# David Johnston Research + Technology Park Strategic Plan and Innovation District Design

2026

DAVID JOHNSTON
RESEARCH+TECHNOLOGY PARK
UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

UNIVERSITY OF WATERLOO

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# Territorial Acknowledgement

The University of Waterloo acknowledges that much of our work takes place on the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishinaabeg, and Haudenosaunee peoples. Our campus is situated on the Haldimand Tract, the land granted to the Six Nations that includes six miles on each side of the Grand River. Our active work toward reconciliation takes place across our campuses through research, learning, teaching, and community building, and is co-ordinated within the Office of Indigenous Relations.

# 02 | Terminology

# Terminology

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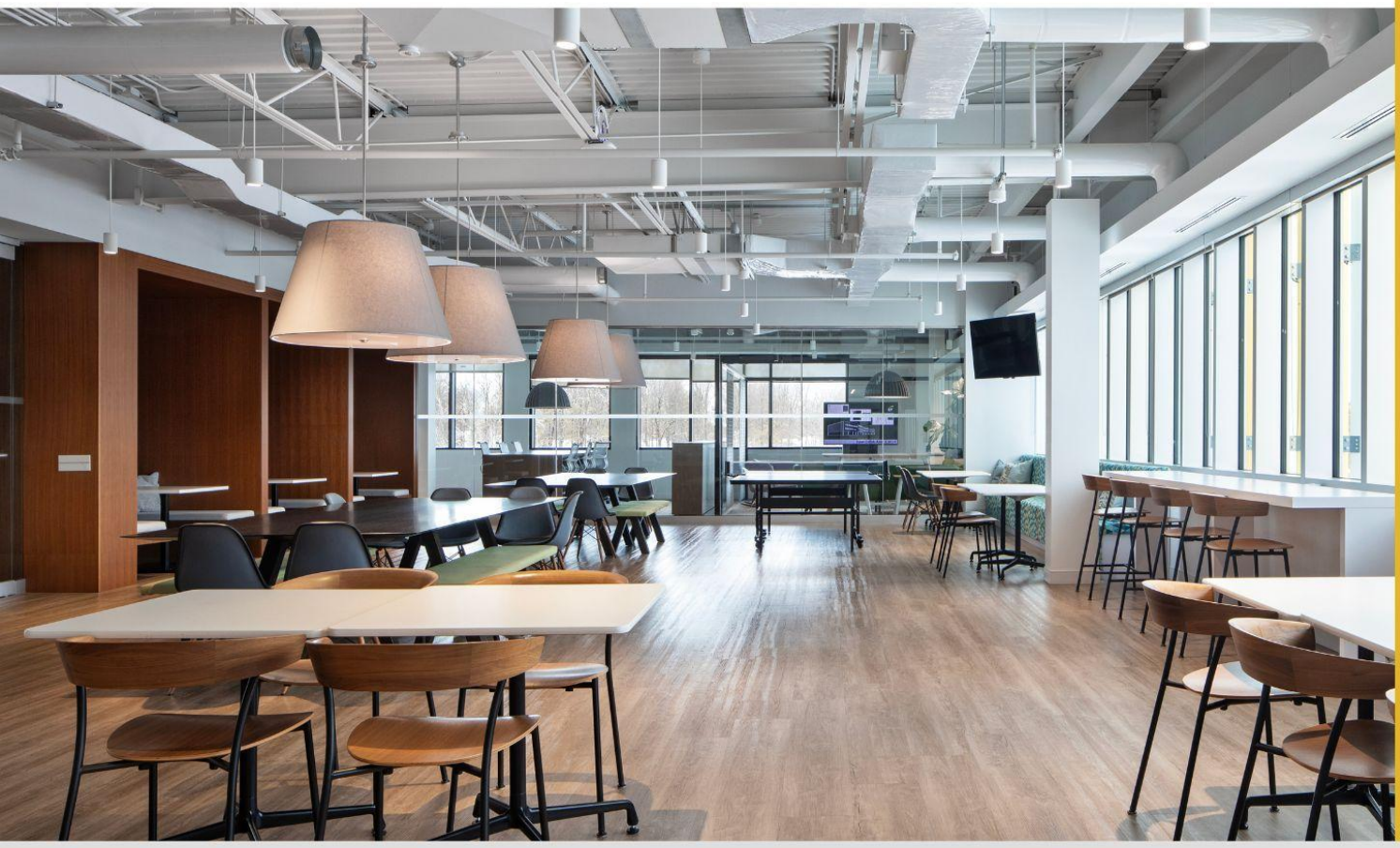
|---|---|
| **R+T Park or "the District"** | Refers to the David Johnston Research + Technology Park at the University of Waterloo. |
| **UWaterloo** | Refers to the University of Waterloo. |
| **City of Waterloo or "the City"** | Refers to the municipal government of the City of Waterloo. |
| **Region of Waterloo** | Refers to the regional government of the Region of Waterloo. |
| **Waterloo Region** | Refers to the overall population, community, and business community within the municipal boundary and geographical location of the Region. |
| **Waterloo Region technology ecosystem** | Refers to the collection of technology companies, supportive organizations and institutions, funders, employees, and networks within Waterloo Region's technology sector. |
| **Waterloo EDC** | Refers to the Waterloo Economic Development Corporation; a nonprofit corporation funded by the local governments for the primary purpose of foreign direct investment readiness, attraction, and retention. |
| **District community** | Refers to the tenants, occupants, and users of R+T Park. |
| **Campus community** | Refers to the Staff, Faculty and Students at the University of Waterloo. |
| **Surrounding community** | Refers to the people who live, work, and use the spaces surrounding R+T Park and the University, as well as more broadly to the overall population of Waterloo Region. |

# 03 | Executive Summary



# Executive Summary

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# Overview

The David Johnston Research + Technology Park (R+T Park) at the University of Waterloo is at a pivotal moment in its evolution. After more than two decades, the District has grown significantly to include ten buildings totaling approximately one million square feet of office space, and is home to more than 35 tenants across research, technology, and innovation sectors.

Anchored by internationally recognized organizations including SAP, OpenText, and the Accelerator Centre, R+T Park has established itself as a cornerstone of the Waterloo Region technology ecosystem. However, with the planned addition of the new WRHN @ University Hospital, the remaining land available for development opportunities is increasingly limited and opportunities should be strategically selected to maximize potential. Furthermore, feedback from tenants and stakeholders makes clear that the District's potential is constrained by an office-park character that no longer reflects the ambition nor the sense of community of a world-class innovation hub.

This Strategic Plan and Innovation District Design charts a course for transforming R+T Park into a dense, mixed-use, and deeply connected destination where research, enterprise, talent, and community will converge, ensuring the District remains a competitive, in-demand part of University of Waterloo’s innovation environment.

# Vision and Guiding Principles

The vision for R+T Park is one rooted in the University of Waterloo's culture of discovery and innovation, linking students, researchers, industry, and community to create real-world impact. The District is designed for enterprises that advance co-op and graduate student pathways, collaborative research and development, health innovation, transformative technologies, and sustainable practices.

Six guiding principles shape all planning and development decisions:

**Collaboration, Trust, and Curiosity by Design:** Physical and programmatic design intentionally encourages interaction among students, researchers, industry, and community.

**A Distinct Identity and Sense of Place:** Public realm design and architectural standards reflect The University of Waterloo's legacy of academic excellence and entrepreneurship.

**Human-Centered and Inclusive:** An integrated mix of uses and accessible design supports quality of place for all users.

**Indigeneity and Truth and Reconciliation:** The District's identity, programming, and stewardship centre Indigenous perspectives and reinforce the University's commitment to Truth and Reconciliation.

**Connected and Accessible:** Multi-modal movement prioritizes safe, intuitive connections within the District and to surrounding areas.

**Stewardship, Sustainability, and Adaptation:** Low-carbon, resilient, and regenerative design principles guide all future development.

# Governance

Governance reform is a foundational priority in this plan. While the existing governance framework has proven effective at moving decisions forward, the internal, approval-based nature of the current model is largely reactive, administrative in function, and lacks focus on strategic growth. Additionally, there is insufficient real estate expertise that would bring the insight and market alignment necessary to guide growth in a district of R+T Park's scale and ambition. Current challenges include:

- Market-aligned decision-making pathways
- Limited staff capacity
- Stagnating engagement with internal and external stakeholders
- A lack of alignment between the University and the private sector

A three-phase governance transition is recommended, as follows:

**Phase One** clarifies roles, responsibilities, and decision pathways.

**Phase Two** explores whether a Real Estate Advisory Board should be established to bring specialized development and financing expertise.

**Phase Three** evaluates whether operations should remain internal or transition to a subsidiary development corporation.

## Business Strategy and Ecosystem Integration

A comparative landscape analysis examines the requirements and preferences for startups, scale-ups, and medium-to-large enterprises in location selection, contextualizing R+T Park with respect to these needs. This analysis demonstrates that R+T Park is well-positioned in proximity to University of Waterloo talent pipelines, access to regional investment networks, and quality professional office space. However, it further reveals notable gaps with respect to flexible leasing options, on-site amenities, specialized lab infrastructure, and the walkable urban character that increasingly drives employer and employee decisions regarding location.

The plan recommends a strategic refresh that clearly defines R+T Park's value proposition around four thematic sectors that are strongly aligned with the Global Futures vision for the University:

Health and Science

Transformative Technologies

Sustainability

Community

A refreshed marketing and positioning strategy will sharpen external communications and expand digital engagement to better support tenant attraction, retention and expansion, while aligning with partners in the Waterloo Region technology ecosystem.

There is also a significant opportunity for firm attraction and retention through Programmatic enhancement. A four phase approach will see R+T Park programming grow from new annual events and expanded recreational leagues, to a full calendar of cross-sector programming, meanwhile use activations, and a scaled Living Labs initiative that embeds real-world experimentation into the District. These enhancements will be delivered in collaboration with the Office of Research, Velocity, and Co-operative Education to further deepen the relationships between the University and industry. These internal collaborations will also be complemented by strengthened external

partnerships with the Accelerator Centre, Waterloo EDC, the City of Waterloo, the Waterloo Regional Health Network, and Communitech.

## Land Use and District Design

The development concept organizes R+T Park into four quadrants, each reflecting one of the four strategic themes of the District Design and aligned with the University of Waterloo's Global Futures framework:

**A Community Quadrant** (northeast) for mixed-use residential and retail development.

**A Health and Science Quadrant** (northwest) anchored by the planned Waterloo Regional Health Network hospital.

**A Sustainability Quadrant** (southeast) aligned with professional services, the ION light rail station, and a proposed new mobility hub.

**The Transformative Technologies Quadrant** (southwest) building on existing technology sector tenancies.

Core design interventions include contemplation of transforming the central Great Circle roundabout into a public plaza, infill development on underutilized surface parking lots, the introduction of ground-floor retail and food and beverage uses, and new residential development in the northeast quadrant. Meanwhile-uses such as temporary sports courts and shipping container market spaces are proposed as near-term tools to animate underused spaces while permanent development matures.

Design guidance emphasizes low-to-mid-rise built form, active ground-floor frontages, and strong street relationships along Wes Graham Way and Hagey Boulevard. Energy and sustainability planning includes a proposed district energy system connecting R+T Park to the new hospital and the main University campus, alongside building envelope standards, smart building systems, and biodiversity-enhancing landscape design.

Indigeneity is woven throughout the plan with consideration of land-based learning connections, ecological restoration, and alignment with the Office of Indigenous Relations' Kiinomaage-Aki initiative at Columbia Lake.

# Implementation and Next Steps

The plan is organized across four implementation horizons:

Quick wins in one to three years.

Short-term actions in one to five years.

Medium-term actions in five to ten years.

Long-term actions spanning ten to twenty years.

Near-term priorities include meanwhile use activations, wayfinding improvements, park redesign, transit engagement tied to the hospital opening, and initiation of the governance transition process.

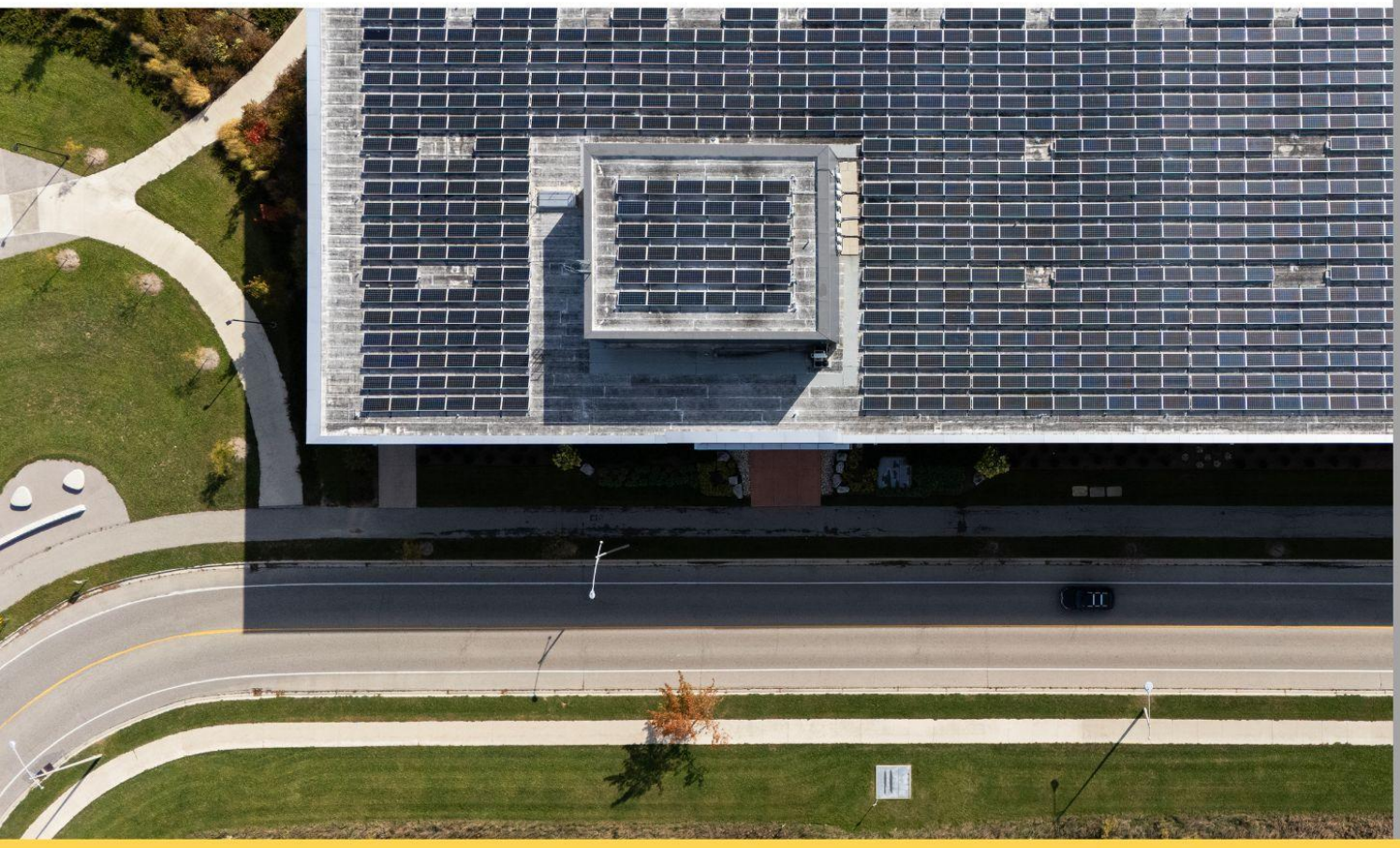
Performance will be tracked through land use metrics including vacancy rates, floor area ratios, and ground-floor activation levels, as well as public space metrics, mobility indicators, and recurring tenant satisfaction surveys.

To ensure ongoing accountability, the plan also calls for annual performance reviews and a comprehensive five-year review with external consulting support, with findings reported to the R+T Park Advisory Council and the Buildings and Properties Committee.

Taken together, this Strategic Plan and Innovation District Design provides R+T Park with a clear, comprehensive, and actionable framework for the next twenty years. By strengthening governance, repositioning its brand, diversifying land uses, and improving mobility and public space, R+T Park is positioned to fulfill its role as a world-class innovation district that advances the University of Waterloo's mission and contributes meaningfully to the economic and social vitality of Waterloo Region.

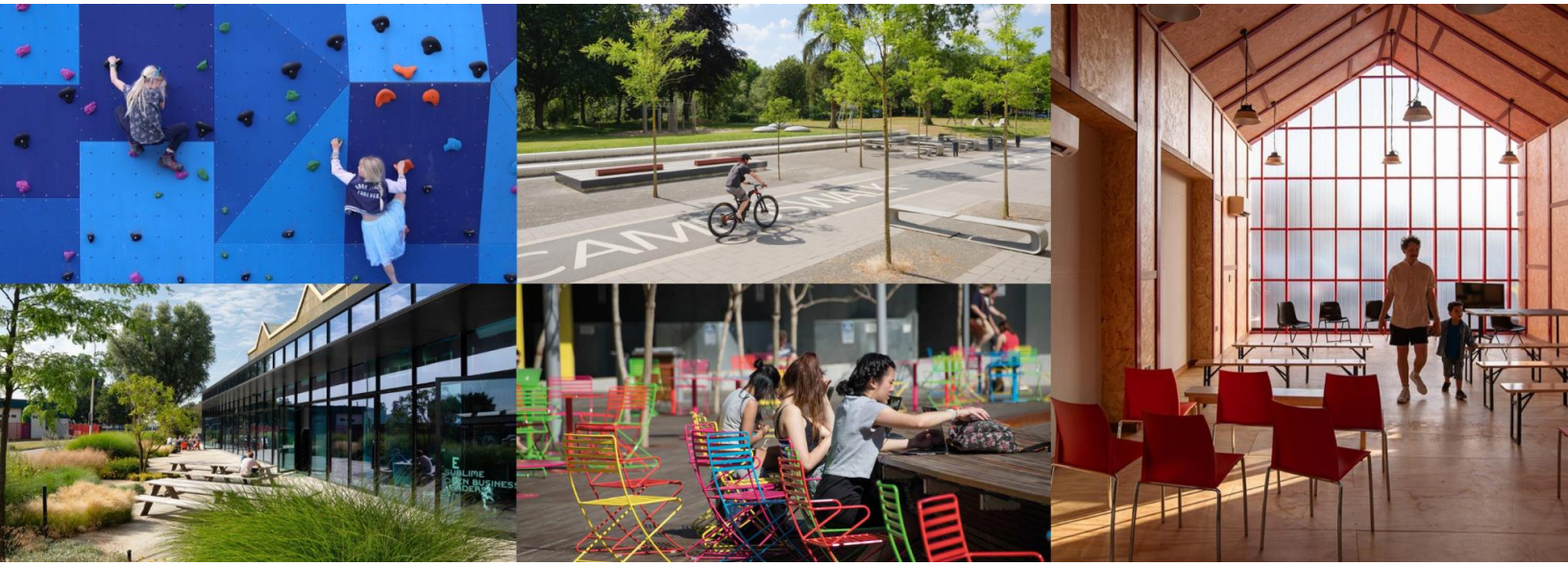
# 04 | Vision & Guiding Principles





# 4.1 Vision Statement

The David Johnston Research + Technology Park at the University of Waterloo is a place where research, talent, industry, and community converge—a vibrant district where a tradition of discovery fuels collaboration, creativity, and real-world impact.



R+T Park is a living laboratory, rooted in Waterloo Region's innovative culture, linking students, researchers, industry, and community to create real-world impact.

Designed for enterprises aligned with the University of Waterloo's pursuit of excellence, the District strengthens co-op and graduate student pathways, advances collaborative research and development, and supports health innovation, transformative technologies, and sustainable practices. Through physical spaces, programs and partnerships, R+T Park is a destination for talent, ideas, and investment—contributing to innovation locally and globally.

# 4.2 Guiding Principles

R+T Park is built on a clear mandate: developing UWaterloo's northern lands as a public trust through high-quality research and development. The following principles serve as both values and evaluation criteria for all projects, partnerships, and development decisions—guiding R+T Park towards its long-standing objectives of attracting research-based companies compatible with University activities; providing meaningful employment for co-op students and graduates; generating long-term financial returns that strengthen teaching, research, and service; and contributing to the economic and social vitality of the surrounding community, as outlined in the Guidance Statement for the Development of UW Lands (1997).

## Collaboration, Trust and Curiosity by Design

- R+T Park's physical and programmatic design—defined by how spaces are used and activated—intentionally encourages interaction among students, researchers, industry, and the community.
- Spaces and places foster meaningful encounters that support informal meetings, knowledge exchange, and the collision of ideas.
- Building adjacencies, amenities and programming are designed to promote cross-sector and cross-disciplinary collaboration.

## A Distinct Identity and Sense of Place

- The District's identity, storytelling and positioning align with the University's legacy and future ambitions.
- Public realm design and architectural standards reflect UWaterloo's values and celebrate UWaterloo's leadership in academic excellence, innovation, and entrepreneurship.
- Gateways, landmarks, and gathering spaces express the District's identity and establish R+T Park as a recognizable destination.

- Storytelling is embedded across the public realm to strengthen identity and communicate R+T Park's evolution from a traditional research park to a mixed-use innovation district that integrates research, enterprise, talent development, and community integration.

## Human-Centered and Inclusive

- Innovation thrives in a place where people feel welcome, connected, inspired, and safe to explore new ideas.

