute peak frequency on 201 and 202 iXpress, new 205 Ottawa iXpress and service improvements in southwest Kitchener have contributed to a projected 20.7 million riders in 2018, a 5% increase or 1 million more riders than in 2017.
- Construction is essentially complete on ION Stage 1 LRT, and testing and commissioning of the system is underway. Although delivery of the Bombardier light rail vehicles has lagged behind the original schedule, the vehicles are all now assembled, and specialized equipment installation, delivery and final vehicle testing is underway.
- As a result of ongoing advocacy by the Region, area municipalities and many community partners, the Province has implemented several improvements to GO bus and train service over the last several years. The Province also continues to take steps to bring two-way, all-day GO train service to the Region by 2024. The Region and City of Cambridge (with support from the Province) are undertaking a study of the feasibility of bringing GO train service to Cambridge via an alternate route known as the Fergus Subdivision.
- The new Transportation Master Plan (TMP) was approved by Regional Council in June 2018. The new TMP examined transportation needs in Waterloo Region up to the year 2041. The TMP represents a balanced approach to investment in transportation with plans to widen Regional roads based on need and with significant investments to expand public transit and to expand the active transportation network including the addition of over 600 kilometres of new sidewalks, trails and bike lanes.
- The Environmental Assessment is well underway for ION LRT Stage 2. As a result of public consultation in 2017, several route alternatives were reconsidered. In June 2018, Regional Council approved the majority of the Stage 2 route, with the exception of a portion of the route through Preston where additional options are being considered to mitigate negative impacts.
- The Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Program Plan for 2017-2021 was recently approved by Council. The Plan includes continuing the current TravelWise workplace program, and developing additional programs to promote transportation options in various community settings.
- The Region continues to collaborate with community partners to implement the Active and Safe Routes to School Program including: the Walking School Bus program, improving wayfinding and signage and school travel planning.

Did you know?

The approved GRT Business Plan 2017-2021 guides the planned improvements to the regional transit network and service levels over the next five years to achieve the target of 28 million annual riders by 2021 and 53 million riders in 2031.

Planned transit service improvements would complete the iXpress network, realign routes to more of a grid network connecting to ION stations and provide more frequent service on high ridership corridors. To deliver these planned service improvements, Council approved an additional 35,000 service hours annually and an additional 48 buses by 2021.

All Grand River Transit buses are wheelchair accessible and have bike racks.
The Region plays a key role in protecting and enhancing the natural environment including our air, water and land as well as preserving our green spaces and sensitive environmental features. The Region works in partnership with the community and area municipalities to manage growth in environmentally sustainable ways and create spaces and places that enhance living, working and travelling experiences for the community. Some accomplishments from this focus area include the following:

- A new waste collection contract was successfully implemented in March 2017. The waste collection changes have helped improve waste diversion from landfill with green bin tonnage up 105%, blue box tonnage up 8% and yard waste tonnage up 3% while the amount of garbage going to landfill has decreased by 24%. These changes have contributed to a significant increase in the overall residential waste diversion rate to 60% after contract implementation compared to 52% prior to the new contract.

- In 2018, Council approved a new Biosolids Master Plan, and a new Wastewater Treatment Master Plan (WWMP). The Biosolids Plan includes short-term onsite storage at the Kitchener, Waterloo and Cambridge (Galt) Wastewater Treatment Plants and initiating planning studies for future biosolids management programs.

- The Wastewater Master Plan addresses how the Region will treat wastewater, plan for growth, and identifies infrastructure needs to the year 2051 for the Region’s 13 wastewater treatment plants.

- The Region’s Source Water Protection Plan (SPP) as approved by the Province came into effect on July 1, 2016. The Region continues to implement the SPP including the adoption of a Risk Management Plan Bylaw, a website for screening/approval of development applications and a related incentives program.

- The Region continues to make progress on reducing greenhouse gases (GHG) from Regional operations. For example the Region’s carbon footprint due to biosolids operations was reduced by approximately 75% between 2012 and 2017. The Region also replaced 550 furnaces in social housing units in 2016 and 2017. This saves an estimated 50,000 m3 of natural gas each year and reduces CO2 emissions by about 95 tonnes per year.