- An integrated mix of residential, retail, dining, office, recreational and community amenities supports exceptional quality of place and vitality.
- Social, recreational, and learning opportunities will foster belonging, trust, and year-round site activation.
- Wellbeing, accessibility, and universal design will be prioritized across all aspects of the District.
- Public and private partnerships will be leveraged to advance local economic development and social inclusion outcomes.

## Indigeneity and Truth & Reconciliation

- The District's identity, storytelling, stewardship, programs, and initiatives will centre Indigeneity and Truth & Reconciliation.

- District identity and storytelling will acknowledge the land's Indigenous history and integrate Indigenous perspectives into placemaking and public art.
- Environmental stewardship will reflect Indigenous principles of land care, reciprocity, and long-term resilience.
- The District's leadership and community collaborate with and support the efforts of the Office of Indigenous Relations in Land-Based Learning and ongoing education.

## Connected and Accessible

- The District strengthens connections between campus, industry, and the surrounding community through people-focused mobility and design.
- Movement and access prioritize safe, inclusive and multi-modal travel within the District and to surrounding areas.
- Connections between main campus, North Campus, R+T Park and surrounding neighbourhoods will be welcoming, intuitive, and include legible wayfinding.
- Ground floors and public spaces will animate the public realm and support year-round activity.

## Stewardship, Sustainability, and Adaptation

- The District demonstrates leadership in environmental responsibility, resiliency and future-ready planning.
- Low-carbon, resilient, and regenerative design principles will guide all future development (and redevelopment).
- Nature-based placemaking will enhance and celebrate existing biodiversity assets.
- Sustainability will advance new approaches to stewardship and climate resilience.

# 05 | Governance



# 5.1 Why It Matters

The Global Institute for Innovation Districts' Research Brief on "Why Governance Matters" (2023) highlights that the long-term success of innovation districts hinges on organizational structure and the development of a strong, coherent governance. Conversely, they highlight that, without effective models to govern, leaders get stuck in organizational gridlock, while ideas and strategies conceived in isolation can fail to "add up" to the desired collective impact and spur economic activity.

There is a complex and evolving network of actors, including institutions, governments, and the private sector that play a role in the creation, financing, development, and ongoing operation of R+T Park. While on one hand, this translates to significant desire amongst these partners to support long-term success, there is also the risk of misalignment of priorities, objectives and outcomes. As the long-term nature of development, particularly the land lease structure, equates to significant changes in personnel, economic conditions, and priorities over time, there is significant need for clearly defined, highly functional and well-aligned governance that anticipates and responds to these changes, while providing a consistent, transparent, and coherent operational and decision-making structure.

# 5.2 Historical Structure

## Guidance Statement for the Development of UW Lands

The foundational document for the creation, development, and operation of R+T Park is the **Guidance Statement for the Development of UW Lands**, approved by the Board of Governors in 1997. This document stipulates that property is a public trust and a long-term endowment for furthering academic goals; and further states that the University's "lands are an invaluable resource, large and varied enough to accommodate a wide range of uses."

The Guidance Statement outlines four primary objectives to be met in the development of R+T Park, as follows:

To encourage the creation or relocation of research-based companies whose research and development interests are compatible with the research and development activities in the University.

To provide suitable employment for University of Waterloo co-op students and graduates.

To produce a long-term financial benefit that will help the University to enhance the quality and relevance of its programs of teaching, research and service.

To assist in the economic and social enhancement of the surrounding community by facilitating the creation or relocation of companies or agencies employing highly-skilled people.

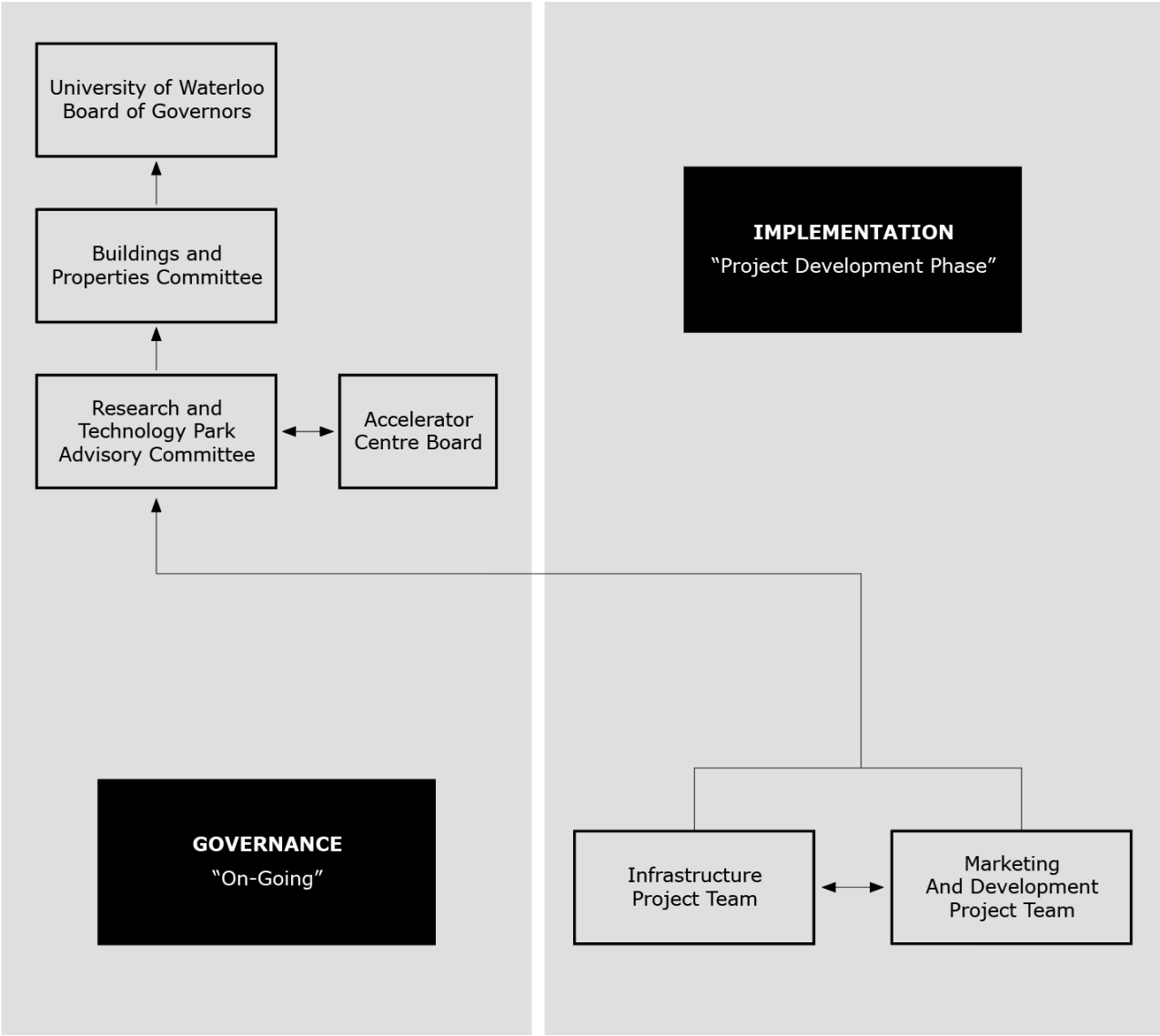
It is acknowledged that while not all four of these objectives will be achieved in every opportunity for development, the aim is to maximize the benefits implicit in these goals.

**>** Refer to Appendix 1 for the complete Guidance Statement for the Development of UW Lands (1997).

# Undertaking By The University Of Waterloo

The 2002 “Undertaking By The University Of Waterloo” agreement between the Province of Ontario, the Regional Municipality of Waterloo, and the University of Waterloo, outlines the original governance of the project as including the following entities and areas of responsibility (Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1



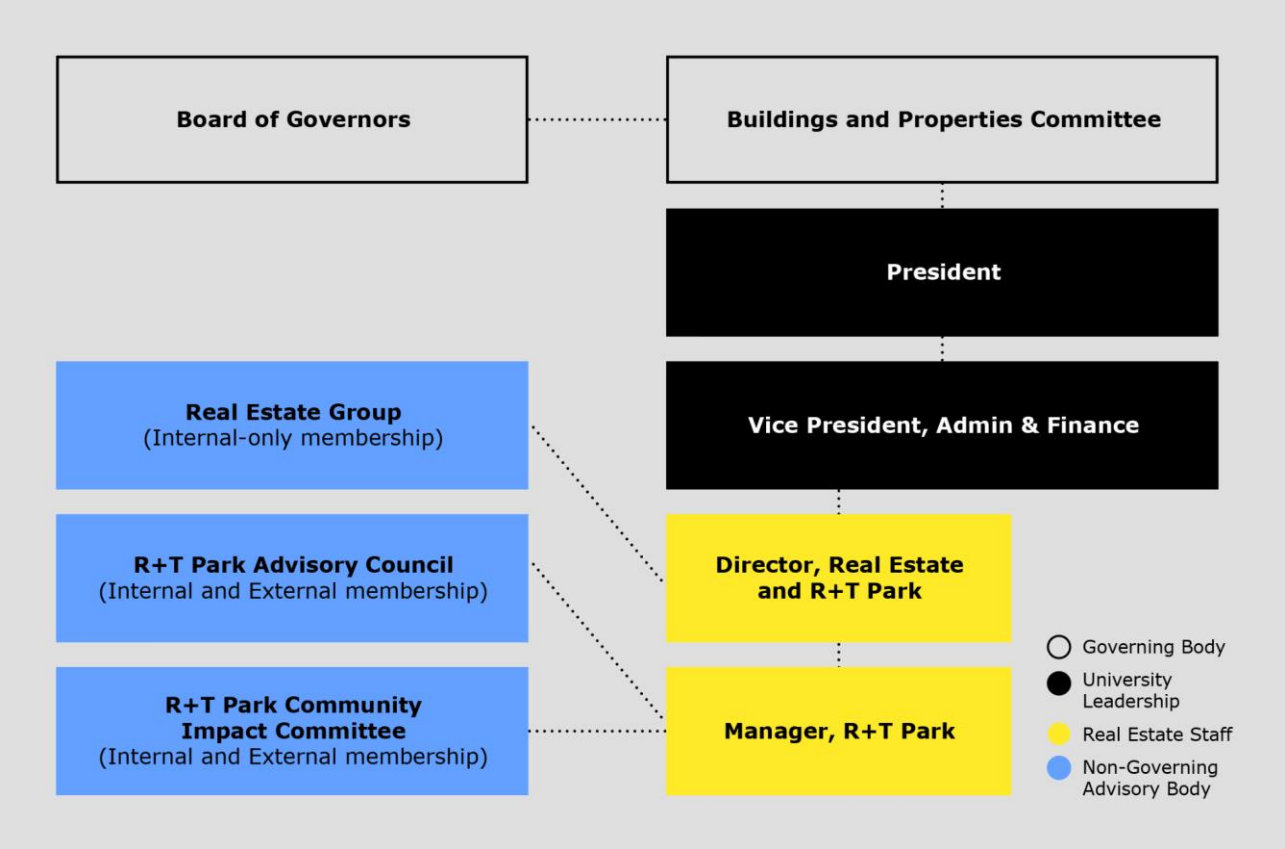

> Refer to Appendix 3 for the complete Undertaking By The University Of Waterloo, 2002 document

# 5.3 Current State

The governance structure described in the Undertaking By The University Of Waterloo document has been modified over time, particularly as R+T Park has become more developed, requiring less infrastructure management and more operational management, including the necessity for more internal resource capacity.

This has trended away from advisory governance rooted in external partnerships, to a more formal internal, departmental governance as shown in Figure 5.2. While there are several advisory groups supporting the development and operation of R+T Park, decision-making and strategic planning are largely contained within the portfolio of the Vice-President, Administration & Finance, reporting through the President to the Buildings and Properties Committee of the Board of Governors.

Figure 5.2



## Real Estate Staff

Oversee day-to-day operations and strategic planning. The R+T Park Manager is responsible for strategically attracting new tenants, enhancing tenant retention and expansion, and cultivating mutually beneficial relationships between developers, government, tenants, and the University of Waterloo. The Director, Real Estate and R+T Park oversees the ongoing strategic planning, development, optimization and management of the University of Waterloo's land holdings and real estate assets.

## University Leadership

The leadership provides strategic direction, sets priorities and targets, and ensures alignment between the activities and strategic priorities of the Real Estate team and the overall mission, vision and strategic planning of the University.

## Governing Bodies

The Board of Governors continues to have the statutory responsibility to manage the University's property. The Building and Properties Committee was delegated the responsibility of managing the development of R+T Park.

## Non-Governing Advisory Bodies

Non-Governing Bodies provide advice, feedback, and offer engagement on matters germane to the operations, management and growth of R+T Park.

The **Real Estate Group** is an internal-only University group that convenes quarterly to review and provide due diligence and expertise on matters related to University Real Estate, including space needs, leasing, financial and taxation matters, procurement, risk management, and legal expertise.

The **R+T Park Advisory Council** is an evolution of the original Advisory Committee for R+T Park. Over time, its role in formal governance has changed, but the intent is to provide insight and feedback on the strategic growth of R+T Park. Membership includes internal stakeholders and external entities, including the Accelerator Centre, the City, Waterloo EDC, as well as developers and tenants of R+T Park. This also serves, to some degree, as a partial Tenant's Association.

The **R+T Park Community Engagement Committee** provides oversight for the disbursement of funds from the R+T Park Community Impact Fund held at the Waterloo Region Community Foundation. Historically the committee has also supported community fundraising events that engage tenants and grow the *Community Impact Fund.* This also serves, to some degree, as another partial Tenant's Association.

# Tenant Approval Process

The R+T Park tenant approval process was revised in 2025 to reflect changes in commercial leasing trends post-COVID19, which have trended to leases with a smaller footprint and shorter terms. The previous process required the Buildings and Properties Committee to review all decisions and resolve disputes, which proved inefficient and untimely.

The new process established a streamlined process for approvals of smaller, shorter tenancies, and increasingly restrictive levels of approval corresponding to larger tenancies and new building developments. It also introduced a more clearly defined and responsive dispute resolution process.

> Refer to Appendix 2 for the Tenant Approval Process, 2025 document

# Current challenges

Governance reform is a foundational priority in this plan. While the existing governance framework has proven effective at moving decisions forward, the internal, approval-based nature of the current model is largely reactive, administrative in function, and lacks focus on strategic growth. Additionally, there is insufficient real estate expertise that would bring the insight and market alignment necessary to guide growth in a district of R+T Park's scale and ambition. Current challenges include:

Decision pathways are primarily internal, administrative, and reactive, as opposed to strategic, proactive, and target driven.

- While this can lead to responsiveness and efficiency, it risks a lack of coordination with long-term strategic plans, favouring a "project-by-project" or piecemeal approach to project decisions, rather than a broader, cohesive planning approach rooted in alignment with strategic goals at a district level.

Lack of clarity as to how contributors, particularly external stakeholders, should be engaged in the decision-making process; ambiguity regarding leadership, governance, and advisement risks a lack of clarity as to who should be engaged, at what time, and for what purpose.

Limitations on personnel and resources make coordinating and managing governance and committees challenging. This also constrains reporting with regards to data collection, analysis, and creating digestible reporting materials.

These challenges have driven down engagement with advisory groups who are unsure of what their role is, why they are needed at the table, and what they are expected to support or accomplish. This has led to reduced attendance, inconsistent participation, and limited interest in active participation with strategic decision-making that could benefit the District's long-range ambitions.

Current governance lacks relevant expertise in real estate, leading to knowledge and experience gaps that are important to develop strategy, manage growth, identify and mitigate risks, and foster long-term sustainability of asset management.

- Current governance is well-engaged with regard to institutional and local government, but insufficient in market-relevant real estate expertise with respect to financial modeling, deal structure, public-private partnerships, taxation, land-use and urban planning, and more.

This lack of expertise also risks misalignment of timelines and expectations between the institution and the private sector.

- Decision making and approval timelines do not often move at the same pace and the public and private sectors don't always operate in the same economic/market realities.

There is a lack of internal alignment with respect to financial analysis of revenues and expenditures relative to real estate management. This creates challenges in appropriately aligning real estate revenues to costs, developing budgets and capital plans, and effectively planning for long-term growth in the District.

The current development process can be interpreted as having failed to prioritize the highest and best land use, with parcels under-developed and large segments of land allocated to low-use surface parking.

Alignment with other actors in the Waterloo Region technology ecosystem is lacking, leading to a lack of clarity with regard to what R+T Park's role is from an economic development and venture creation standpoint.

# 5.4 Phased Governance Transition

It is recommended that R+T Park governance be clarified and strengthened using a phased approach that re-engages both internal and external stakeholders in long-term planning, and establishes a solid base from which to explore different structural models of operations.

Early steps should focus on bringing more clarity to the roles, responsibilities and decision pathways, as well as identifying and attracting relevant expertise in real estate development and financing.

Once these steps are complete, further organization restructuring should be undertaken, focusing on long-term planning and in-depth analysis of structural changes such as an endowment or trust fund, joint venture partnerships, or a subsidiary development corporation.

## Phase One—Clarify Governance

The Director, Real Estate and R+T Park and the R+T Park Manager will work collaboratively with the VP, Administration and Finance and the Secretariat to:

- Identify and clarify roles, responsibilities, and decision-making pathways, including when information is shared for information, review, feedback, or approval.
- Understand who needs what information, at what time, and ensure they understand how to contribute, bringing alignment between projects and long-term strategy and planning.
- Establish targets in alignment with planning and governance, identify how governance best supports those objectives.
- Examine the role of board committees and advisory bodies and consider alternative approaches, structures, and expertise.
- Better understand the role tenants wish to play in the District's growth, but also with the University and the broader Waterloo Region Technology Ecosystem.

## Phase Two—Refine and Strengthen

The Director, Real Estate and R+T Park and the R+T Park Manager will work collaboratively with the VP, Administration and Finance to:

- Research best practices and future structure in alignment with broader real estate priorities:
    - Explore the role of internal vs. external stakeholders, advisors, and decision-makers.
    - Begin research into structural options with respect to whether Real Estate operations should remain internal to the University or if a subsidiary development corporation should be considered.
- Align R+T Park governance with broader Real Estate strategic planning and governance.
- Consider the formation of a Real Estate Advisory Board or Real Estate Subcommittee of the Board that attracts highly qualified, relevant expertise in Real Estate development and financing to advise on project development.

## Phase 3—Restructure

The Director, Real Estate and the VP, Administration and Finance, will work with the support of the relevant advisory and governing bodies to:

- Analyze and develop a business case to support the decision regarding remaining with a primarily internal (hands-on) or primarily external (hands-off) leadership and operational management of the real estate portfolio, including R+T Park
- Undertake the process of a more comprehensive restructure in alignment with long-term planning for portfolio management.

# 5.5 Precedent Examples of Governance and Operational Models

As R+T Park is the largest of the University of Waterloo's commercial real estate holdings, R+T Park governance is central to the overall real estate governance model of the University. As the support of the Real Estate division will continue to be a crucial part of the District's development moving forward, exploring governance models of comparable university real estate divisions is useful to understand how these may be applied to R+T Park. This is also in alignment with broader conceptual thinking in the recently adopted Campus Plan, which contemplates engagement in Public-Private Partnerships, land leasing and joint-venture opportunities for campus growth.

## University of Guelph— Real Estate Division & Heritage Trust

The University of Guelph Real Estate Division is a formal division within the University, responsible for managing and developing surplus land and properties with the goal of generating long-term revenues to support the University's mission.

The Real Estate Division reports to a Board of Trustees under the Board of Governors to ensure alignment with University goals.

The Board of Trustees is made up of external members with expertise in real estate development and financial management.

Revenues from real estate assets are invested into the Heritage Trust, an endowment fund from which the principle remains untouched and the interest is re-invested into strategic and capital projects at the University.

# Real Estate Partnerships at the University of Toronto

The Real Estate Partnerships group manages real estate assets to support the University's academic mission, create sustainable funding through revenue generations, and creates positive impact within the city's social fabric.

The team is composed of real estate professionals with background or expertise in development, leasing, dispositions, acquisitions and private/public partnerships; led by a managing director and reports to VP of Operations and Real Estate Partnerships.

The Real Estate Advisory Committee (REAC) is made up of industry professionals with real estate development and finance expertise, providing strategic and independent advice on matters related to planning, development, investment, management and stewardship of University of Toronto real estate assets.

# University of Calgary Properties Group (UCPG)

The University of Calgary Properties Group (UCPG) serves as a trustee to both the University District Trust and the University Innovation Quarter Trust.

UCPG works collaboratively with University of Calgary, reporting to an independent board of governors that is made up of the university, community and industry representatives.

UCPG executes the master plan and all leasing and property management for the commercial buildings within UIQ (e.g., marketing space, managing tenants, maintaining infrastructure).

# University of British Columbia (UBC) Properties Trust

UBC Properties Trust (UBCPT) acts as the real-estate arm of the university, tasked with the development of campus communities (retail, residential, mixed-use), leasehold land deals, institutional project delivery and property management of rental housing, and the management of other real estate assets.

UBCPT is fully owned by the University but operates at arm's length with its own board of directors, comprised of external industry professionals, developers and UBC administrators, including one member of the UBC Board of Governors.

UBC's Vice President of Finance & Operations coordinates the governance for institutional projects undertaken by UBC Properties.