- The Region also continues to work with community partners on community-wide GHG reduction targets and strategy, a Community Energy Investment Strategy, and a Climate Change Adaptation Plan. In spring 2018, Regional Council and all area municipal Councils approved a long-term GHG emission reduction target of 80% below 2010 levels by the year 2050. A Community Energy Investment Strategy was also approved by Regional and Area Municipal Councils in January/February 2018.

- Work is underway on a Central Transit Corridor “place-making” initiative, which includes a public art strategy and an urban greenlands strategy connecting the ION corridor to the Grand River.

- Regional staff worked with city staff on the development of a pilot network of separated bike lanes, which will be presented to Council in 2019. Work is ongoing with area municipalities to improve trail crossings of Regional roads, and consideration of winter maintenance for cycling and pedestrian facilities.

- The Region processes over 180,000 m3 of wastewater every day — equivalent to 2500 backyard swimming pools!

In 2016, 85% of the Region’s biosolids were used as a soil amendment to add nutrients, improve soil quality and enhance crop growth on agricultural and non-agricultural lands.
Healthy, Safe and Inclusive Communities

The Region continues to provide programs and services that contribute to a healthy, safe and inclusive community. These include efforts to improve population health, support healthy living, disease and injury prevention as well as enhance community safety and crime prevention. Some accomplishments from this focus area include the following:

- The Region continues to work with community partners to reduce poverty in Waterloo Region by supporting a community-wide poverty reduction symposium in 2016; redesigning the Ontario Works (OW) service delivery model to focus more on transitions to employment; and promoting the Canada Learning Bond program.

- The Region is in the midst of a research study regarding affordable transit and poverty reduction. Funded by the provincial Poverty Reduction Fund, over five hundred residents are participating in the study where they are able to purchase bus passes based on three different reduced fare options. Their experiences with these options will help inform future decisions about transit fare structures for people on low income.

- The Region, with federal and provincial funding support, continues to implement the Affordable Housing Strategy and increase the number of available affordable housing units. Between June 2014 and June 2017, the Region has helped to create 167 new affordable rental units, 112 Affordable Home ownership units, assisted 169 households with rent assistance, and provided 147 Ontario Renovates loans.

- The Region continues to work with community partners to reduce homelessness. Implementation of the Homelessness to Housing Stability Strategy has helped reduce shelter use, and has helped many people transition and maintain more stable housing.

- The multi-year Child Care Early Learning and Care Service Plan was approved in August 2016. The plan includes numerous actions to improve access to affordable, high quality licensed early learning and child care services and includes the implementation of a renewed approach to continuous quality improvement for all early years services that is responsive, effective and measurable.

- Regional staff worked with community partners to develop www.FamilyCompassWR.ca, which is a comprehensive website related to services and support for children and youth in Waterloo Region.

- The Region is working with area municipalities and other partners to implement the Healthy Kids Community Challenge to reduce childhood obesity. Programs to date have included Region-wide initiatives to encourage children to engage in physical activity, drink water rather than sugar-sweetened beverages, eat more fruits and vegetables and reduce screen time and engage in active play.

- The Paramedic Services Master Plan was approved by Council in October 2016. Since that time Council approved two -12 hour units to be added to the service for 2017 and two – 12 hour units in 2018 with the aim of eventually reducing the unit utilization rate to 35 per cent, as well as improving response times across the Region. There were also additional staff added to other areas of the division in 2017 and 2018 to assist with performance and compliance to legislated standards. With these service increases, overall response times in 2017 have improved by 16 seconds (2.8 per cent) over 2016.

- Region Public Health and Community Services staff are working with the Crime Prevention Council, Waterloo Region Police and numerous other community partners to continue to implement the Waterloo Region Integrated Drugs Strategy (WRIDS). In partnership with the WRIDS, Public Health has also coordinated the development of a comprehensive opioid response strategy which includes actions related to prevention, treatment and rehabilitation, enforcement and justice and harm reduction.

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- The Crime Prevention Council continues to work on developing a Youth Engagement Strategy and to facilitate community activities to decrease risk factors for crime with a special focus on reducing stigmatization and exclusion.

- Did you know?