# 06 | Business Strategy and Ecosystem Integration

**6.1** Current State Overview

**6.2** Comparative Landscape Analysis

**6.3** Branding and Positioning Opportunities

**6.4** Programmatic opportunities

**6.5** Partnership and Collaboration opportunities

# 6.1 Current State Overview

## Historical Context

Plans for a research and technology park at the University of Waterloo can be dated back to at least the early 1980s. At that time, the vision was primarily large parcels of land dedicated to sprawling corporate campuses with a single corporate occupier. This was the case when 100-acres of land was sold to Hewlett Packard for the development of such a campus. However, this development never materialized and the land was re-acquired by the University in 1992.

The 1992 Campus Master Plan identified opportunities for development on the North Campus to "encourage development which can initiate the potential for transfer of knowledge between University research activities and the private sector."

In 1997, the Board of Governors approved the "Guidance Statement for the Development of UW Lands" which articulated that the University's "land holdings represent an invaluable and finite resource," which should be used to foster "research and development activities" and attract "enterprises of the highest quality and prestige."

The Guidance Statement goes on to say that, in developing the North Campus land, the University should focus on objectives that directly complement its academic and public-interest mandate; such objectives include:

- Encouraging the creation or relocation of research-based companies aligned with the University of Waterloo's strengths.
- Providing meaningful employment opportunities for students and graduates.
- Generating long-term financial benefits to support the institution's mission.
- Contributing to the economic and social vitality of the surrounding community.

Funding, planning and development of R+T Park began in 2002, with the first building opening in 2004, marking a significant milestone in the University's vision for innovation-driven development. Sybase, now SAP, served as the District's first major tenant, establishing early momentum. Soon after, prominent technology and advanced industry firms including OpenText, BlackBerry, NavTech (now Skywise), and AGFA joined the District, reinforcing its role as a center for research, technology, and enterprise.

In 2006, the Accelerator Centre (AC) opened its doors as the first incubator of its kind in Waterloo Region. Since then, the AC has earned international recognition, consistently ranking among the top five incubators globally. Through its award-winning Accelerator Program, the AC has supported some of Canada's most successful and influential startups, including Miovision, Axonify, Clearpath, ApplyBoard, and TextNow, further cementing the District's reputation for innovation and entrepreneurship.

# Current State

Currently, the District comprises ten buildings totaling approximately one million square feet of world-class office space and is home to more than 35 tenants across research, technology, and innovation sectors.

Despite its strong foundation and notable successes, feedback from tenants and stakeholders are indicative of several challenges that limit the District's full potential. There is a perception that the District's reputation has begun to stagnate, particularly as peer innovation districts have evolved to place greater emphasis on experience, placemaking, and vibrancy. The area lacks amenities and a well-defined public realm, contributing to a limited sense of identity and place. It also lacks strong connective ties to the University's more vibrant South Campus, reducing opportunities for collaboration and employment growth opportunities.

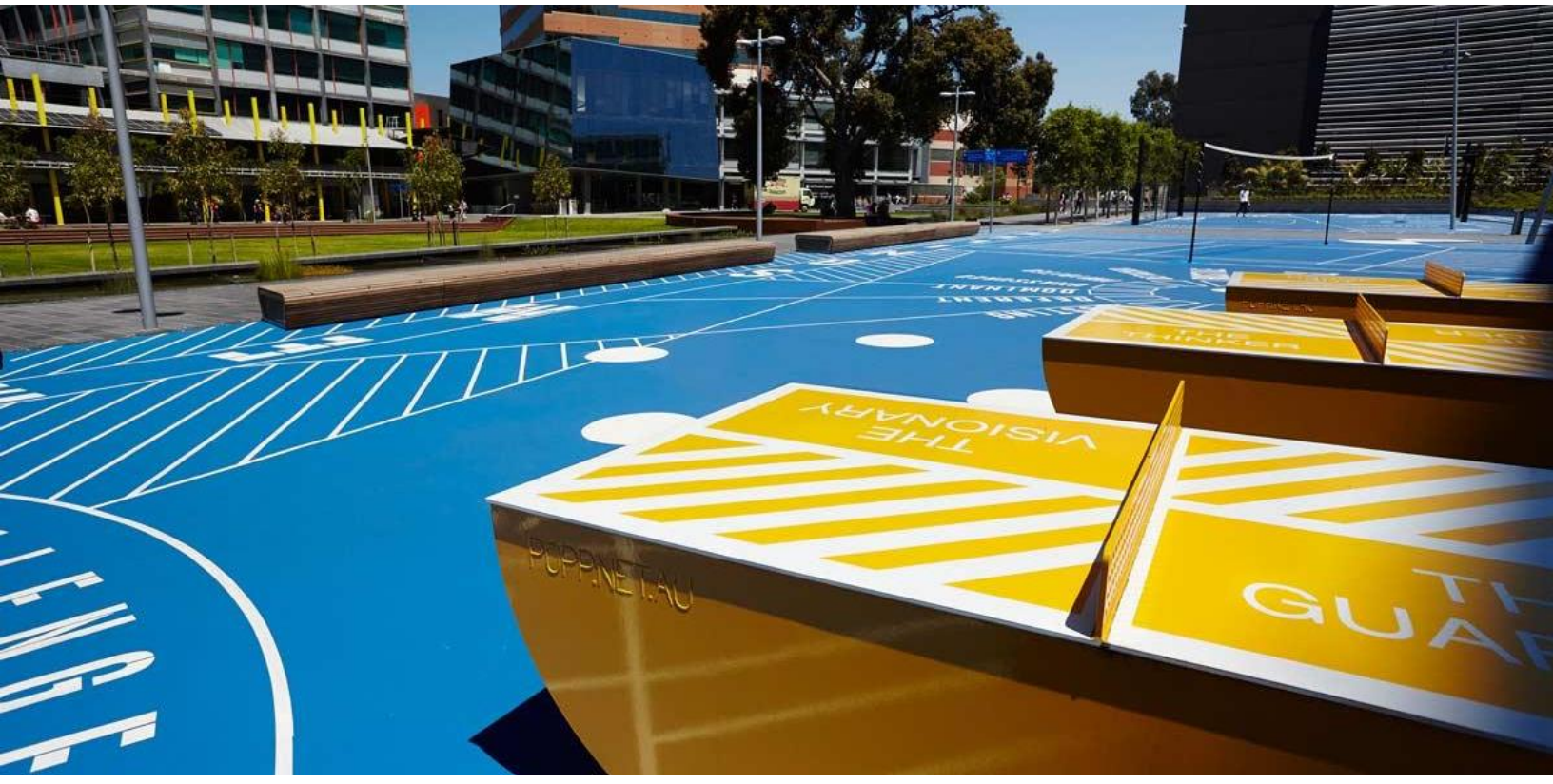
Stakeholders also highlighted an over-emphasis on surface parking, combined with insufficient active transportation and transit connectivity. The District is perceived as physically and experientially disconnected from the main campus and the community, reinforcing a sense of isolation rather than integration. In addition, the absence of flexible event spaces and gathering areas limits opportunities for informal interaction, programming, and community-building. A lack of tangible alignment with the University's commitment to Truth and Reconciliation and meaningful relationship with Indigenous Host Nations through placemaking and land-based learning is also notable.

# A New Innovation District Approach

Looking ahead, there is a clear opportunity to evolve the District into a more complete, connected, and vibrant innovation district. Future opportunities in the short-term include the proposed development of a new hotel and conference centre, construction of the new WRHN @ the University innovation hospital, collaboration with the Office of Indigenous relations, as well as new programming and partnership developments.

Longer-term priorities include the introduction of a richer mix of uses to add density, create vibrancy, and foster a more welcoming, connected neighbourhood feel. These new uses could include wet and dry laboratories, advanced manufacturing facilities, residential, amenities and street-level retail. These new additions will be designed to support a dynamic, 24-hour district that encourages connection and collaboration between users, the Campus community, and the surrounding neighbourhoods. Complementary programming and events would animate the area and foster collaboration, creativity, and community engagement.

Enhancing connectivity, both to the main campus and throughout the District, through improved transit, pedestrian, and cycling infrastructure is critical. Finally, integrating sustainability principles and district energy planning will ensure that future development reflects the University's leadership in environmental responsibility while supporting long-term resilience and operational efficiency.



# 6.2 Comparative Landscape Analysis

To position R+T Park as a compelling location for employers, R&D organizations, and other innovation-driven groups, it is essential to understand the broader competitive landscape. This begins with examining which companies are choosing Waterloo Region for office and employment space—and the factors influencing those decisions. Organizations select different areas within the region based on their size, stage of growth, operational needs, and proximity to talent, research institutions, and other demand drivers (e.g., cost, amenities, etc.).

ISED Canada's 2024 report SME Profile: *Innovative Enterprises In Canada* broadly defines "innovative enterprises" as falling into four categories by firm size:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **1-4** employees | **5-19** employees | **20-99** employees | **100-499** employees |

This can further be broken down into the types of space profiles required for these users as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Office-based users** | Primarily software-oriented companies with most work being done at desks |
| **Light-Industrial-based** | Typically hardware, with focus on component assembly, electrical and light fabrication, storage, with associated office and administrative space within or immediately adjacent. |
| **Specialized space-based** | Typical lab-based life sciences, focused on uses that require more specialized/controlled environments that can include fume-hoods, clean rooms, specialized equipment and tightly controlled access. |

Broadly, office and employment users in the region can be grouped into four “personas” or classifications as follows:

### Startups: 1-19 employees

- Office-based
- Light-Industrial-based
- Specialized space-based

### Scale-ups: 20-99 employees

- Office-based
- Light-Industrial-based
- Specialized space-based

### Medium-to-Large Enterprise: 100-499 employees

- Office-based
- Light Industrial-based
- Specialized space-based

Each classification and firm size has its own unique requirements and priorities when it comes to space needs, cost sensitivities, and locational preferences which will influence where they choose to locate.

# Startups

Startups tend to be entrepreneurs or small teams in early stages of growth. They are often testing ideas, products or services for commercialization and preparing for funding rounds.

**Employee Count:** 1-19 employees

**Space requirements and decision drivers**

## Office-based Startups:

**Size:** Can range from single hot/hotel style desks to smaller dedicated suites of up to 20 people.

**Flexibility and affordability:** Preference for space that can be rented on a short-term basis and/or with a flexible lease structure. Lower costs preferred but will often pay a premium for increased flexibility.

**Quality-amenitized spaces:** Preference for fully furnished spaces with access to shared facilities including meeting rooms, common areas/kitchens, to reduce start-up/operational costs.

**Collaborative environments:** Often seek environments and locations where other startups are located (incubators or innovation spaces), to leverage peer learning, shared problem-solving, networking, mentorship, and access to early-stage funding opportunities.

**Where are they located in Waterloo Region:**

- Accelerator Centre
- Velocity
- Communitech
- Catalyst Commons
- Den 1880
- WorkHaus

## Light Industrial-based Startups:

**Flexibility and affordability:** these remain a priority, though affordability is more desirable than flexibility due to longer product development and growth cycles.

**Flexible use space:** need for flexibility in space design that can accommodate light industrial, warehousing, and associated office uses, but configuration may change based on research & development versus manufacturing and shipping balances. Additionally, growth space that is connected or nearby is advantageous.

**Ecosystem / network access:** highly collaborative environments are unlikely to be part of the building space design in such environments, but access to networks through programming and adjacency is desirable.

**Where are they located in Waterloo Region:**

- Accelerator Centre
- Velocity
- Catalyst Commons
- Medical Innovation Xchange (MIX)

## Specialized space-based Startups:

**Turn-key facility:** These startups typically begin in university-linked incubators offering free or deeply affordable access to high-quality lab conditions. Due to the long cycles of research and product development, these companies value access to facilities highly, and often leave to higher-priced turn-key space.

**Complex facilities with highly specific equipment:** Can require access to wet labs, dry labs, secured spaces, specialized ventilation, vibration-controlled or sound-controlled spaces, as well as space for specialized equipment and storage facilities. These spaces are expensive and complex to build, with a limited pool of experienced developers who can bring a facility online.

**Talent proximity:** Close connections to universities, hospitals, and other research institutions and companies allow companies to attract and retain highly specialized talent.

**Collaborative networks:** Proximity to institutions and opportunities to co-locate with other high-tech, life science, and advanced research companies, enables knowledge sharing, partnerships, and joint projects, and a stronger ecosystem increasing reputation and funding opportunities.

**Where are they located in Waterloo Region:**

- Velocity
- Medical Innovation Xchange (MIX)

# Scale-Ups

These are growing companies that have moved beyond the early startup phase but are not yet large, established firms. They usually require more space than startups but still want flexibility as their team and operations may evolve quickly. These users require space that can grow with them over shorter timeframes without a long-term lease commitment. Community is important, especially access to other growing firms, talent, and specialized services. Amenities that support staff attraction and retention, along with proximity to funding sources and institutional partners, play a strong role in location decisions.

**Employee Count:** Between 20-99 employees

## Office-based Scale-ups:

**Size:** Can range from dedicated spaces for 20 people, approximately 1,500-5,000 square feet to larger floor plates of 25,000 square feet

**Shorter term, flexible:** Preference for larger more secure/private spaces on short-to-medium terms, typically under 5 years. Preference for a flexible lease structure allowing for growth or contraction with limited penalties for changes. Lower-costs preferred, but will often pay a premium for higher quality space that attracts/retains talent.

**Quality-amenitized spaces:** Preference for spaces with access to amenity rich buildings/zones that will support employee attraction.

**Where are they located in Waterloo Region:**

- R+T Park
- Catalyst Commons
- Catalyst137
- Downtown Kitchener Innovation District
- Phillip St. Corridor
- Uptown Waterloo

## Light Industrial-based Scale-ups:

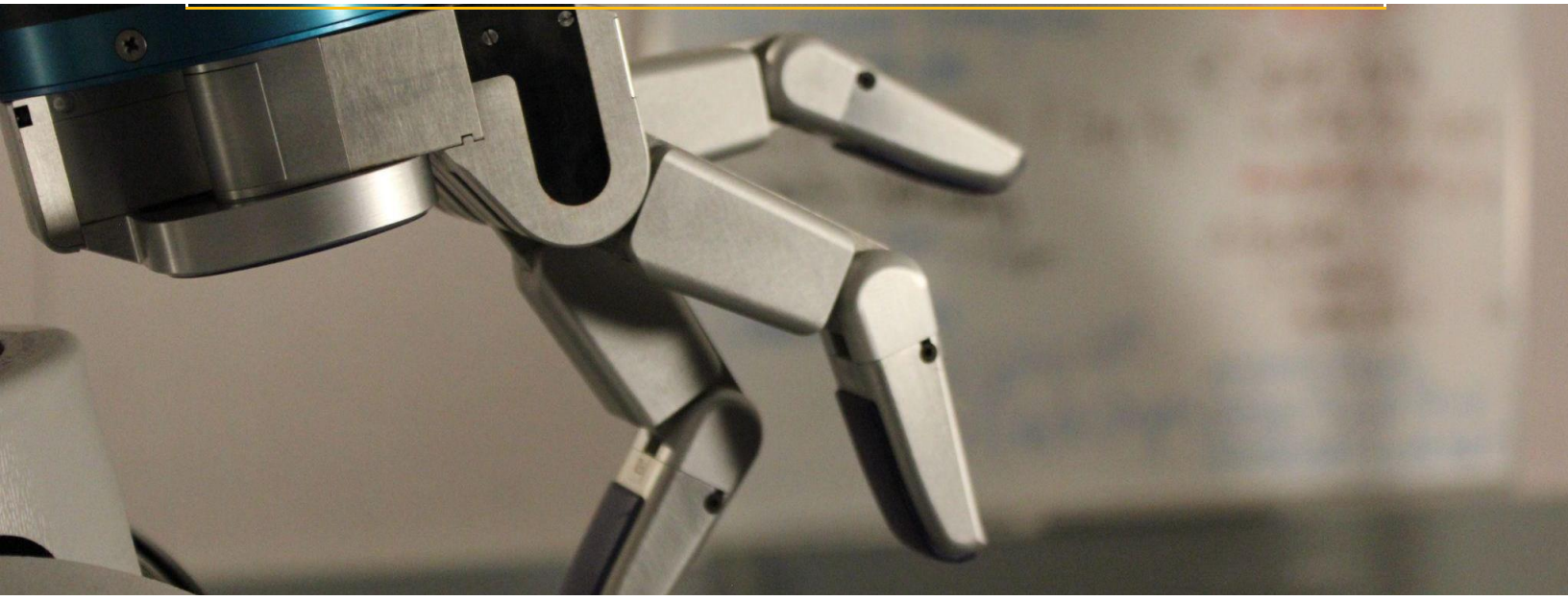
**Size:** Often needing more open spaces that accommodate the warehousing and assembly needs in addition to associated uses. Can range from approximately 1,500-5,000 square feet to larger floor plates of 25,000 square feet or more depending on the type of product and warehousing needs.

**Shorter term, flexible:** Preference for larger, secure/private spaces on short-to-medium terms, typically under 5 years. Preference for a flexible lease structure allowing for growth or contraction with limited penalties for changes. Lower costs preferred, but will often pay a premium for higher quality space that attracts/retains talent.

**Location flexible:** Given the general lack of light industrial and warehousing space, as well as limited truck access in dense urban areas, these companies are typically more flexible on location, being driven by the logistical and operational needs above amenity access. Factors like parking, truck loading, power and water access drive decisions more than amenities and centrality.

**Where are they located in Waterloo Region:**

- Catalyst137
- Phillip Street Corridor
- Medical Innovation Xchange (MIX)
- Waterloo Innovation Park
- Huron Business Park
- Other light industrial areas in the three major cities



## Specialized space-based Scale-ups:

**Turn-key facility:** These companies typically begin in university-linked incubators offering free or deeply affordable access to high-quality lab conditions. Due to the long cycles of research and product development, these companies value access to, often higher priced, turn-key space as it remains more cost-effective and less risky than the cost of fit out for equipment and custom lab facilities, which they risk outgrowing rapidly.

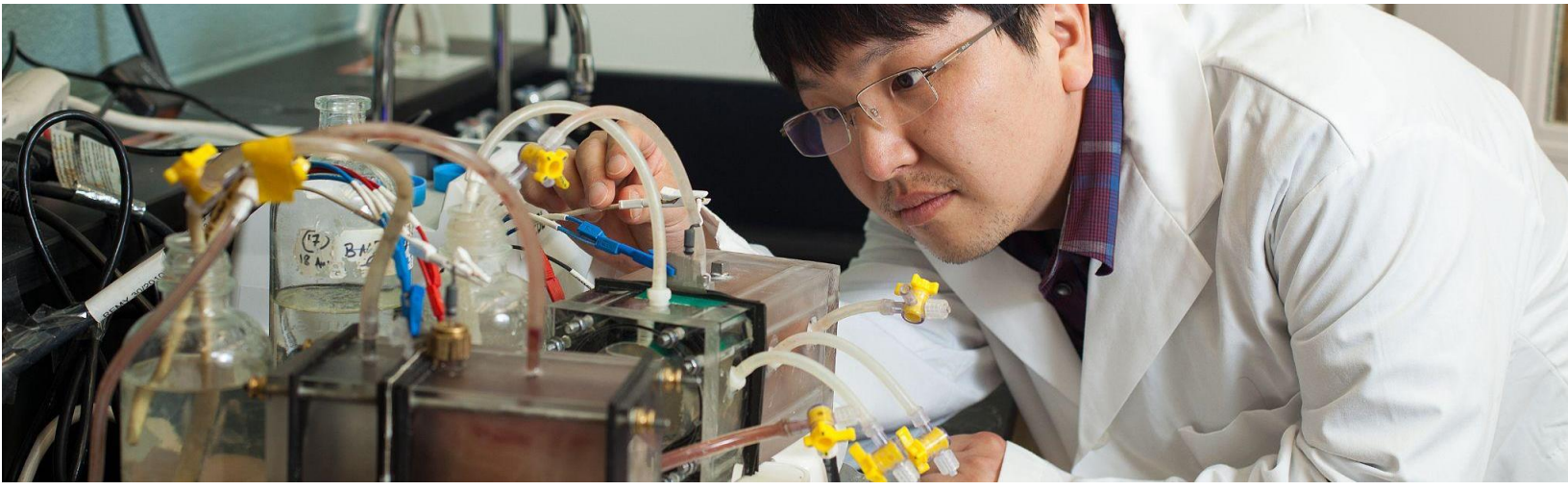
**Complex facilities with highly specific equipment:** Can require access to wet labs, dry labs, secured spaces, specialized ventilation, vibration-controlled or sound-controlled spaces, as well as space for specialized equipment and storage facilities. These spaces are expensive and complex to build, with a limited pool of experienced developers who can bring a facility online.

**Talent proximity:** Close connections to universities, hospitals, and other research institutions and companies allow companies to attract and retain highly specialized talent.

**Collaborative networks:** Proximity to institutions and opportunities to co-locate with other high-tech, life science, and advanced research companies, enables knowledge sharing, partnerships, and joint projects, and a stronger ecosystem increasing reputation and funding opportunities.

**Where are they located in Waterloo Region:**

- Velocity
- Medical Innovation Xchange (MIX)



# Medium-to-Large Enterprises

These are typically more established companies with stable operations and defined space requirements. These firms are often focused on long-term growth, talent retention, and operational efficiency rather than short-term flexibility. Some of these enterprises may have multiple office locations across Ontario or beyond.