The Region of Waterloo helped integrate approximately 1,800 Syrian refugee families in 2015 and 2016, working as part of a coordinated community response involving community partners across many sectors. Immigrants make up almost one quarter of Waterloo Region’s population. From 2015 - 2018, regional staff together with partners from area municipalities and the Immigration Partnership provided information sessions to over 500 newcomers.
Responsive and Engaging Government Services

The Region continues with efforts to provide efficient, effective services for citizens while maintaining excellent value to the community. By engaging with citizens on Regional initiatives, attracting, recruiting and retaining a skilled, engaged and caring workforce we can continue to improve how we deliver our programs and services. Some accomplishments from this focus area include the following:

- The Region launched the online “Engage Region of Waterloo” platform in 2016. Since then the Region has posted over 40 topics with almost 2,000 participants providing input. There have been 15,000 unique visitors to the site. The Region is working with area municipal staff on evaluating and enhancing the online engagement platform.

- Upgrades to the Region’s main website as well as several program-specific sites were completed 2018. The Region’s websites are now accessible, created in plain language, have enhanced features for internal search, and content has been arranged according to function making the sites more user friendly.

- Staff continue to enhance the Region’s support for innovation. This has included: creating an “Innovation Leadership Team”; developing a “mandate for innovation”; providing training for more than 300 staff on the use of innovation tools; creating an innovation “toolkit” on the employee portal; and greater focus on sharing stories and experience regarding innovation within the organization.

- The Region continues to enhance efforts to attract and retain excellent employees and manage the demographic transition occurring in our workforce. This has included: enhanced succession planning activities; enhanced metrics to track and forecast workforce trends; and new internal staff development and training opportunities. In 2017, staff undertook an employee survey that had a excellent response rate of 75 per cent. Work is underway to implement actions to address the findings of the survey.

- The new Office of Corporate Performance was created in 2016 to enhance the organization’s focus on performance measurement and performance improvement. Significant activities include: developing a risk-based internal audit plan; implementing a Lean Six Sigma performance improvement program (including introductory and advanced Lean Six Sigma training); and piloting an integrated “management system” in two program areas. The Office of Corporate Performance has delivered Lean Six Sigma training and coaching to over 75 employees across the Region in the last two years. These trained individuals have led over 60 improvement initiatives, resulting in an estimated cost avoidance of over $320,000 annually.

- The Region continues to look for opportunities to streamline service delivery with the area municipalities. Recent examples include: a joint process for conversion to LED streetlights; exploring joint training / leadership development opportunities; the joint procurement of an emergency notification system, which is now being implemented; and the joint development of a proposal to the Federal Smart Cities Challenge. Some planning approvals have been transferred to area municipalities and transfer of more are being considered.

- A new Taxi Bylaw was approved in 2016 to protect public safety while offering regulated access to new “vehicle for hire” options.

Did you know?

The Region owns 8,300 street lights that cost approximately $1,500,000 to operate and maintain every year. By converting these lights to LED high efficiency lighting, the operating and maintenance costs are estimated to be reduced by approximately $550,000 per year. The increased efficiency will pay back the initial investment to convert to LED in approximately 4 years!

Did you know the Region refreshed its website? The new site is faster, easier to navigate and has better search capability.

Calling the Region of Waterloo is easy!
Call: 519-575-4400

- One main number for Regional services
- Talk to a real person 24/7
- Over 200 languages

In general, when accessing government services, people tend to interact with the Region in person (33%), telephone (29%) and website (26%).
Region of Waterloo Awards and Recognition

With the many accomplishments and progress made in the Region’s 2015 - 2018 Strategic Plan, the Region of Waterloo has also been recognized as a leader by federal, provincial and professional organizations. Some examples from the 2015 - 2018 cycle include:

Region of Waterloo Waste Management wins Silver in “3Rs” promotion and education award (2015)
The Municipal Waste Association recognized the best of municipal 3Rs promotion and education to the Region of Waterloo’s Waste Management Division by awarding it the Silver in the Digital Tool category for its electronic newsletter. The newsletter is a fun mix of information and tips about its programs and services.

ION selected as ‘Best Large Project’ in national Brownfield awards (2016)
ION, the Region of Waterloo’s rapid transit service has been selected as Canada’s ‘Best Large Project’ by the Canadian Brownfield Network. The Brownie Awards recognize projects that stimulate the transformation of brownfield sites and contribute to the growth of healthy communities across Canada. Encouraging better use of land and balancing growth within Waterloo Region were some of the reasons why ION was selected as ‘Best Large Project’ by the Canadian Brownfield Network.