**Employee Count:** 100-500 employees (may not be in one contiguous location)

## Office-based Medium-to-Large Enterprises

**Quality amenities to support top-talent employee attraction:** Medium and large enterprises place greater emphasis on employee experience. On-site or nearby amenities such as food options, fitness facilities, outdoor space, and common areas as well as housing, childcare, and schools are viewed as important for retention and productivity, particularly in competitive labour markets.

**Access to post-secondary talent pipeline:** For many firms, the priority is not immediate physical adjacency to a campus, but reliable access to a steady talent pipeline and the ability to build and maintain relationships with universities and colleges. This includes engagement in co-op programs, research collaboration, and recruitment channels across the broader region.

**Proximity to startup and scale-up clusters:** Many larger firms value being near innovation activity, including start-ups and scale-ups, to support collaboration, acquisitions, partnerships, and exposure to emerging technologies.

Additional drivers include access to larger floorplates, and ample low-cost parking.

**Where are they located in Waterloo Region:**

- R+T Park
- Catalyst137
- Downtown Kitchener Innovation District
- Phillip St. Corridor
- Waterloo Innovation Park

## Light industrial-based Medium-to-Large Enterprises

**Expanded Space needs:** Companies seeking large floor plates at ground floor level to accommodate warehousing, loading docks, and truck access.

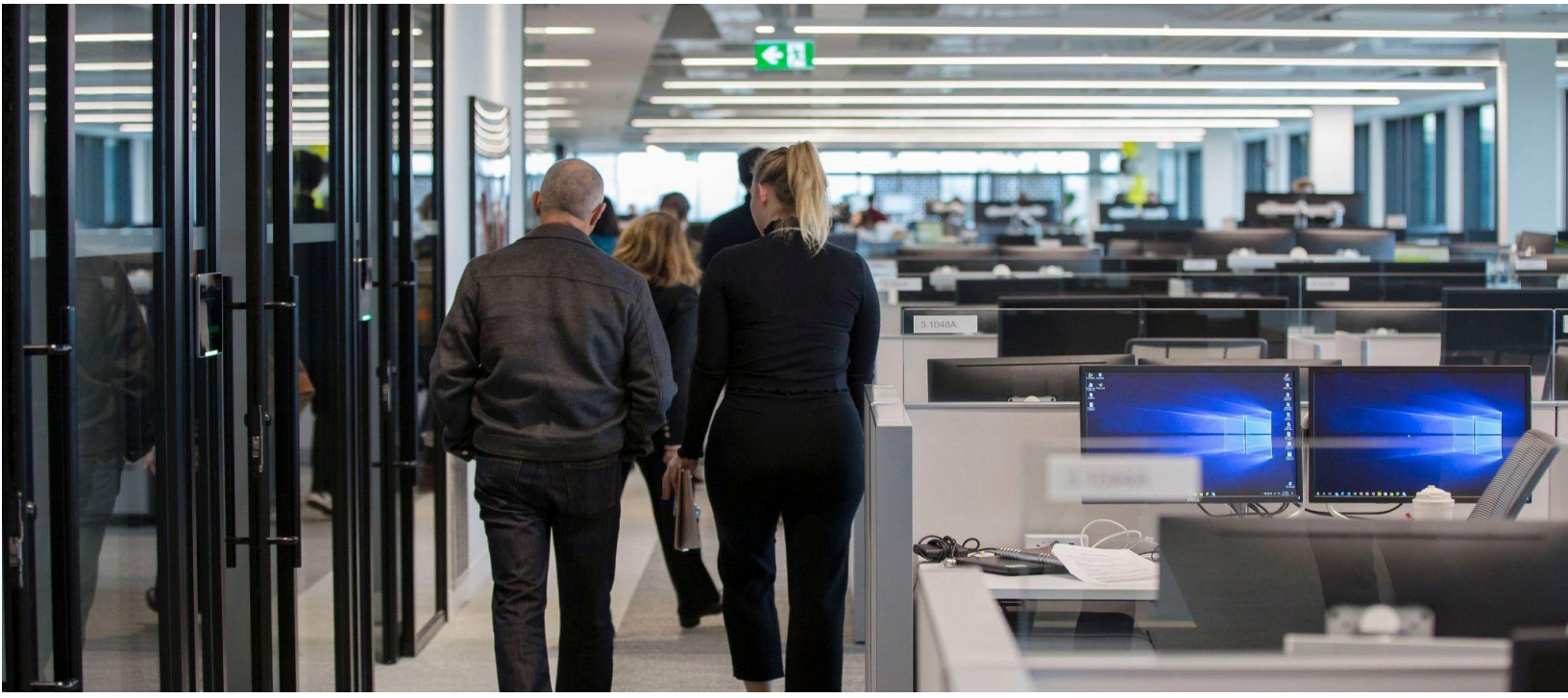
**Location outside dense urban areas:** The larger ground floor spaces often require companies to look towards peripheral industrial areas that are less urban.

**Parking trumps amenities:** The more remote locations often mean companies are in areas that are less transit accessible, feature few amenities, making ample free parking a necessity.

Additional drivers include access to larger floorplates, and ample low-cost parking.

**Where are they located in Waterloo Region:**

- Waterloo Innovation Park
- Catalyst137
- Huron Business Park
- Homer Watson Business Park
- IP Park
- Generation Park (Currently undeveloped greenfield)



## Specialized space-based Medium-to-Large Enterprises

**Expanded Complex Space needs:** Companies seeking larger floor plates with highly specialized equipment and fit out, such as ventilation, electrical, access control, and so on. Spaces are typically bespoke and designed by the occupant company to meet specific research, development and manufacturing needs as well as highly attuned to regulatory compliance.

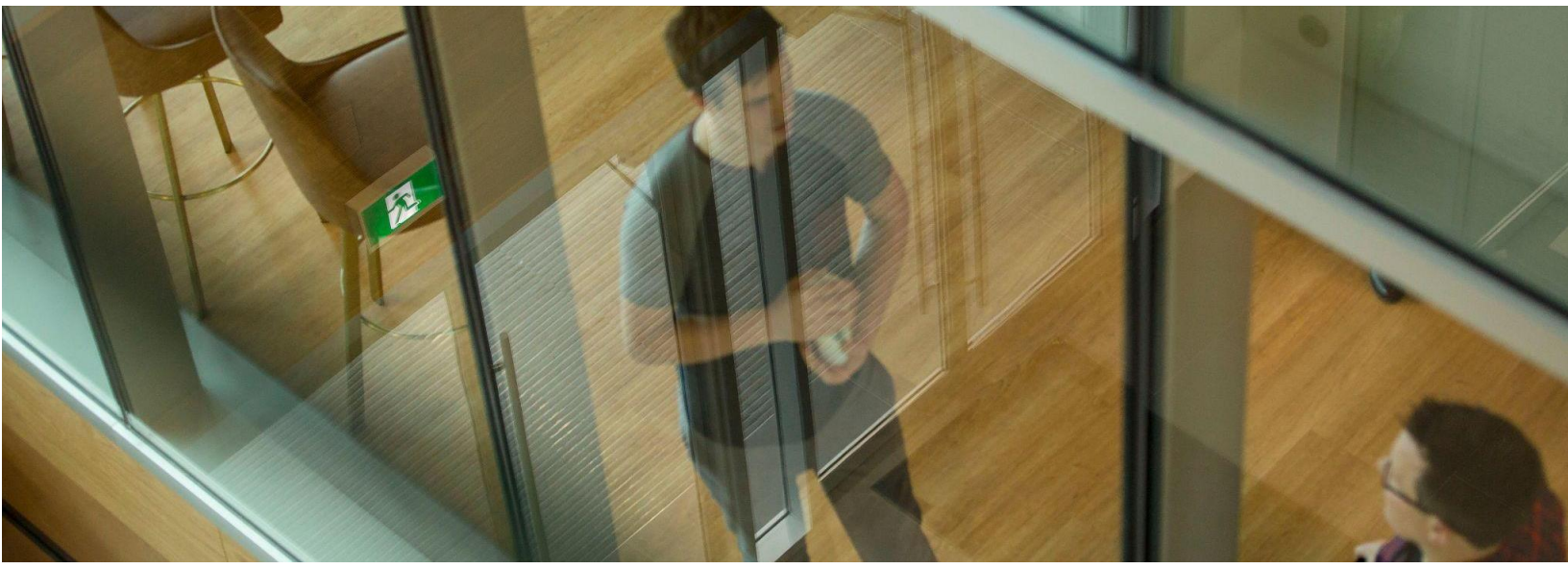
**Rarity:** Due to the long growth cycle, complexity of needs, and specialized talent, clusters of such companies tend to be hard to foster and occur with less frequency and in relation to strong anchor institutions.

**Talent proximity:** Close connections to universities, hospitals, and other research institutions and companies allow companies to attract and retain highly specialized talent.

**Collaborative networks:** Proximity to institutions and opportunities to co-locate with other high-tech, life science, and advanced research companies, enables knowledge sharing, partnerships, and joint projects, and a stronger ecosystem increasing reputation and funding opportunities.

**Where are they located in Waterloo Region:**

- Intellijoint Surgical co-located with the Medical Innovation Xchange (MIX)
- Catalyst137

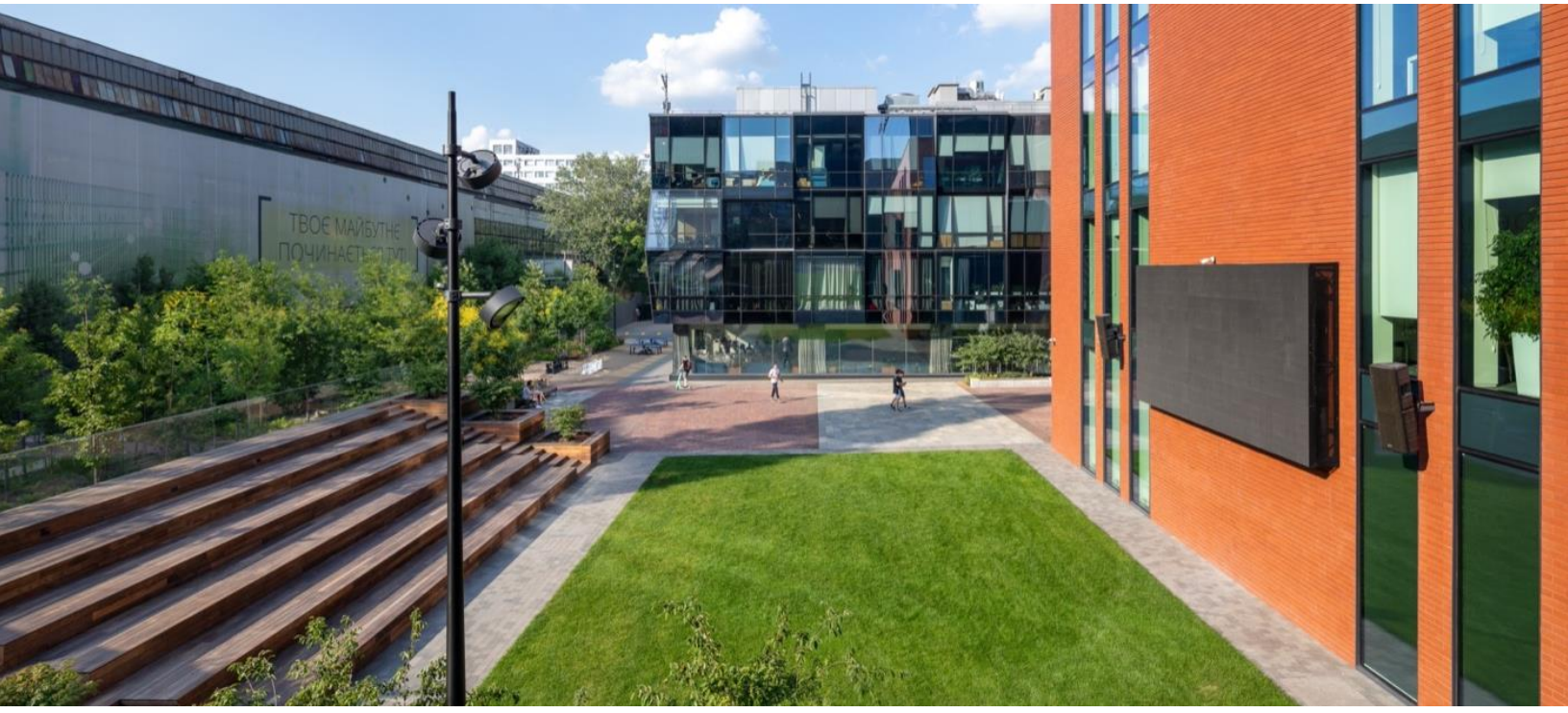


# R+T Park Gap Analysis

While R+T Park does not/should not cater to every group, understanding what is valued helps clarify where the District is most competitive and where gaps exist that could influence future positioning and growth strategies.

| Demand Drivers | R+T Park Alignment |
|---|---|
| **Flexible leasing and adaptable space** | **Limited;** current options include:<br>Accelerator Centre—Office-based Startups<br>Cora GRID—Office-based Startups<br>Cora Platinum Suites—Office-based Scale-ups |
| **Ability to scale within the same campus** | **Moderate;** limited flexible options that allow for rapid transition, but there is vacancy that can accommodate growth. |
| **Turnkey / furnished office space** | **Limited;** current options include:<br>Accelerator Centre—Office-based Startups<br>Cora GRID—Office-based Startups<br>Cora Platinum Suites—Office-based Scale-ups |
| **Access to innovation and research networks** | **Strong;** Accelerator Centre, Velocity, GTAN/ArchAngel Funds; UWaterloo Research Institutes. |
| **Proximity to universities and talent pipelines** | **Strong;** University of Waterloo, Wilfrid Laurier University, and Conestoga College all in close proximity. |
| **Collaborative environment with other tech and innovation firms** | **Moderate;** Overall tech ecosystem is highly collaborative, particularly on the startup and scale-up side. Larger tenants in R+T Park tend to be more closed off. |
| **Predictable and competitive costs** | **Moderate:** High-end of market competitive. |
| **Convenient access and parking** | **Strong;** ample free surface parking; transit connectivity. |

| Demand Drivers | R+T Park Alignment |
|---|---|
| **Quality professional office environment** | **Strong;** high quality spaces; a mix of collaborative, co-working focused and private spaces in evolv1. |
| **Access to funding, investors, and commercialization support** | **Moderate;** Strong regional angel network, with some VC support; good connective access to Toronto and San Francisco networks. |
| **Employee amenities (food, fitness, social spaces)** | **Limited;** currently very few publicly accessible amenities; cafeteria style venue in 445 Wes Graham Way with limited hours; everything else is contained within offices and only accessible to select employees or tenants. |
| **Walkable urban lifestyle** | **Limited;** The area is walkable, but buildings are far and there is little to walk to/through. |
| **Available specialized infrastructure (wet labs, clean rooms, vibration control)** | **Limited;** Outside of dedicated University spaces there is limited specialized infrastructure available to firms. |



# 6.3 Strategic Refresh and Repositioning for R+T Park

Stakeholder feedback highlighted that over time, R+T Park has increasingly been perceived as an office park adjacent to the University of Waterloo, rather than a fully integrated, vibrant innovation hub with strong collaborative ties to the University.

R+T Park will continue to evolve into a denser and more connected urban environment with planned growth and new development. As the transformation unfolds, the District should strengthen the positioning and marketing strategy to showcase a purpose-driven innovation district, defined by its areas of strength, an intentional community atmosphere, and its integration with the University of Waterloo's research priorities.

A refreshed positioning and marketing strategy should clearly communicate:

What R+T Park is and the value proposition of choosing this location.

Who R+T Park is for:

- The types of companies and partners it seeks to attract, with specific emphasis on the core thematic sectors of:
  - Health & Science
  - Transformative Technologies
  - Sustainability
  - Community

The beneficial outcomes for companies, employees, the University, and the surrounding community in the growth and vibrancy of the District.

The relationship between R+T Park and the University, the Waterloo Region technology ecosystem, and the surrounding community.

These themes will anchor the District's narrative and be consistently reflected across leasing materials, digital content, signage, placemaking language, and external communications. They also inform the land-use and built-form design as outlined in the Land Use strategy in Section 7.

## Considerations

Current resources are limited in several ways that will impact the degree to which such a refresh can be impactful and drive outcomes, including:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Capacity:** | Current staffing resources leave limited time available to attend to marketing and brand matters. |
| **Resources:** | Current budget realities require limited investment in tools and resources to support branding and marketing work. |
| **Skills:** | As marketing and branding are continually evolving there continues to be risk of skills gaps within the existing team to maintain top awareness of changing tools and trends to be able to capitalize and position the District accordingly in the correct context. |

As the District continues to grow and generate more revenue, there should be corresponding re-investment into the marketing and communications strategy and resources to continue to support the District at scale. As development in R+T Park evolves to embrace a greater mix of uses and new areas of research open new priorities, the positioning and marketing should also continue to be re-evaluated and adjusted to ensure alignment.

A phased approach to Positioning & Marketing should include:

| | |
|---|---|
| **Phase One** | • A comprehensive review of current brand assets, positioning and marketing strategies.<br>• Detailed assessment of current assets, strategies and tactics with gap analysis.<br>• A competitive analysis of marketing efforts from comparable/competitive sites. |
| **Phase Two** | • Update of value proposition messaging to align with strategy.<br>• Identification of audiences and partner channels.<br>• Alignment of objectives, strategies and tactics as outlined in Figure 6.1. |
| **Phase Three** | • Resourcing assessment and priority analysis with respect to strategies and tactics.<br>• Resource planning for expanded capacity to support growth and address the considerations outlined above. |

Figure 6.1—sample positioning and marketing alignment plan

# 6.4 Programmatic Opportunities

## Why it matters

The Global Institute on Innovation Districts notes that practitioners working within more mature districts find intentionally building networks through programming helps shift traditional real estate developments into connected, collaborative innovation communities. As one district leader shared: “It’s all about programming, choreographing ‘spontaneous opportunities’ for smart people to interact with each other.” By bringing people together through intentional programming, strong connections form that build trust and encourage collaboration within the community.

Programming, both formal and informal, makes the District an attractive and desirable location for companies, and employees, and makes relocation a less attractive option over time as relationships and shared value deepen. For example, during stakeholder engagement one tenant noted that their decision to stay in R+T Park versus relocating was influenced by employee participation in events and sports leagues.

Expanding programming among tenants and in partnership with the University further strengthens this ecosystem by fostering knowledge exchange, applied research opportunities, and talent connections that benefit both industry and academia.

## Challenges

- Limited staff time, capacity, and finances.
- Planning and delivering quality events requires coordination and effort, which can strain existing personnel.
- Budget constraints can limit how often events occur or how large they can be.
- Sustaining impactful programming will depend on careful prioritization, partnerships, and additional resources.

# Public Realm

According to the Ontario Professional Planners Institute, the public realm consists of places and spaces that are open and accessible to everyone. This includes streets, lanes, plazas, sidewalks, trails, parks, open spaces, waterfronts, public transit systems, conservation areas, and institutions. Public realm spaces may support passive use, such as sitting at a café or relaxing in a park, active use, such as cycling or walking, or a blend of both. Quality, accessible and welcoming public spaces are crucial in achieving healthy communities where people are encouraged to interact. Welcoming, attractive environments that enhance well-being, support daily life, and contribute to a strong sense of place without the need for active programming are an important part of placemaking.

R+T Park has significant natural assets, including stormwater ponds, trails, open spaces, and proximity to Columbia Lake. These assets can become attractive amenity destinations within the District if they are thoughtfully enhanced, well-connected, and supported by complementary programming and intentional design that encourages regular use and community engagement.

## Parks

Ira Needles Park is currently underutilized for much of the year and would benefit from intentional design that supports a broader range of active uses, including opportunities for winter activity, as well as a clearer and more coherent pathway network.

For example:

- New, more direct north—south pedestrian connections through the District, anchored by a tree-lined boulevard linking to the Environmental Reserve.
- Outdoor fitness area to help activate the space and encourage year-round use.
- Interactive installations, for example *Impulse,* an interactive, luminous, and musical seesaw installation in Montreal.

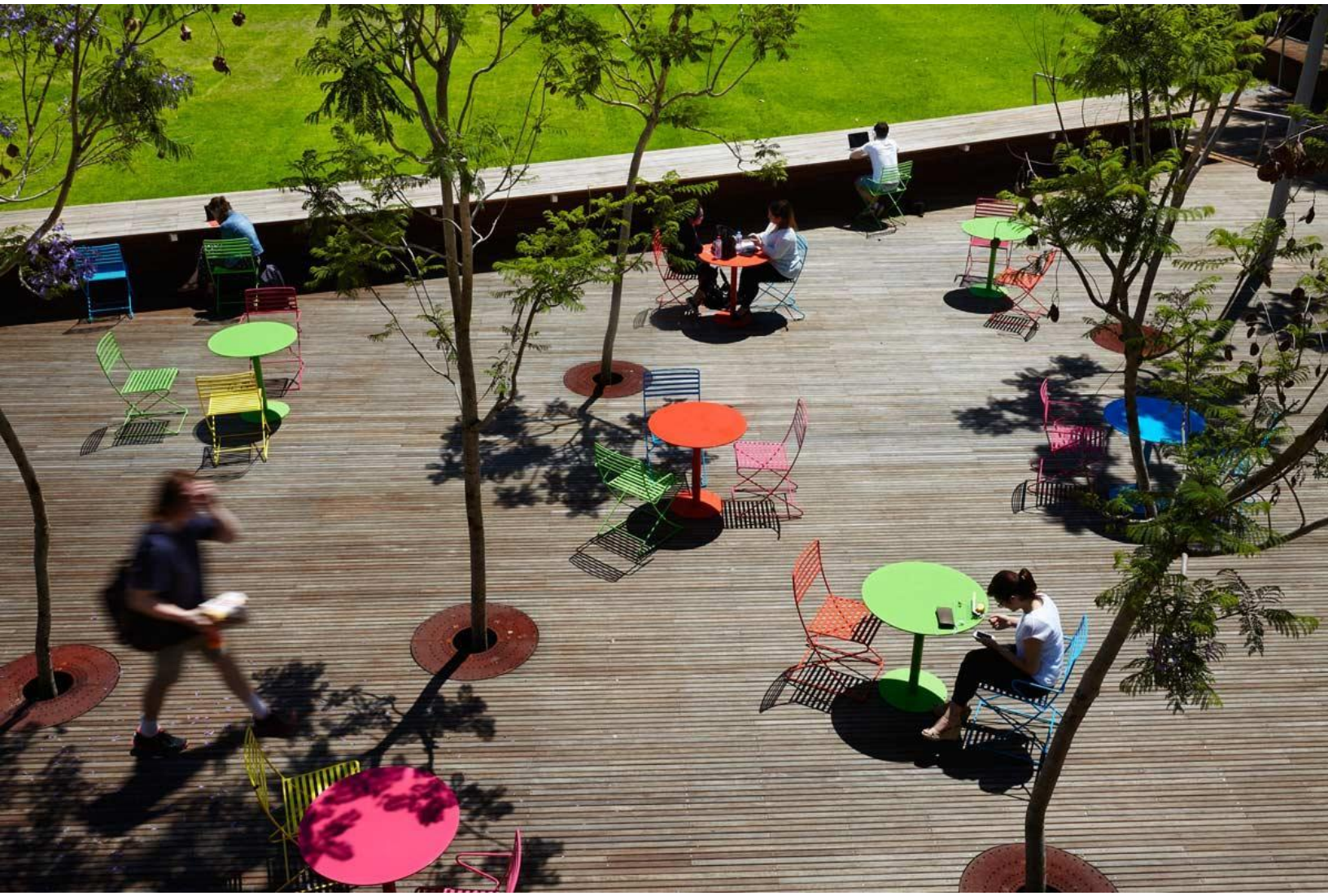
## Plazas

High-quality public realm provides a range of spaces that support diverse activities and different ways of enjoying time outdoors. Places designed for gathering, whether for organized or informal use, help animate a district and bring its identity to life. The development concept for R+T Park includes making the District more human-centric by:

Creating a new central plaza, including opportunities for:

- Soft planting.
- Flexible hard space for markets, concerts, pop-up events.
- A pavilion or icon building.

Additional plazas may be considered as part of infill development or new development on adjacent lands.



## Stormwater Ponds

The three existing stormwater ponds currently perform an important management function, but with more intentional edge design they could also serve as valuable amenities for the District. All three ponds present opportunities for enhancements such as:

- Naturalized restoration and rehabilitation of stormwater management ponds will help create cleaner, more usable natural spaces for passive recreation and land-based learning *(refer to Indigeneity section 7.7 of the land use plan)*.
- Terraced seating and integrated gathering areas, supporting outdoor work, socialization, or relaxation.
- Views of natural landscaping and local wildlife.

## Gateways & Wayfinding

Effective wayfinding can be highly transformative. Clear routes, strong legibility, and well-designed signage significantly enhance a person's sense of safety, comfort, and ease of navigation within a site. Establishing a hierarchy of entry points through identifiable "gateways" provides a clear framework for orientation and movement, while also creating opportunities for public realm enhancements that reinforce and highlight the wayfinding strategy. Upgrades could include:

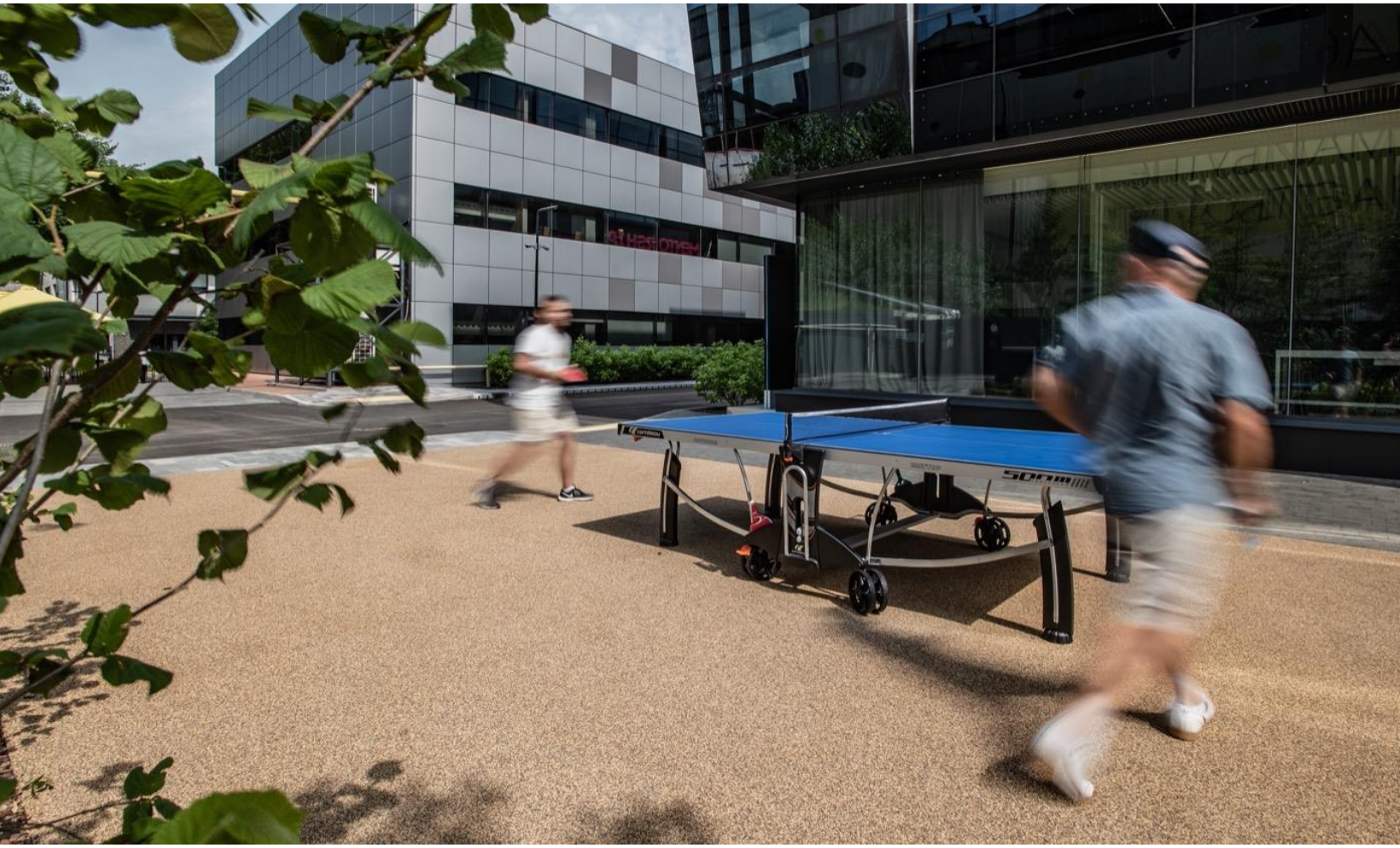
- Enhancing the trail connection between WRHN and Kiinomaage-Aki and along the Laurel Trail *(refer to Indigeneity section 7.7 of the land use plan)*.
- Seating and street furniture alongside branded signage.
- Opportunities for public art or sculptural elements.
- A marked 1 to 3km walking loop around the ponds and trail system, with simple signage to support wellness programming.

## Meanwhile Use

Meanwhile use describes the temporary activation of vacant buildings, land, or public spaces for community or commercial purposes while awaiting permanent redevelopment. It can stimulate local economic activity, strengthen community connections, and provide opportunities to test ideas before long-term investments are made. Examples include:

- Low-cost building interventions such as shipping containers and simple, demountable building structures for food, retail, and beverage outlets.
- Pop-up sports courts in the empty parking lots to create an activity/sports loop.
- Parking lots could also be activated with ground murals, adding pops of colour and art to the District.

Refer to section 7.4 Public Spaces for further details.



# Activations and programming

## Overview

From a programming standpoint, R+T Park has a strong base to build on: delivering 4–5 events annually, co-hosting an additional three events with the Accelerator Centre and coordinating year-round recreational leagues. There is an existing clear, sustained interest across the community. By scaling purposeful, well-aligned programming, R+T Park has an opportunity to deepen engagement, attract new audiences, and more intentionally connect events to broader goals around innovation, collaboration, and placemaking.

## Phase 1:

The plan prioritizes measured growth: two new events, league expansion, and an initial meanwhile activation will serve as near-term priorities:

- **Review and strengthen:** R+T Park will streamline and strengthen its existing events and Accelerator Centre collaborations while adding two events developed with the Office of Research and Co-operative Education.
- **Expand sports leagues and "meanwhile uses":** The District will look to expand its recreational sports leagues and will pilot "meanwhile uses" from the land-use section, starting with an outdoor basketball court to activate underutilized space.
- **Create a tracking system for program monitoring and evaluation:** Establish a method to track activities and outcomes, supporting performance measurement, continuous improvement, and informed decision-making across programs.

## Phase 2:

R+T Park will build on Phase 1 delivery by expanding the current established calendar.

- **Continue and Build:** R+T Park will continue to broaden reach and deepen alignment with research, talent, and community.
- **Implement information from Phase 1:** Program monitoring and evaluation will guide improvements to the sports leagues and a careful rollout of more temporary uses for underused spaces ("meanwhile uses").
- **Add one new event per quarter:** Introduce a new, thoughtfully curated event each quarter to maintain consistent engagement, test new ideas, and keep programming fresh and relevant throughout the year.

## Phase 3:

Programming will scale and grow with the addition of a Marketing & Community Manager.

- **Create a Marketing & Community Manager role:** This role will be responsible for promotion, partner and community outreach, event execution, and measurement/reporting.
- **Scale and grow programming:** This will expand programming capacity, strengthen existing offerings, and enable measured growth where evidence supports it.

## Phase 4:

With additional resources in place, R+T Park will shift from steady growth to a scalable model that supports long-term impact.

- **Explore new support for programming:** The program will keep its proven calendar, expand where results warrant, and explore new support for programming through sponsorships, partnerships, and revenue generating activities.
- **Deepen multi-year collaborations:** Multi-year collaborations with campus, industry, and community will be deepened.
- **Conduct a 5-year program review:** Outcomes will continue to be tracked to guide what programs to grow, refine, or retire.

# Living Labs Strategy

## Overview

According to the European Network of Living Labs (ENoLL), Living Labs create physical and hybrid environments that bring diverse stakeholders together to address complex societal challenges through shared resources and real-world experimentation. By enabling hands-on testing of ideas, collaboration, interventions, and prototypes, Living Labs foster both technological and social innovation and increasingly serve as hubs for prototyping, learning, entrepreneurship, community building, and placemaking.

The Living Labs initiative at R+T Park applies this model by supporting the testing and scaling of innovations in areas such as autonomous shuttles, sustainable buildings, micro-mobility, and climate-resilient infrastructure. Notable projects include:

- Canada's first e-scooter pilot.
- The net-positive energy evolv1 building.
- Flood-resilient floating homes.

This aligns with the University of Waterloo's Guidance Statement by encouraging research-based companies to locate and operate within the District, where their work complements University expertise and actively engages with campus-adjacent research and innovation activities. Through participation in a Living Labs program, industry partners can collaborate with faculty, students, and researchers in real-world settings, supporting applied research and providing meaningful employment opportunities for co-op students and graduates. Over time, these on-site and collaborative relationships generate the potential to advance the University's academic, research, and institutional strengths through the Global Futures framework. These activities further support revenue generation, business development, and contribute to the economic and social vitality of the surrounding community.

## Phased Living Labs Program

### Phase 1: Pilot and Activation (Short-term)

**Focus:** Outdoor, low-risk experimentation

- Review best practices for university-based living labs governance models to leverage existing R+T park initiatives.
- R+T Park will look for opportunities to expand existing Living Lab activities in outdoor or publicly accessible settings. Projects are limited in scope and duration, allowing for quick testing and visible outcomes.
- Emphasis is placed on storytelling, communications, and advertising to build awareness, demonstrate value, and engage partners and the community.

### Phase 2: Program Expansion (Medium-term)

**Focus:** Larger, longer-term projects

- Based on monitoring and evaluation, R+T will expand and/or broker more complex and ambitious projects with longer timelines (approximately 2–3 years).
- These initiatives involve deeper collaboration with research partners, industry, and students, and may include dedicated funding, governance structures, and evaluation frameworks.
- Based on best practices and success of Phase 1 and growth needs of Phase 2, evaluate the opportunity to hire a Living Labs Coordinator.

## Phase 3: Integrated Living Lab Infrastructure (Long-term)

**Focus:** Larger, longer-term projects

- Explore linkages between Living Labs and new or redeveloped infrastructure resulting from the land use and mobility plans.
- The Living Lab becomes a permanent feature of the environment, supporting continuous experimentation, data collection, and co-creation across multiple projects and disciplines.

## Phase 4: Bespoke and Strategic Labs (Advanced / Ongoing)

**Focus:** Custom, partner-driven Living Labs

- Establish and market R+T Park Living Labs as a bespoke platform, tailored to the needs of specific partners, sectors, or societal challenges.
- Labs may be co-funded or co-governed and designed to address strategic priorities, support commercialization, or advance policy and systems change.

# 6.5 Partnership and Collaboration Opportunities

Internal partnerships enhance collaboration by helping teams work in more aligned and purposeful ways through aligning priorities, sharing knowledge, and combining complementary expertise. This approach reduces silos, improves efficiency, and supports the effective use of institutional resources in support of shared goals.

Forming external partnerships brings different organizations together to share their skills, knowledge, and resources. By planning together and keeping communication open, partners can coordinate efforts, identify unmet needs, and align their work so that programs, services, and investments complement and enhance, rather than duplicate.

Across internal and external settings, partnerships build trust and lasting relationships. They facilitate the sharing of ideas, make better use of shared strengths, and increase impact by bringing people and resources together around common goals, to the benefit of all.

## University of Waterloo—Office of Research:
Corporate Partnerships

**Opportunity:**

- Advance research–industry collaborations and support companies investing in research and development to co-locate on campus at R+T Park.
- Connect R+T Park-based companies with faculty expertise, research capabilities, and funding opportunities that support R&D activities.

**Goal:**

- Simplify and streamline opportunities for industry partners to engage in collaborative research, establish long-term research relationships, and grow operations within R+T Park.

**Activities include:**

- Participation of Vice-President of Research & International on the R+T Park Advisory Council
- Meetings will be held every other month with the Office of Research to share priorities and identify opportunities
- Joint outreach to research-intensive companies interested in locating in the District
- Connecting companies with faculty, researchers, and students for collaborative R&D projects
- Collaboration on a Living Labs program to connect academia and industry to support the testing and validation of projects
- Creating and hosting joint events, including research showcases and networking sessions, to build relationships and encourage collaboration

## Velocity

**Opportunity:**

- Support the growth of early-stage startups as they move beyond initial incubation.
- Create pathways for Velocity supported companies to access space and industry connections within R+T Park as they scale.

**Goal:**

- Support startups transition from early development to growth, encouraging companies to establish a longer-term presence in the District and remain connected to the University.

**Activities include:**

- Meet quarterly with Velocity to share information on startup pipelines, needs, and readiness to scale.
- Identify Velocity companies that are well-suited to locate in the district as they grow.
- Collaborate on Living Lab program: this program could help startups test/validate and identify industry partnerships.
- Organize opportunities to bring startups, industry, and institutions together around specific themes relevant to the District, such as energy, sustainability, mobility, and so on.

## University of Waterloo: Co-operative Education

**Opportunity:**

- Support meaningful employment opportunities for University of Waterloo co-op students and graduates within the District.
- Connect park-based companies with highly skilled students and emerging talent to meet workforce and talent-development needs.

**Goal:**

- Help companies access top talent while providing students with relevant, hands-on experience.

**Activities include:**

- Participation of Associate Provost, Co-operative and Experiential Education on the R+T Park Advisory Council.
- Meet quarterly to align priorities and share updates on workforce needs.
- Coordinate outreach to employers to support co-op placements and graduate employment opportunities.
- Create and host joint events, such as networking sessions, employer showcases, and recruitment events, to connect students directly with companies in the District.

## University of Waterloo Faculty

**Opportunity:**

- Advance research collaboration within the District by enabling partnerships between research and industry, both at the Faculty level and with individual researchers.

**Goal:**

- Foster mutually beneficial research collaborations that create pathways for joint projects, student involvement, and the real-world application of academic research within the District.

**Activities include:**

- Assess research alignment and partnership potential individually through engagement with internal partnerships stakeholders.
- Support meetings and introductions to explore joint research projects.

# External Collaborations

## Accelerator Centre

R+T Park should further strengthen its collaboration with the Accelerator Centre by building on the existing partnership, which currently includes co-hosting three annual events. These shared events, combined with ongoing connections between researchers, students, tenant companies, and AC mentors, create a seamless pathway from research and early ideas to startup formation and growth, strengthening the Waterloo Region technology ecosystem. This collaboration serves several University of Waterloo objectives by creating opportunities to engage startups in co-op hiring, fostering collaborative projects with faculty, and helps R+T Park develop a pipeline of companies that may transition into larger, long-term tenancies as they scale.

## City of Waterloo and Developer Partnerships

R+T Park should continue to work closely with the City of Waterloo and local developers, recognizing that collaboration is essential to align the District's built form, infrastructure, signage, and mobility with City codes and standards. A representative from the City of Waterloo currently sits on the R+T Park Advisory Committee to support coordination and shared oversight. Together, partners will coordinate streetscapes and servicing, deliver cohesive wayfinding, and improve walking, cycling, transit, and access to support a connected, integrated, welcoming innovation district.

## Waterloo EDC

Through a strategic partnership with Waterloo EDC, R+T Park should continue to support the attraction, retention, and growth of innovative companies while helping to advance foreign direct investment. Leveraging complementary strengths, R+T Park's infrastructure, campus proximity, and talent pipeline alongside Waterloo EDC's international engagement, collaboration will attract global firms and strengthen the region's competitiveness in research-intensive sectors. To support alignment and ongoing collaboration, a Waterloo EDC representative currently sits on the R+T Park Advisory Committee. Further collaboration would be supported by quarterly meetings to ensure information sharing, coordinated action, and progress review.

## City of Waterloo Economic Development

R+T Park should continue to work with the City of Waterloo's Economic Development team to drive job creation and local business growth. Through coordinated promotion, direct business referrals, and shared support for innovative firms, R+T Park will help support the translation of research activity into sustained economic impact.

## Waterloo Regional Health Network (WRHN)

With the anticipated development of the new WRHN @ the University hospital site in R+T Park, both organizations are well-positioned to connect clinical care with the University and the broader Waterloo Region technology ecosystem, bringing education, innovation, and applied health solutions to frontline needs. This collaboration will be aligned with broader University of Waterloo engagements to ensure a coordinated, institution-wide approach. Over time, this alignment will support joint initiatives such as co-designed innovation programs, pilot and demonstration opportunities for health technologies, and expanded experiential learning pathways that help translate new ideas into improved patient and system outcomes.

## Medical Innovation Xchange (MIX)

R+T Park should engage with MIX to deepen its understanding of the life sciences sector and emerging Medtech opportunities. Through this engagement, R+T Park will build awareness of sector needs, growth patterns, and ecosystem gaps, helping to inform future programming, partnerships, and infrastructure that support the continued growth of life sciences companies in the region. This collaboration will become increasingly important with the development of the WRHN @ the University site.

## Communitech

R+T Park should work closely with Communitech to foster a strong sense of belonging for startups and increase long-term “stickiness” within the community. Through collaborative programming and co-hosted initiatives, Waterloo Region and R+T Park will be positioned as a compelling destination for company formation, growth, and retention. Together, they will create an integrated ecosystem that supports founders not only through commercialization, but by building lasting, beneficial connections to the region.

# 07 | Land Use and District Design



# 7.1 Overall Development Concept

The District is logically viewed in four "quadrants" formed by the main east-west (Wes Graham Way) and north-south (Hagey Boulevard) streets, lending itself to a general theming of different areas that align with the mission of the University of Waterloo (UWaterloo or University) and the David Johnston Research and Technology Park (R+T Park) itself. Key themes that have been drawn from Waterloo at 100 are:

- **Societal futures:** How do we share and translate knowledge to positively advance society's future and ensure that communities and everyone within them thrive?
- **Health futures:** How will we ensure everyone achieves optimal health and well-being? How can we redesign our health systems through technological advances, virtual care and health data applications?
- **Sustainable futures:** How will we enact the social, economic and geopolitical changes required to ensure a prosperous future for humanity and the planet?
- **Technological futures:** How will we lead the next technological transformation to ensure a safe and human-centered digital future?
- **Economic futures:** How do we create equitable and resilient local and global economies to lead us into the future?