Seniors’ Services Award for Innovation and Excellence (2016)
Seniors’ Services received a provincial award for Share the Care, an effort to improve resident care at Sunnyside Home by improving the way we work. Seniors’ Services freed up 15 hours of personal support worker time per day by simply changing how they store and replenish washcloths. This award was from the Ontario Association for Non-Profit Homes and Services for Seniors (now AdvantAge Ontario).

Water Efficiency public education and awareness award (2016)
The Ontario Water Works Association recognized the Region of Waterloo for its Restaurant and Business Certification Programs. The program used a point system to give local restaurants and businesses credit for water conservation activities they perform at their site. This is a unique and collaborative program that partners with local restaurants and businesses who want to be good stewards.

FCM Awards Region of Waterloo two Sustainable Communities Awards (2016)
The Region of Waterloo was awarded two Sustainable Communities Awards from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM). The Best Brownfield Project was awarded to the Breithaupt Block, a recipient of the Region’s Brownfield Financial Incentives Program. The Region, jointly with the City of Kitchener has worked closely with Perimeter Development Corporation as it transforms an abandoned industrial block in downtown Kitchener into creative workspaces that have attracted a number of businesses, including Google’s Canadian headquarters. The Best Energy Plan was awarded to the Region of Waterloo for its Climate Action Plan. The Region collaborated with its area municipalities and community partners to develop A Climate Action Plan for Waterloo Region: Living Smarter in 2020. Greenhouse gas emissions are targeted to be reduced by six per cent from 2010 to 2020.

Region of Waterloo wins Biosolids Award (2017)
The Water Environment Association of Ontario (WEAO) recognized the Region of Waterloo with the annual WEAO Award for Exemplary Residuals and Biosolids Management in Ontario. The Region was recognized for its ongoing efforts to create a long-term management plan for its biosolids. A highlight of the award was the Region’s work on educating the public on the project and involving them in the decision-making process.

Hermes Creative Awards (2018)
The Waterloo Region Museum, Schneider Haus National Historic Site and McDougall Cottage websites won the Platinum Award, the highest distinction in the competition for its recently updated website launched early in 2018. Grand River Transit captured a gold award for its revamped website launched late in 2017.

Region of Waterloo recognized for transformational Initiatives by Water Environment Federation (2018)
The Region of Waterloo was recognized with the Utility of the Future Today designation. The awards celebrates the achievements of water utilities that transform from traditional wastewater treatment systems to a resource recovery centre and leader in the overall sustainability and resilience of the communities they serve. Honourees exemplify the kind of forward-thinking leadership that strengthens the entire water sector.

IAP2 Canada Visual Engagement Award (2018)
The International Association for Public Participation Canada (IAP2 Canada) awarded the Region of Waterloo the IAP2 Canada Visual Engagement Award for its engagement and communication approach in the Biosolids Strategy which lays out a plan for how the Region’s biosolids will be managed to the year 2051.

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Communicating progress of the 2015 - 2018 Strategic Plan

Citizens have access to this report in multiple formats. As part of our commitment to greener choices, we are significantly reducing the number of printed materials and expanding web-based tools to encourage people to view our progress online. A website was developed to show progress of the 2015 - 2018 Strategic Plan, which can be found at http://waterlooca.clearpointstrategy.com/.

Public engagement for the 2019 - 2022 Strategic Plan

We invite you to stay in touch with the Region’s Strategic Planning process. The public and stakeholder engagement process will begin in early 2019 with the new term of Council. Planning the future would not be possible without your input. Your thoughts and ideas will help us set priorities for the Region of Waterloo over the next four years.

For more information on the Region of Waterloo’s strategic plan visit:

www.regionofwaterloo.ca
Call: 519-575-4400   TTY: 519-575-4608

Corporate Leadership Team (Department Commissioners):

The Region of Waterloo is responsible for providing approximately 60 per cent of municipal government services which are administered through six Regional Departments and a Chief Administrator’s Office. The Region’s Corporate Leadership Team is comprised of the following individuals:

Chief Administrative Officer
Mike Murray
Public Health and Emergency Services/
Medical Officer of Health
Dr. Liana Nolan
Corporate Services - Chief Financial Officer
Craig Dyer
Human Resources and Citizen Service
Jane Albright
Planning, Development and Legislative Services
Rod Regier
Community Services
Douglas Bartholomew-Saunders
Transportation and Environmental Services
Thomas Schmidt