The first four of these goals have been represented through the characterization of four development-focused quadrants, in part built upon the current clustering of uses and activities within each area of the District, and in part upon planned uses and opportunities that are intended to unfold and strengthen through new development over the next 10-20 years. Thinking about the District in terms of quadrants allows for a differentiation of character and the types of activities that are intended to predominate in each, while establishing their intersection point as a natural gathering place for the users of the District. The four development-focused quadrants are:

**Community Quadrant (northeast):** The only fully-undeveloped portion of the District today, this quadrant is identified as the quadrant that will host new university-related residential development, the majority of new commercial development to bring shops and services to the District, and as a hub to invite the broader community—whether employees and visitors of the future hospital, or surrounding residents—to participate in the life of the District.

**Health and Science Quadrant (northwest):** Building upon existing tenancies and the anticipated Waterloo Regional Health Network hospital to be located on Bearinger Road, this quadrant is conceived to evolve through infill and new development into a health innovation and science cluster.

**Sustainability Quadrant (southeast):** Currently hosting a significant proportion of consulting services tenants, the most sustainable building in the District (evolv1) and the portal for sustainable transportation (ION light rail) the Sustainability Quadrant could also be a primary focus area for sustainability improvements or testing in public space.

**Transformative Technologies Quadrant (southwest):** Building upon existing tenancies in the technology sector, this quadrant is envisioned to continue expanding its offerings through infill on current leased sites, strengthening what is already a notable cluster for the District.

**Figure 7.1:** Proposed Development Quadrants

When taken as a whole, the links between these four quadrants and the strategic goals of the University all support the fifth “economic futures” pillar described by Waterloo at 100 as well as the goals articulated for R+T Park in the Guidance Statement for UWaterloo Lands, positioning the District as a living lab for research into innovation policy and economic growth and prosperity.

Achieving that economic potential depends significantly on the ability of R+T Park to attract and retain the calibre of tenants and talent that its research and innovation mandate demands. Innovation-oriented organizations—whether established firms, scaling companies, or research-driven institutions—increasingly make location decisions based not only on proximity to academic and industry partners, but on the quality of the environment they are able to offer their employees. A district characterized by vibrant street life, walkable amenities, and attractive public spaces signals to prospective tenants that R+T Park is a place where people genuinely want to be—a factor that has become a meaningful competitive advantage in recruiting and retaining skilled workers. The introduction of mixed uses, including retail, food & beverage, and residential, is therefore a core component of the District's value proposition as a destination for knowledge-intensive enterprise.

To support these ambitions, and aligning with the characterization of the quadrants, the future development concept has emerged through an iterative process of design and stakeholder engagement feedback sessions. The key characteristics of the concept include:

- The introduction of residential, retail, and food & beverage uses in new mixed use buildings, as well as desirable locations for the addition of these use types on the ground floors of existing buildings, if future renovations allow. Bringing these uses into the District creates the conditions for the kind of animated, amenity-rich setting that leading knowledge-economy districts rely upon to draw talent and differentiate themselves from conventional suburban office parks.

- Identification of infill opportunity areas for future enhancements across R+T Park dependent on leaseholder agreements and future cooperation.

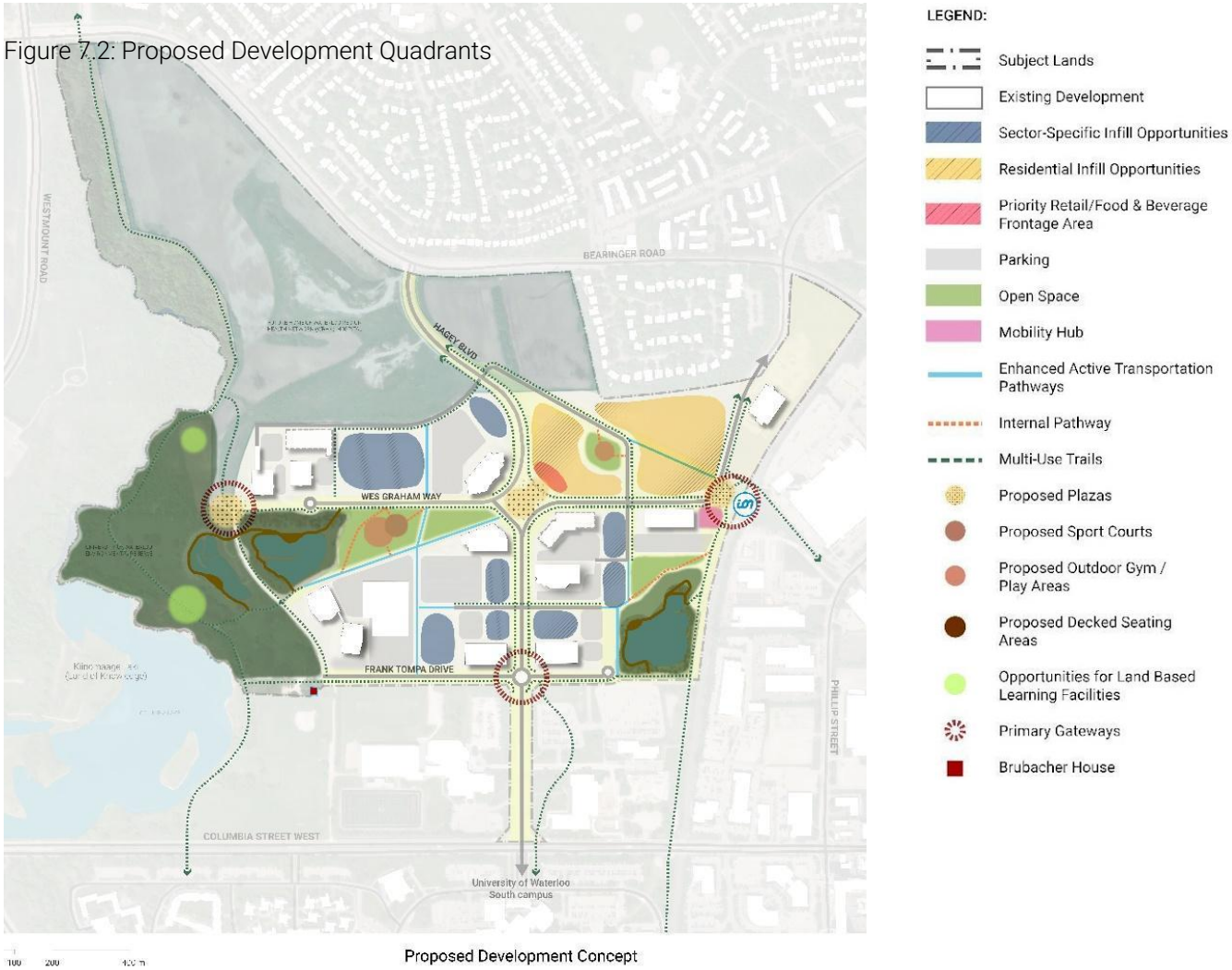
- Transformation of the Great Circle roundabout into a generous public plaza at the centre of all four quadrants, activated by new mixed use development in the Community Quadrant. A high-quality public space of this kind functions as a legible address and a memorable place identity for the District, reinforcing the sense that R+T Park is a cohesive and purposeful community rather than a collection of isolated buildings, an impression that matters when tenants are evaluating where to locate and invest.

- Enhancement and improvement of Ira Needles Park and enhancement and activation of existing stormwater ponds for recreation with improvements to trails and wayfinding.

- Extension of R+T Park's street networks to create a finer-grained grid for movement and to create a hierarchy with dedicated streets for active mobility such as walking and cycling. Existing streets will be improved and their place-quality enhanced, prioritising safe and pleasant connections to the ION light rail station and the Environmental Reserve (described in more detail in the mobility chapter).

- The development concept focuses development and improvements on lands controlled by the University and suggests an approach to surface parking that reduces steadily over time, given that surface parking is currently overprovided across the District.

Figure 7.2: Proposed Development Quadrants




Proposed Development Concept

# 7.2 Public Spaces

## Parks

Park spaces should be designed to accommodate a range of activities and be central to the life of the District. This can be aided by designing adjacent buildings to relate positively to park spaces, as well as taking a considered approach to park design. Ira Needles Park is largely underutilized throughout the year. It would benefit from more intentional design for active uses, including consideration for winter activities, and rationalizing its pathway system. The development concept proposes new, more direct, north-south footpaths through the District with a treelined boulevard leading to the Environmental Reserve. The new concept also suggests programming the District with activities such as an outdoor fitness area, like the image pictured above. This would be complementary to the existing volleyball court in summer and help cement the image of R+T Park as a district for active lifestyles while appealing to existing tenant workforces.

Infill opportunities identify areas adjacent to the District that could provide positive edges and strengthen its existence as a place. Improvements to the existing trees and planting, such as the addition of more flowering or medicinal species aligned with the four quadrants, would not only enhance biodiversity but help Ira Needles feel like a destination. Ira Needles should feel safe, welcoming, and relaxing. More direct paths, overlooking from adjacent buildings, and improved soft landscape would help achieve these qualities.

# Plazas

Good quality public realm provides a range of spaces to allow for a diversity of activity and ways of enjoying time outdoors. Places for gathering, whether for structured or informal activity, can help animate a district and bring to life a place's identity. R+T Park would positively benefit from a series of well-designed public gathering spaces that could help it express its identity through programming and encouraging chance encounters with different people who inhabit the District. Well designed plaza spaces do this by being flexible, mostly hardscaped places, that allow for different types of activities and events while also being enjoyable places to dwell in.

The development concept takes space originally given to cars and reclaims portions of it for people, making the District more human-centric. A new central plaza is created and positioned as an extension of the northeast Community Quadrant, creating a type of "heart" to the development, previously absent. Opportunities for this plaza include the addition of trees, soft planting, flexible hard space for markets, concerts, pop-up events, a pavilion or icon building, plus climate appropriate winter activities.

Figure 7.3: Monash University, Melbourne, Australia. Example of a university plaza.

# Stormwater Ponds

The three existing stormwater ponds serve an important stormwater management function but could also function as valuable district amenities if designed more intentionally around their edges. Naturalized restoration and rehabilitation of SWM ponds could help create cleaner, more usable natural spaces that support passive recreation and land-based learning *(refer to Indigeneity section 7.7)*. All three ponds could be considered for edge improvements such as terraced seating, allowing for outdoor working or relaxation with views of natural plantings and wildlife.

These stormwater ponds could also be used more actively as components of R+T Park's "Living Lab" concept, becoming test-beds for the application of landscape, environmental and engineering concepts aligned with University research.

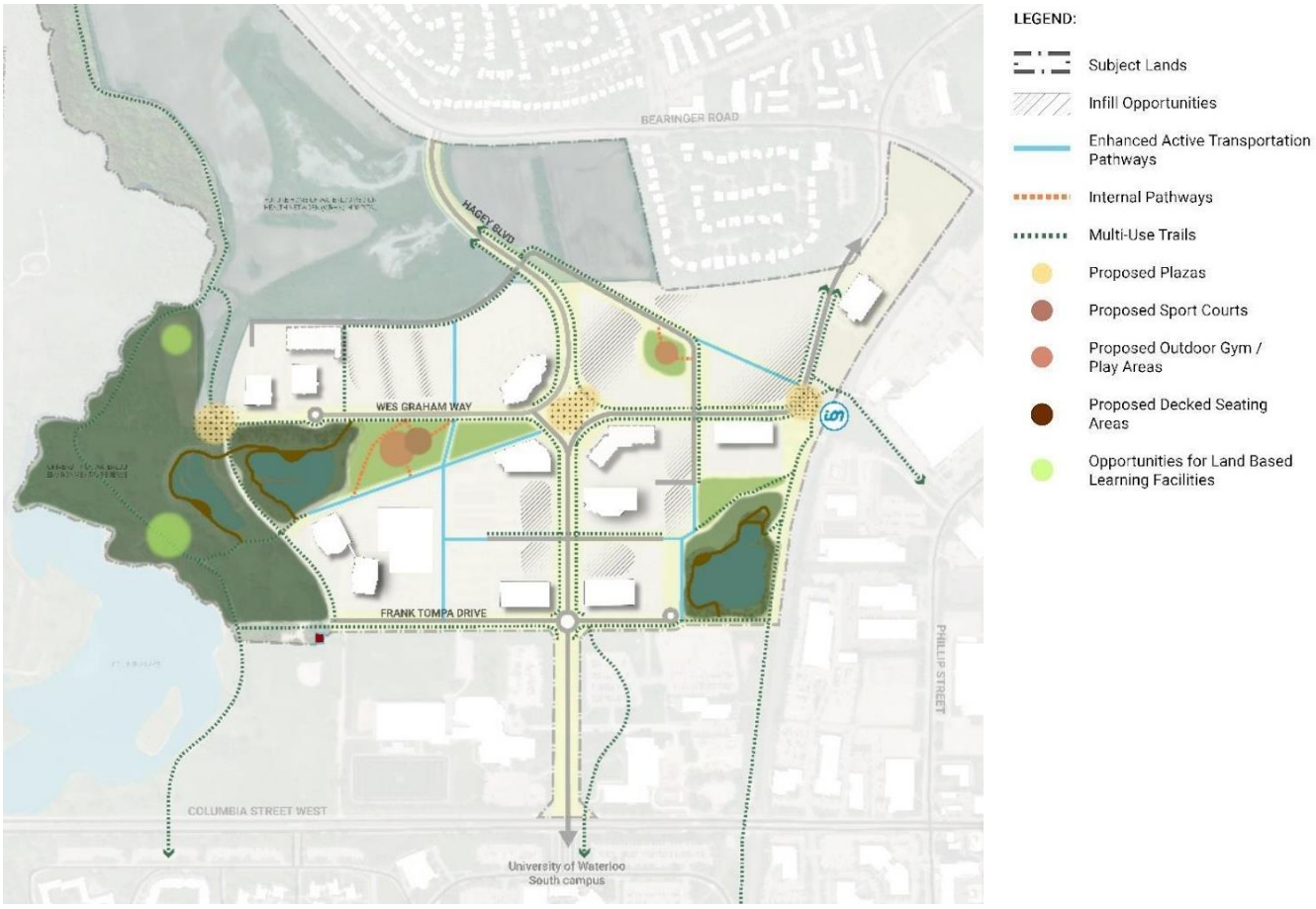
Figure 7.4: Bow River Walk, Calgary, Alberta, Canada. Example of floodable terraced seating steps.

# Building-associated Outdoor Spaces

The outdoor spaces immediately adjacent to buildings currently within R+T Park are typically heavily planted with ornamental landscaping and not designed for the enjoyment and use of tenants or visitors. Toby Jenkins, evolv1, the Cora Building and OpenText's westernmost building all have outdoor patios with seating areas, except for OpenText's patio area, all spaces are minimally designed and furnished, with little relationship between the outdoor space and indoor areas. In part, these leftover spaces are a function of the dispersed character of current development in R+T Park, creating little likelihood of people encountering others using these spaces if they venture outdoors.

With infilling of vacant and underdeveloped sites in the District, and the intention to introduce ground-floor retail and food & beverage uses in selected locations, an opportunity is created for outdoor patio spaces to be animated and attractive areas to hold informal meetings, to enjoy a coffee or eat lunch. New mixed-use buildings can be designed to create permeability between indoor and outdoor areas. If existing buildings are renovated, ground floor spaces should be reconsidered to locate meeting spaces or cafes adjacent to outdoor areas and doors added to improve indoor/outdoor access. Negotiations with existing leaseholders would be required, but would have a long-term positive impact on the entirety of the R+T Park.

Figure 7.5: Proposed Open Spaces




# Gateways & Wayfinding

Establishing good wayfinding across a site can be simple but transformational. Legibility, clear routes, and signage can dramatically increase a person's sense of safety and well-being in a place, allowing clear navigation and planning. Using the concept of 'gateways' as a hierarchy of access points into the site helps provide a clear strategy for navigation but can also provide opportunities for public realm enhancements that help emphasize the wayfinding strategy. Public realm enhancements could include seating and street furniture alongside branded signage, as well as opportunities for public art or sculptural elements such as those already existing at the LRT station plaza. All signage for R+T Park should be scaled appropriately to its intended use and audience, distinguishing between pedestrian- and cyclist-oriented signage versus vehicular signage. Signage across R+T Park should maintain a cohesive visual identity, forming a unified signage family that reflects inclusion within site boundaries. The wayfinding strategy should tie in with the main campus of the University while still emphasizing R+T Park as a distinct place. The University of

Waterloo Campus Plan has identified key gateways and distinct experiential routes, such as the Discovery Trail, that help reinforce campus-wide wayfinding. The wayfinding for R+T Park should knit into this plan wherever possible to provide students with a seamless wayfinding experience across both sites. Whether the existing branding is maintained or a rebranding occurs, said branding should be applied to existing gateway features and street signs, and extended to all proposed wayfinding installations.

Figure 7.6: Example of wayfinding gateway plaza

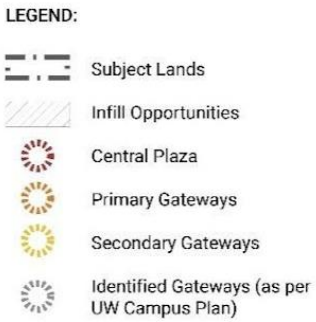





Figure 7.7: Proposed Gateways

# Streetscape Design

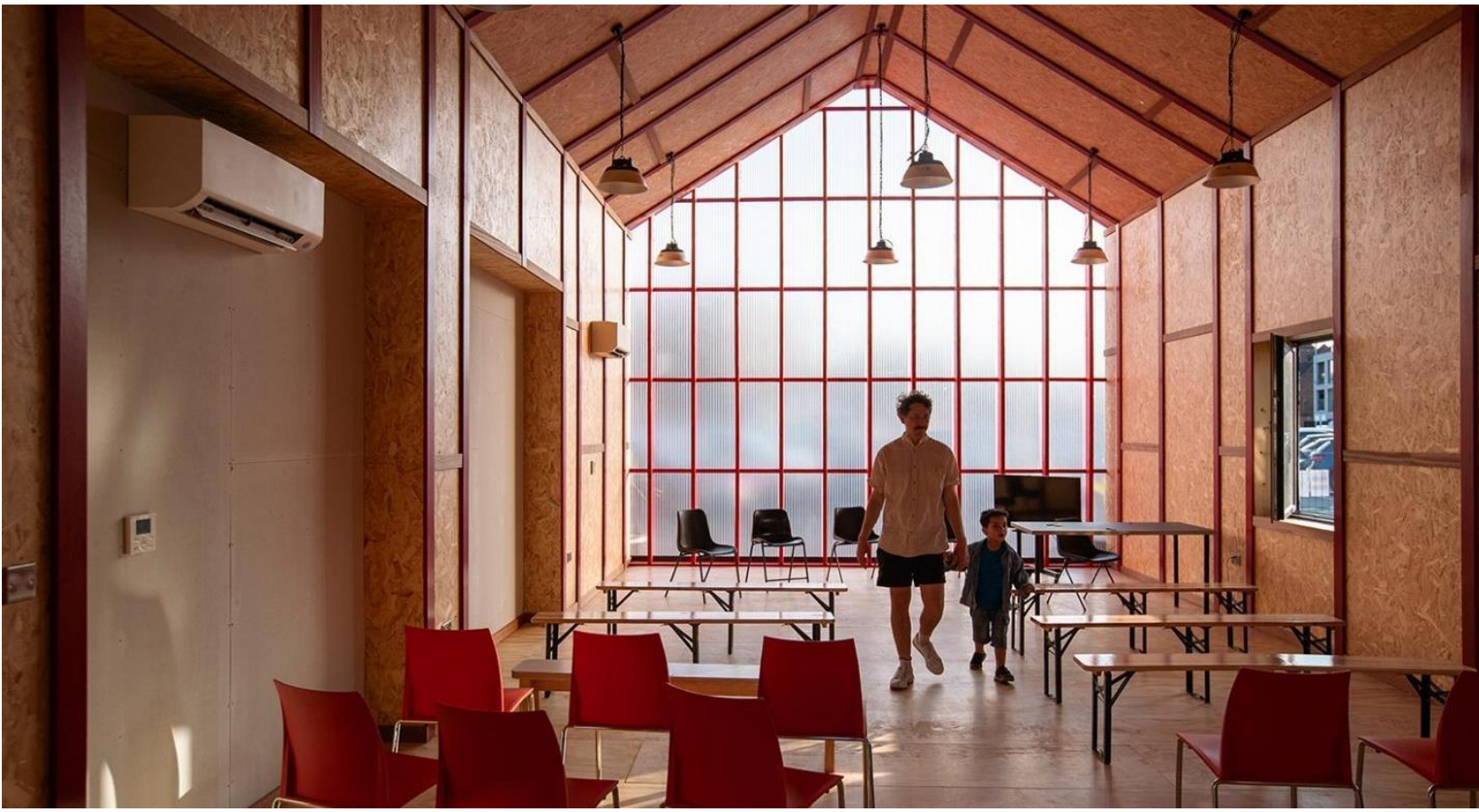
All new streets should emphasize placemaking through the integration of street trees, street furniture, landscape design, and green infrastructure that manage stormwater while enhancing aesthetics and comfort. Please see the Mobility Plan for further details on streetscape pertaining to the proposed development.

# 7.3 Meanwhile Use

Meanwhile use refers to the temporary activation of vacant buildings, land, or public spaces for community or commercial purposes while awaiting permanent redevelopment. It can drive local economic activity, enhance community cohesion and encourage testing of development ideas before long term investment. Relatively new to Canada, meanwhile use has been more established in the United Kingdom where it has become a significant retail strategy for long-term developers and a recognised tool for economic resilience.

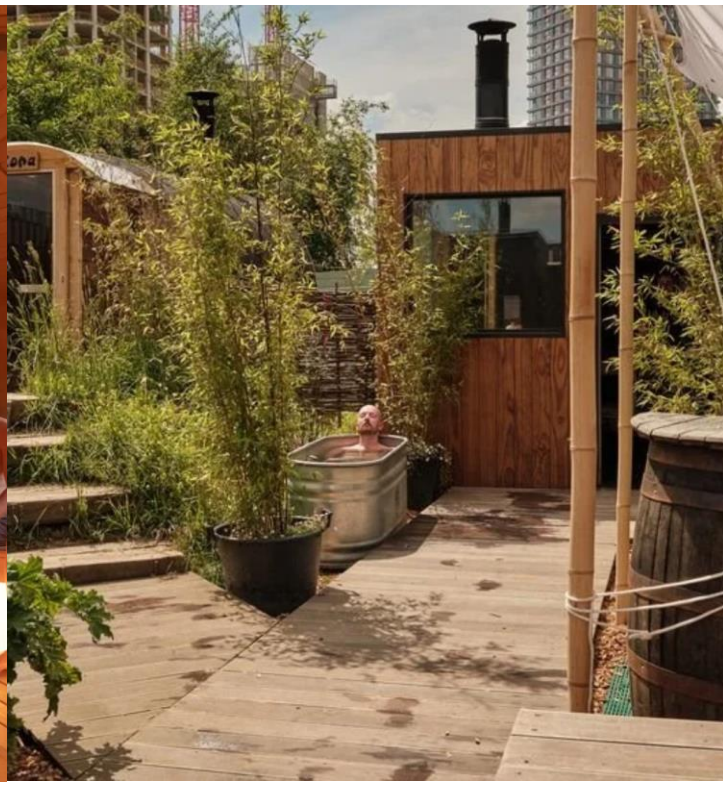
Including a meanwhile use strategy for R+T Park could be a vital component for its longer-term activation and an interesting way to test ideas and uses before committing anything to plan. Meanwhile use spaces can be created through low-cost building interventions such as shipping containers and simple, demountable building structures. They can encompass anything from retail, food and beverage outlets, temporary workspace, exhibition space, and external public space.

Figure 7.8: Example of meanwhile use event space



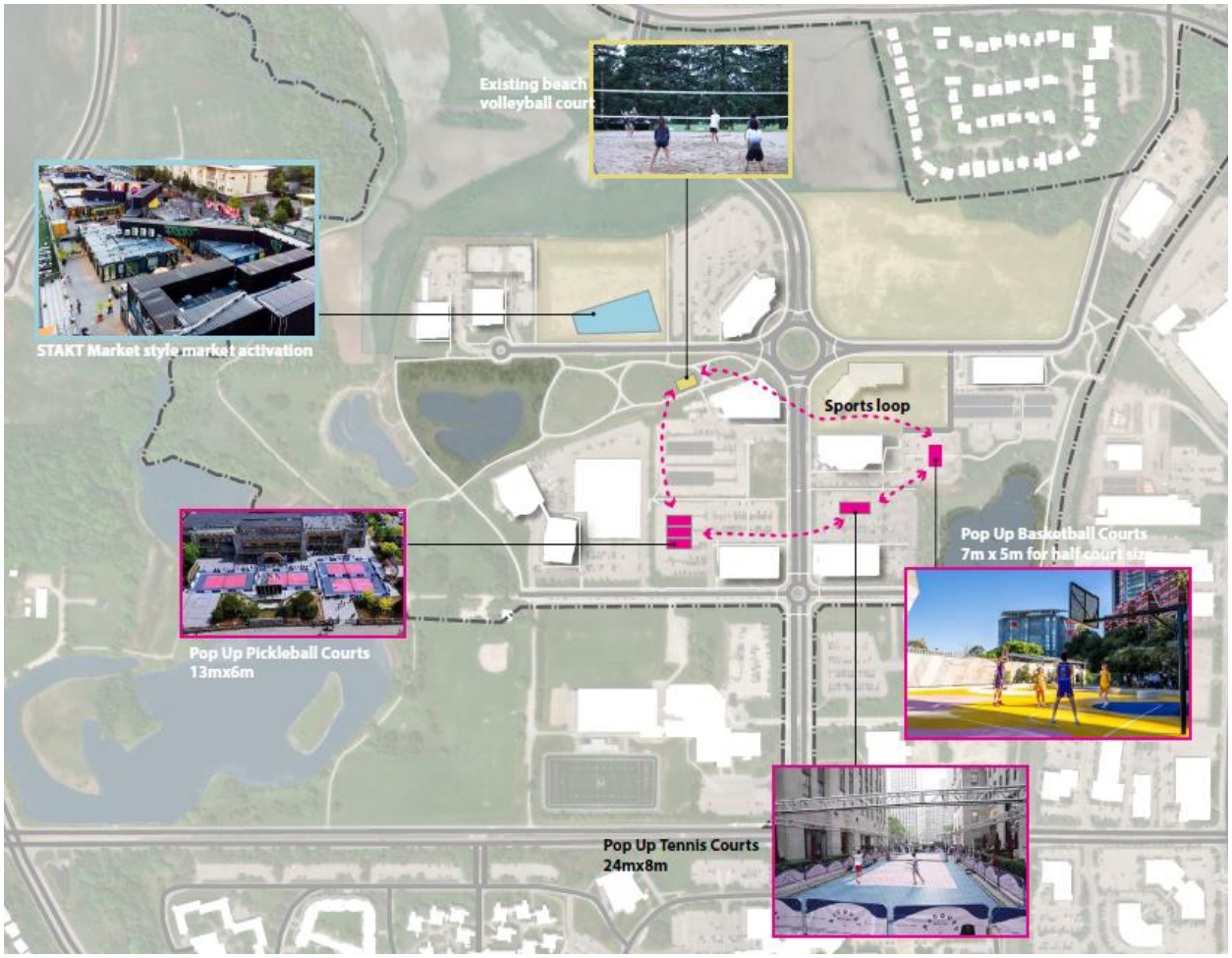
Across R+T Park, parking lots are significantly underutilized, creating dead space between buildings. One proposal for activating the District through meanwhile use activities is using pop-up sports courts in the empty parking lots to create an activity/sports loop, tying into the existing trail network and reinforcing R+T Park as a destination for active lifestyles. Pickleball, basketball, tennis, bocce, and skating in the winter, are all activities that could easily function on a temporary basis. Parking lots could also be activated with ground murals, adding pops of colour and art to the District. An additional layer of meanwhile use could be added by installing a type of shipping container or demountable retail village that could bring temporary food and beverage uses and test out different retail options. Maker spaces could be part of the village as well as temporary event space both internally and externally. Adding fire pits in the winter or a pop-up sauna space, like the ones pictured above, could help maintain activation in the village all year round. Options for developing specific concepts could be the creation of a design competition for the architecture/engineering students, with the winning design being built, helping to strengthen ties with different University programs, and serving as an additional application of the “Living Lab” concept at R+T Park.

Figure 7.9: Meanwhile use sauna in a community garden



Meanwhile use can be a fun and creative way to bring activation to underutilized developments and could be a wonderful way to activate underutilized portions of R+T Park prior to the arrival of new permanent developments.

Figure 7.10: Possible meanwhile use sport court configuration in R+T Park



# 7.4 Land Uses

The Brookings Institution's influential report The Rise of Innovation Districts (Katz and Wagner, Brookings, 2014) has clearly documented the transition from mono-use research parks to mixed-use innovation districts in locations across the world as being driven by a need to remain competitive and attract investment. The quality of place matters to attract and retain tenants and partners in the context of competing research and technology parks and facilities elsewhere in the region and across North America that have either selected locations with a diversity of activity and amenities (e.g. in downtowns) or have created those sorts of environments intentionally through their own development.

With these lessons in mind, and the ambitious Urban Futures framework that has been established as the strategic vision of the University and its associated enterprises, the future of R+T Park must be in land use diversification. It is only through diversification that the District can bring the full range of amenities and users necessary to support the core mission of a robust and dynamic research and business environment that supports and accelerates the mission of the University. This does not mean abandoning the office and research uses that have been the focus of development within R+T Park to date, but rather strengthening those uses by bringing different people and activity to the District that extend activity throughout the day.

Concept mapping in this document identifies both infill and vacant site development opportunities as "Sector Specific Opportunities". These may constitute any of the following land use types, either in combination or alone, excepting residential uses which are intended to be limited to the northeast Community Quadrant. Sector Specific Opportunities are intended to be generally guided by the intentions of the quadrant structure, but may take different forms as development partnerships emerge over time.

## Research + Development and Office

Office and research uses will continue to be the mainstay of R+T Park, with the addition of other uses aimed at helping to accelerate the perception and function of R+T Park as a complete and active community of workers, learners and residents.

Although not meant to be exclusive, the Vision and Guiding Principles, building from the Business Strategy and Ecosystem Integration recommendations, emphasizes Transformative Technologies, Health Innovation and Sustainability as part of the attraction strategy, building upon current research and innovation strengths of the University of Waterloo, the region as a whole, and also anticipating additional opportunities that will emerge from the location of the regional hospital within the northern portion of the Health and Science Quadrant. This focus would support the

attraction of related businesses to R+T Park in build-to-suit office and research buildings, including wet and dry lab facilities.

These types of developments can be readily accommodated throughout R+T Park on vacant parcels and infill areas. The design and orientation of new office and research facilities must emphasize stronger street-relationships, with improved activation of ground floors and associated outdoor spaces, to progressively build towards a more urban and dynamic environment as the District densifies.

The quadrants concept for R+T Park provides general guidance regarding the most suitable areas for different types of buildings and tenancies, though it should be noted that the quadrants concept is not intended to be an inflexible or exclusive framework. As is the case today, a range of different activities and tenant types are anticipated to locate in all three employment-focused quadrants, but where possible, clustering will aid in the fostering of distinct quadrant character and serve to encourage closer collaboration between aligned businesses and researchers. The character of each quadrant will be shaped not only by its tenant mix, but by the cumulative effect of building design, ground floor activation, public realm quality, and programming. The quadrant concept suggests the following locational guidance.

Health and Science Quadrant (Northwest): The largest of the quadrants and including the planned WRHN regional hospital to the north of existing R+T Park development, this quadrant is an ideal location for health and science research, particularly in the area of health innovation, and hospital supporting uses such as medical laboratories and offices. The presence of the hospital as an anchor institution creates a significant opportunity to attract a range of complementary tenants whose proximity to clinical operations and patient populations is a functional asset. These may include medical device and diagnostics companies, health data and digital health firms, pharmaceutical and life sciences researchers, and providers of specialized clinical support services. Over time, the quadrant has the potential to function as an integrated health innovation cluster, in which private sector tenants, university researchers, and hospital practitioners work in close proximity, facilitating the kind of cross-sector collaboration that accelerates the translation of research into applied health solutions.

Transformative Technologies Quadrant (Southwest): building upon current tenancies in tech innovation such as OpenText and the Accelerator Centre, this quadrant is an ideal location for development geared towards startups and scale-ups. The existing concentration of technology-focused tenants creates a foundation that new tenants can meaningfully build upon, offering access to an established peer network, shared talent pool, and proximity to University of Waterloo researchers and student co-op participants.

Sustainability Quadrant (Southeast): building upon current tenancies in consultancy and more established large and medium enterprises, this quadrant is a good location

for new development and tenancies that can support the University's co-op program at scale, may be able to collaborate with tenants of other quadrants that may need design or advisory support for their research and development endeavours. The quadrant's existing tenant base, which skews toward professional services, environmental consulting, and advisory firms, reflects a quadrant identity centred on applied knowledge work rather than lab-based research. This profile is well-suited to attracting tenants in areas such as sustainable design, environmental engineering, climate and energy advisory, and professional services. Future tenancy attraction efforts in this quadrant should leverage this identity, positioning it as a location where firms can credibly demonstrate alignment between their work and their workplace. The quadrant's accessibility via the ION light rail network further supports this narrative, and is likely to be of particular value to larger employers for whom transit access is a meaningful recruitment consideration.

# Commercial

## Retail and Food & Beverage

Attracting shops, services, cafes and restaurants to R+T Park is a key goal for the land use plan, as these uses are essential to make the District dynamic throughout the day and week, giving workers reasons to stay within the District during lunch hour or at the end of the workday, and attracting outside visitors. Having retail and food & beverage offerings within the District also makes choosing not to drive to and within the District more feasible, bringing more energy and activity to the streets and pathways. For future residents of the District, these sorts of uses are also the sorts of offerings that make life more convenient and living within the District more desirable.

Co-locating retail and food & beverage uses within R+T Park is important to the success of these uses. A cluster of these uses will become the new activity centre of the District, serving as a gathering place for district residents and workers, while also attracting staff and visitors from the nearby regional hospital, once operating. If paired with intentionally designed public space to allow interaction between indoor and outdoor spaces such as outdoor restaurant patios, and park spaces that encourage lingering, a cluster of shops, restaurants and cafes could become the new heart of the District. In contrast, a dispersed approach to these types of uses will discourage movement between different parts of R+T Park as workers and residents will tend to patronize offerings located in or close to their own buildings and agglomeration effects will be dampened. A single business within a building does not necessarily create a destination, but a cluster of them can become a hub of activity.

These uses should generally be developed as ground floor components of mixed use buildings, with a priority on combining them with residential uses in the Community Quadrant. These uses could also be combined with office and/or research &

development uses in other quadrants, but they should be prioritized in the location identified as “Priority Retail/Food & Beverage Frontage” in Figure 7.11: Proposed Land Uses, specifically adjacent to the proposed public plaza. Demand for retail and food & beverage uses will be limited in the District, and must be supported by a variety of users, including the R+T Park community (employees and future residents), visiting campus community members, and the surrounding community (including future employees and visitors to the hospital). As such, R+T Park should focus on establishing a successful cluster of retail and food & beverage uses in this location before encouraging these uses to locate elsewhere in the District, to avoid undermining long-term success.

If developed elsewhere in R+T Park, other suitable locations include adjacent to the ION LRT station to take advantage of daily transit commuter traffic and the nearby mobility hub, and in retrofit or infill locations that front onto the two main streets of the District, Wes Graham Way and Hagey Boulevard. Other locations are generally discouraged for retail and food & beverage uses.

### Hotel

A hotel is already planned for R+T Park in the southeast Sustainability Quadrant, facing the proposed central plaza. This hotel will serve a number of current and future demands, including meeting a general lack of hotels in Waterloo, limited short-stay visitor accommodation serving the University area, and future demand anticipated with the future regional hospital to the north of the District. In future, if demand for accommodations grows, the hotel may also expand on the site.

If possible, the Great Circle Roundabout-facing frontage of the hotel should be designed for an active ground floor use such as a hotel restaurant or café, and designed with the opportunity for outdoor seating in the summer, to help activate this area which is envisioned as a future gathering space for the entire district.

## Residential

Residential uses are key to the diversification of activity within R+T Park, bringing a base of activity that will be present within the District throughout the day and on weekends. Residential demand has been identified for a number of University-related groups, including graduate student housing, and staff and faculty housing, including possibly medium and long-term rental for visiting faculty and researchers.

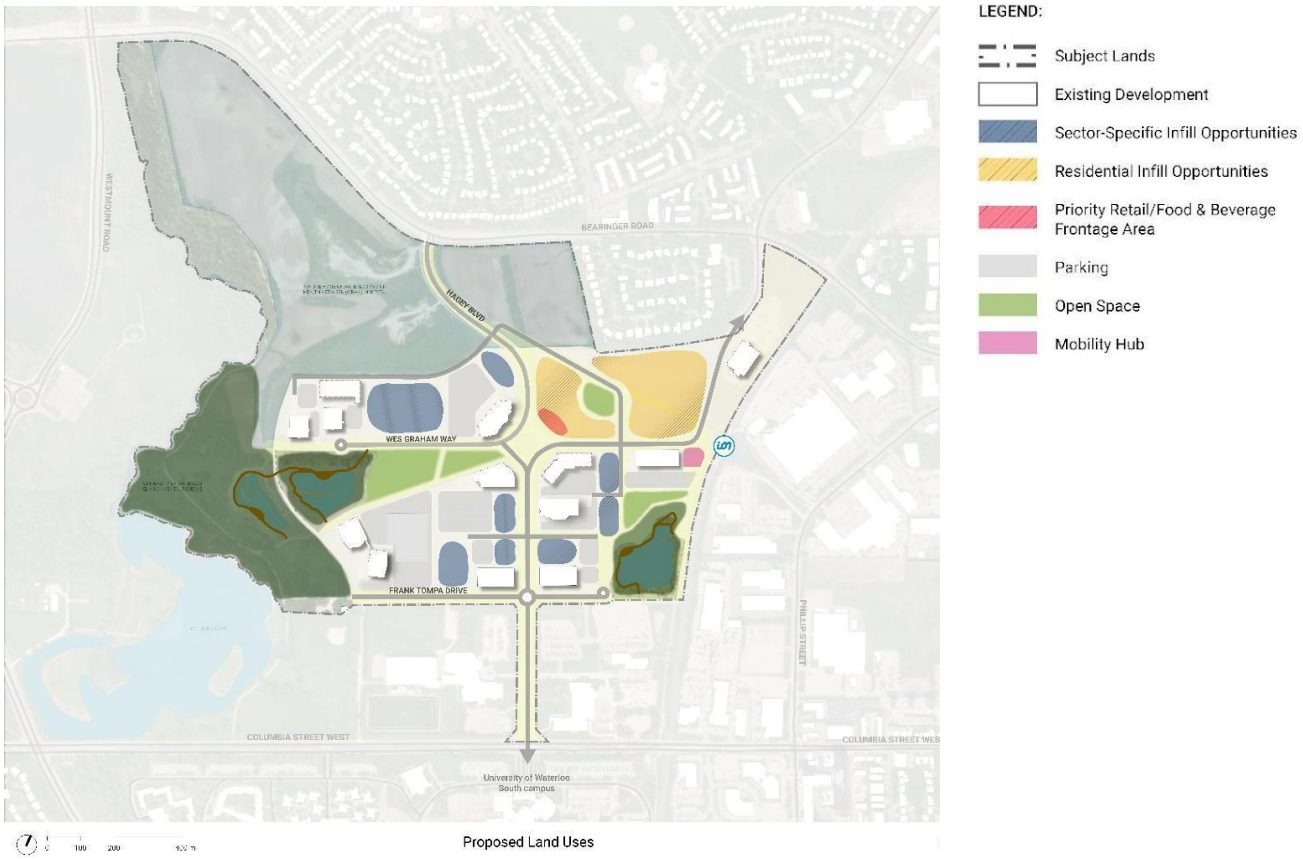
Additionally, general market housing could be explored, but pursuing market housing would require further analysis, as market housing may or may not be considered in alignment with the University’s charitable status. Furthermore, current zoning allows student housing development in R+T Park, but does not permit other types of housing. However, if market housing were permissible in the District, it would allow for near-term development opportunities and could be targeted towards recent graduates,

entrepreneurs and their employees who may locate their businesses in the District, significantly contributing to the vibrancy of R+T Park.

The northeast Community Quadrant is the area of the District recommended for residential uses, which could be built on currently vacant land and close to ION light rail. Clustering residential in a single quadrant allows for more resident-focused amenities to be provided (e.g. a playground for children, shared residential courtyards, rooftop spaces) with less need for duplication across the District. Residential development will also provide patronage for retail and food & beverage offerings that are also primarily anticipated to be within the Community Quadrant.

Residential development is anticipated to occur in both standalone residential buildings and mixed use buildings combining residential with retail/food & beverage uses and/or office uses.

Figure 7.11: Proposed Land Uses




Proposed Land Uses

# Northwest Campus Land Use Considerations

R+T Park is often explored as a possible location for a wide range of University or partner-led facilities and developments, but many proposals do not align with the overall vision and intention of the District, whether due to misalignment with operational constraints and requirements, security or safety requirements, land area requirements, or any number of other considerations depending on the specific facility or development being considered. However, R+T Park does not constitute the only University-owned land holdings north of Main Campus, and while some proposals may not fit the vision and development intent of R+T Park, these facilities may be better suited to location within the broader Northwest Campus area.

Although a set of guidelines exists for Northwest Campus (see the *Northwest Campus Development Design Guidelines*), there is no corresponding land use framework for this area that would complement this plan and aid University decision-makers in determining what types of uses can and should be located in this area.

This plan recommends that a land use framework for Northwest Campus should be undertaken by the University to complement this plan and to support clearer decision-making regarding development proposals that are ultimately not suitable for the higher density, mixed use R+T Park development context.

# 7.5 Design Guidance

## Development Philosophy

R+T Park must be more than just a place to work, it must be a community and a destination. Urban districts that combine high population density, well-designed public spaces, and diverse land uses create fertile ground for human connection and innovation. When people can live, work, and socialize in close proximity, the frequency of encounters with others—whether in cafés, parks, plazas, or street corners—increases the likelihood of spontaneous conversations and unexpected meetings between individuals from different backgrounds, professions, and perspectives. Quality public spaces act as environments accessible to all where these interactions can unfold naturally, while mixed-use neighbourhoods ensure that artists might bump into engineers, entrepreneurs into academics, and residents into visitors, each with the potential for bringing distinct experiences and ideas to the table. These conditions-of diverse, layered development and animated public spaces leading to serendipitous interactions are currently not present in R+T Park, meaning that energy and “creative collision” is not being amplified.

Achieving the vision and guiding principles requires that this framework be infused throughout the design of the District’s streets, parks and plazas, and buildings. Streets should be designed for pedestrians first with wide sidewalks, boulevard trees, planting and seating. Park and plaza spaces should be thought of as “the commons” where both formal and informal activities are expected and encouraged through both programming and design, making R+T Park more open and public-facing, fostering environments of casual interaction. Buildings are not simply enclosed spaces to work, but are centres of activity that connect to and take advantage of the outdoor environment of R+T Park, interfacing with and addressing public spaces directly. Connections are fundamentally made by people, not places, but good places invite people to see their neighbours, colleagues and collaborators as being part of a shared experience.

The principles of transit-oriented development are also central to thinking about the future of R+T Park. ION light rail is an incredible advantage for the District, enabling a long-term shift away from car-dependence for workers and future residents. But making transit a practical choice requires an approach that makes transit, walking and cycling comfortable and convenient. Future development must emphasize a mix of uses at higher densities sufficient to support transit ridership, accompanied by improvements to walking and cycling networks, integrated with quality public space.

Achieving the physical vision for R+T Park described in this plan will directly support the *Guidance Statement for Development of UWaterloo Lands*. A dynamic mixed use environment will generate energy that encourages the location of research-based companies, and will directly assist in the economic and social enhancement of the

surrounding community. These represent two of the four objectives of R+T Park's framework document, which will thereby help improve opportunities to provide suitable employment for UWaterloo co-op students and graduates, and produce a more significant long-term financial benefit for the University, which are the other two objectives.

Similarly, the planned evolution of the District will also help R+T Park contribute to achieving the University's five "global futures" strategic goals focused on societal improvement, health and well-being, sustainable change, technological innovation, and equitable and resilient economies.

# Built Form and Site Design Guidelines

New development within R+T Park can be pursued via two means:

| Vacant Land: | Infill |
| --- | --- |
| New leases will be sought on as-yet undeveloped parcels of land. | Most currently-leased parcels are underutilized, with low parking utilization, allowing for additional development to fill in portions of current surface parking lots. |

Built form guidance will vary for these two conditions, as vacant sites can be planned comprehensively, whereas infill on existing sites needs to respect existing access points and will need to relate carefully to existing development on the same site.

A variety of built forms may be contemplated for residential development, depending on location and specific target resident group. Higher density residential built forms such as standalone apartment buildings and residential mixed use buildings, should be located fronting onto Wes Graham Way and Hagey Boulevard, which are major streets that should consistently contribute to the urban form contemplated for the future of R+T Park. Townhouses are also desirable, particularly to provide larger and ground-oriented units for households with children, but should be located on quieter streets, or incorporated as part of the lower storeys of multi-storey residential or mixed use residential buildings.

Height limits within the District are quite generous, up to 81 m (approximately 25 storeys) across most of the District. However, it should be noted that the construction of the hospital may serve to moderate those heights due to requirements under Provincial regulation to protect Air Ambulance Service Corridors. In general, high-rise building forms are not recommended for R+T Park, given the current low-rise character of the District, moderate heights in surrounding areas, and the intention to create a

human-scaled urban environment. Low-rise and mid-rise forms are generally recommended, while still aiming to achieve a concentration of activity to bring energy to the District.

## Street Relationships

Built form relationships to both existing and planned streets are important to create an environment that is orderly and supportive of the R+T Park development philosophy.

**Community Quadrant**
As a currently vacant quadrant intended to create a dynamic mixed use environment, buildings within the Community Quadrant should relate to streets as follows:

Provide 5 m setbacks from public streets and publicly-accessible pathways, with spaces between the public street or pathway and building edge designed to be primarily functional rather than ornamental. This may be achieved by providing semi-private ground level patios for residential development and hardscaped outdoor space for commercial uses, with connections to the adjacent public sidewalk. Where ground level commercial uses are developed, larger setbacks may be considered to allow for additional food & beverage patio space or other active commercial uses.

Ground floor units of residential buildings or residential components of mixed use buildings should provide direct individual unit access to public streets and publicly-accessible pathways.

Commercial components of mixed use buildings should provide direct pedestrian access to public streets and publicly-accessible pathways from all ground floor commercial units, ensuring that commercial development is visible from and directly accessible from streets and pathways.

**All Other Quadrants**
For development in all other quadrants, buildings should relate to streets as follows:

Buildings setbacks from Wes Graham Way and Hagey Boulevard should be generally consistent with existing development but include active frontages wherever possible through food & beverage outlets or office social uses. Landscape areas should help define these spaces and should be permeable to the street and provide shade and scale through street trees and biodiverse planting.

Building lobbies should be oriented to provide direct access to either Wes Graham Way or Hagey Boulevard. If a building is not located immediately adjacent to either of these two streets, lobby access should orient towards another street or publicly accessible walkway, rather than providing primary building access to a parking area.

## Built Form

Building character will vary by land use and quadrant, with the following guidelines applying:

### Community Quadrant

Buildings may range from low-rise to high-rise, depending on development demand, though mid-rise forms are strongly encouraged. Notwithstanding the fact that there is no minimum height required by zoning within R+T Park, a minimum building height of 3 storeys or 10 m should be considered throughout the quadrant to create an urban character. Where high-rises are developed, the 3 storey or 10 m minimum should apply to building podiums, with tower portions stepped back and rising above the podium on a smaller floorplate.

Buildings should create a consistent street wall adjacent to public streets, filling in gaps that are not required for site access and maximizing building frontage on these edges.

Site design that creates interior courtyard spaces are encouraged. Where developed, courtyard spaces should be designed to function as amenity spaces for residents, and/ or as extensions of outdoor commercial patio spaces that face public streets and publicly-accessible walkways.

### All Other Quadrants

Buildings may range from low-rise to mid-rise. Notwithstanding the fact that high-rise buildings are permitted in portions of R+T Park, high-rise buildings for office and research & development uses are generally discouraged to maintain a human scale throughout the three other quadrants.

## Parking Design

Surface parking will continue to be provided within the District, but in smaller lots that are screened from view from public streets by buildings and landscaping. The following guidelines shall apply to parking areas:

In the Community Quadrant, the approach to resident parking should be carefully designed to avoid the creation of a car-oriented built form. Resident parking should be provided with the following considerations in mind:

- Given the transit-oriented context, residential development should aim for no more than 0.5 stalls per unit. The City of Waterloo has no minimum requirement for residential parking in the northeast quadrant.
- The form of residential parking should be provided in one or a combination of the following ways, in order of descending priority based on the resulting urban form:
    - Underground parkades.
    - Semi-underground parking, meaning a single level parking structure that is only partially underground, with the first floor of residential development built slightly above grade
    - Small, distributed surface parking areas of no more than 20 parking stalls, which may be shared between different units and buildings. Surface parking areas should be located to the rear or side of buildings and screened from view from public streets by the placement of buildings and/or landscaping.
- Residential parking, whether underground, semi-underground or in surface parking lots, should be shared between multiple buildings.
- Visitor surface parking for commercial and/or residential uses should not exceed 10 stalls in any single location. Where available, on-street parking should be relied upon to serve commercial uses.

In all other quadrants, surface parking should be limited to areas of no more than 100 stalls in any single location; where development occurs as infill on an existing leased parcel, this guideline need not be strictly applied, but infill development should serve to reduce the size of existing surface parking lots even if individual parking areas continue to exceed 100 stalls. In all cases, surface parking should be located to the rear or side of buildings and screened from view from public streets by the placement of buildings and/or landscaping.

If new development occurs on a vacant parcel and an adjacent leased parcel has an excess of surface parking provision, inter-parcel agreements to share parking areas is strongly encouraged.

Driveway access to parking areas should be shared between parcels wherever feasible.

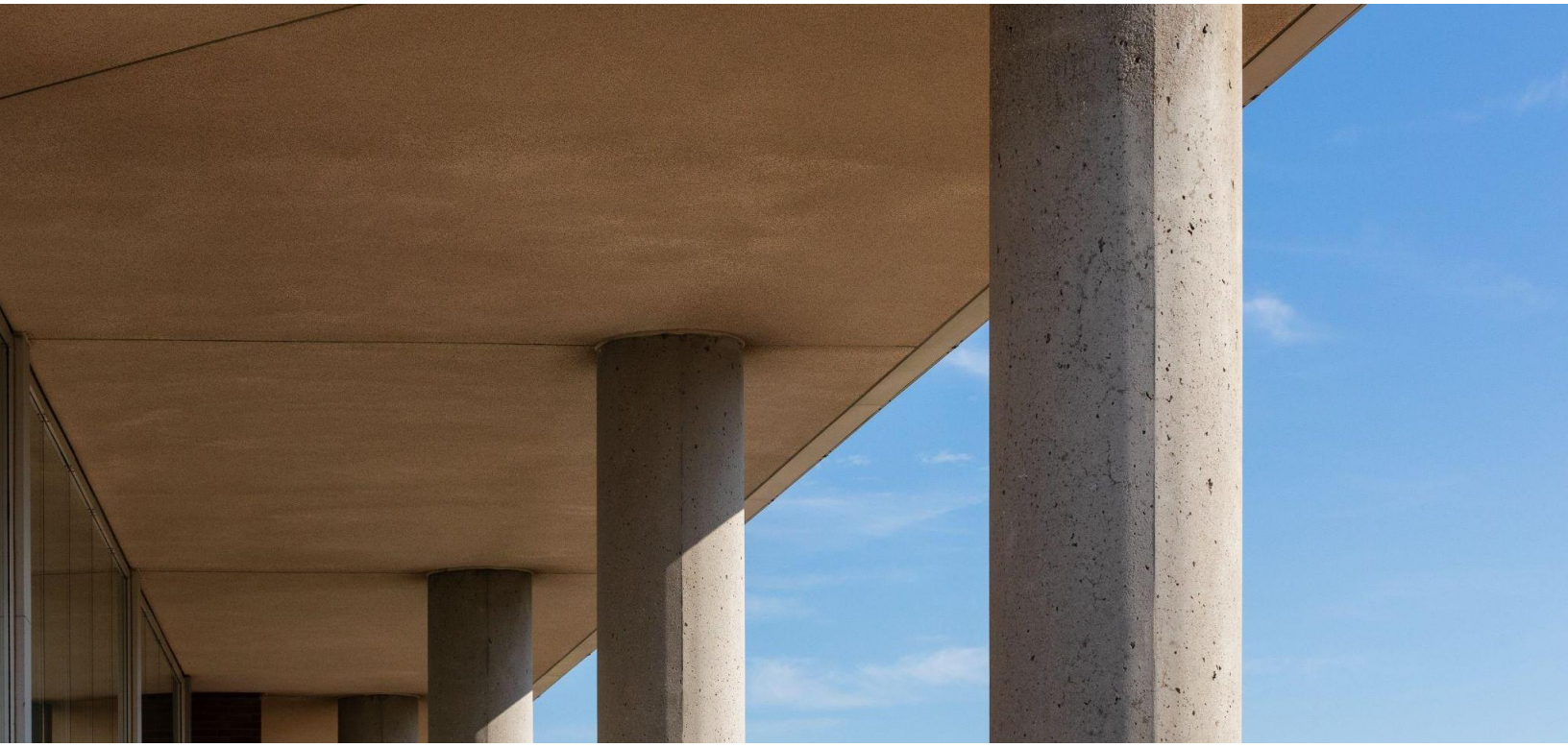
## Considerations for the Retrofit of Existing Buildings

Over time, existing buildings may be the subject of major renovations to accommodate new tenants or to renew the structure. In this circumstance, the following guidelines shall apply:

Buildings located adjacent to a park or plaza are strongly encouraged to increase active orientation to these spaces through the addition of ground floor pedestrian access to the park or plaza.

Buildings located at the intersection of Wes Graham Way and Hagey Boulevard are strongly encouraged to incorporate ground floor commercial space on facades facing the intersection, if demand exists.

Buildings without park or plaza adjacency are strongly encouraged to provide direct pedestrian access to public streets if such access does not already exist.



# 7.6 Energy and Sustainability

As global markets, tenants, and investors increasingly prioritize carbon reduction, resilience, and innovation in the built environment, R+T Park has a unique opportunity to demonstrate leadership through a coordinated approach to energy generation, management, and conservation. Embedding sustainability at the District scale — through smart infrastructure, renewable systems, green building standards, and data-driven operations — can transform R+T Park into a model of low-carbon innovation and a living laboratory aligned with the University of Waterloo's research strengths and global reputation for climate and technology leadership.

Ontario is experiencing rapidly growing electricity demand alongside emerging constraints on transmission and interconnection capacity. While today's grid is relatively low-emission, provincial emissions may rise as natural gas is used more frequently to meet growing demand. Energy policy is also evolving to expand opportunities for distributed energy resources (DER) such as solar PV, batteries, and flexible energy loads. However, the policies and market rules governing how these connect, operate, and create value are still being developed. The energy strategy should therefore remain adaptable, ensuring future developments can respond effectively to shifting provincial conditions and grid realities.

## Strategic Advantages

### 1. Tenant Attraction and Retention

A visible, high-performance energy and sustainability framework strengthens the District's competitive position in attracting forward-thinking tenants—particularly those in clean tech, advanced manufacturing, and digital sectors—who increasingly seek to align with environmentally responsible environments. Access to reliable, clean, and cost-effective energy solutions, along with opportunities for participation in shared sustainability initiatives, enhances tenant satisfaction and retention. The District's commitment to decarbonization can also support corporate ESG reporting and reinforce its brand as a place where innovation and impact intersect.

### 2. Revenue Opportunity

An integrated energy system creates pathways for new revenue streams and operational efficiencies. District-scale energy generation or systems, storage, and on-site production (e.g., solar, combined-heat and power, or waste-heat recovery) can reduce long-term costs while enabling the District (and the University more broadly) to monetize excess capacity. There is also potential to attract green investment and leverage federal and provincial funding programs that prioritize sustainable infrastructure, positioning R+T Park as a pilot site for public-private partnerships in next-

generation energy systems. Any revenue generating approaches will need to be assessed and aligned with current Canada Revenue Agency regulations governing charitable income.

### 3. Resilience and Future Readiness

Investing in a comprehensive sustainability framework enhances R+T Park's physical and operational resilience. Distributed energy resources and adaptive infrastructure can mitigate risks related to grid disruption, extreme weather, and rising energy costs. Microgrid solutions could offer energy resilience for critical operations but would need to be scaled according to the on-site production available. A focus on efficiency, circular design, and climate adaptation will ensure the District remains future-ready—supporting long-term stability, protecting asset value, and reinforcing its reputation as a place for sustainable innovation.

## District Energy

The proposed new regional hospital in the northwest quadrant creates a compelling and time-sensitive opportunity to establish a district energy system (DES) serving the hospital, R+T Park, and the University of Waterloo main campus as an interconnected network. A high-demand anchor user such as a hospital significantly strengthens the business case for investment, offering a consistent energy load, opportunities for waste heat recovery, and the ability to optimize system performance across multiple sites. Aligning shared servicing and infrastructure planning with WRHN and other large-scale institutional developments would reduce overall capital costs, support access to government decarbonization and resilience funding, and create a replicable model of institutional energy partnership applicable to other mixed-use innovation districts in Canada.

District energy systems are common in campus-type developments because they provide highly reliable heating and cooling, reduce maintenance and operating costs, and can incorporate low-carbon energy sources that are more difficult and expensive to apply at the individual building level. Centralizing energy production improves overall efficiency — particularly in lower-temperature distribution systems—and reduces the footprint of mechanical equipment within buildings, returning space and rooftops to developers while lowering equipment noise at grade. In mixed-use developments such as R+T Park, a centralized system also typically requires less installed capacity than separate per-building systems, due to peak load diversification across commercial, industrial, and residential uses.

DES approaches are particularly advantageous where one or more of the following conditions exist:

Where low-carbon thermal resources or waste energy sources are available, providing significant cost advantages.

Where highly reliable thermal energy supply is a priority.

Where long-term maintenance of central systems outweighs short-term costs — especially where buildings are under common management or ownership, as on university campuses, healthcare, or industrial complexes.

Where complementary heating and cooling loads allow for effective heat recovery and transfer, boosting overall system efficiency.

Where policy initiatives encourage energy efficiency or low-carbon heat sources, giving DES an advantage over traditional utilities (e.g., wastewater-to-energy and geo-exchange are often more practical at the DES scale).

DES can also supply electricity in a microgrid arrangement when significant solar PV and electrical battery storage systems are implemented.

For R+T Park specifically, potential energy sources include closed-loop geo-exchange from on-site green space (geofield) and energy recovery from high-intensity users such as the hospital and any future data centres. High-efficiency natural gas boilers can serve as short-term winter peaking, significantly reducing installation and operating costs while maintaining high overall energy performance. DES infrastructure would follow utility corridor alignments along roads, with building connections provided in the conventional manner.

As a next step, a business case for DES should be completed, addressing a phased thermal expansion plan, available grant funding, potential ownership structures, and the readiness of existing and future buildings to connect to the system.

# Energy Efficiency

Pursuing energy efficiency in buildings is essential for post-secondary contexts, and no less for R+T Park. evolv1 was an exemplary model of office building design when designed and constructed, and technology and energy efficiency strategies have continued to evolve in the time since it was completed. As global policy momentum on sustainable energy has become less predictable, the case for embedding energy efficiency into R+T Park's development framework rests increasingly on its practical and financial logic; well-designed, energy-efficient buildings reduce long-term operating costs, command stronger lease rates, and are more resilient to future regulatory and energy price volatility. For developers, this reframes energy performance not as a

compliance burden or an ideological commitment, but as a risk management and asset value proposition.

Prioritizing energy efficiency standards will be important if R+T Park pursues a district energy strategy. A clear understanding of energy demand is required to properly size a centralized system, and energy efficiency design requirements provide a key mechanism to guide system planning. R+T Park has an opportunity to support and incentivize this through the mechanisms described below. Possible opportunities include:

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| **Advanced Energy Design Guidelines:** | Adopt and/or adapt an established framework such as ASHRAE 90.1, the Passive House standard, or the Canada Green Building Council's Zero Carbon Building Standard as a baseline expectation for new development. The guideline should be tiered where possible, distinguishing between minimum performance thresholds required of all new buildings and higher voluntary performance targets that unlock incentives such as reduced development charges, priority permitting, or enhanced lease terms from the University. A clearly communicated and consistently applied guideline reduces developer uncertainty and lowers the perceived risk of investing in higher-performance construction. |
| **Building Envelope Performance:** | Prioritize high-performance building envelopes as a foundational energy efficiency strategy, including continuous insulation, triple-glazed or high-performance window systems, and thermal bridge mitigation. Envelope improvements offer long-term passive returns that are not dependent on the continuing operation or maintenance of mechanical systems, making them particularly durable investments. For developers uncertain about the longevity of energy policy incentives, envelope performance represents a form of future-proofing that retains its value regardless of the regulatory environment. |
| **Building Automation and Smart Controls:** | Encourage the integration of building automation systems (BAS) and smart metering into new buildings, enabling real-time monitoring of energy consumption and performance optimization over time. R+T Park's research mandate creates a natural opportunity to position these systems not only as operational tools but as active research infrastructure. |
| **Demonstration and Research Opportunities:** | R+T Park's identity as an innovation district creates a distinct opportunity to attract tenants and research partners who can treat the built environment itself as a living laboratory. Pilot projects, whether testing novel envelope assemblies, renewable energy integration, or demand response technologies, can be structured as |

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| | formal research partnerships with the University, potentially attracting federal or provincial research funding that offsets construction costs. In the current policy environment, where government incentives for sustainable energy are less certain than they were, the ability to frame energy innovation projects as research investments (rather than purely sustainability investments) may open alternative funding pathways that are more durable. |

## Climate Resilience

Waterloo is a winter city, but also experiences increasingly hot summer weather, meaning that optimal design of buildings and public spaces within R+T Park should consider the full spectrum of environmental conditions.

Urban Heat Island issues can be managed by breaking up large surface parking areas through a combination of infill with new development and the addition of canopies and/or shade trees. Similarly, pedestrian corridors can be designed to provide continuous shelter via canopies and overhangs when located next to buildings, and tree canopies in other locations.

The placement of buildings can be used to create public spaces that are buffered from predominant winter winds, as well as to provide indoor refuges from rain or severe sun. Water features in public space can also help mitigate extreme heat through cooling effects.

Designing for 1 in 200-year flood events should be strongly considered and positive stormwater management systems such as sustainable urban drainage systems, used where possible. These can include permeable paving, bioswales, rain gardens, and green roofs to convey, infiltrate, and attenuate water wherever possible.

New buildings will need to be designed in alignment with the City of Waterloo's High Performance Building Design Standards (HPBDS) which aims to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions from construction by 80% by 2050. Other development areas in the city, such as Generation Park, are targeting LEED Silver and Canada Green Building Council (CAGBC) Zero-Carbon Building Standards. Developers at the R+T Park can be incentivized to achieve similar standards through federal and provincial grant systems and access to green financing such as sustainability loans through the Canada Infrastructure Bank. Net-zero buildings also have lower long-term operating costs and resilience from energy market volatility, plus they can command rental premiums and are preferred by corporate tenants with net-zero or science based targets.

Green spaces and biodiversity are another key consideration for climate resiliency which is addressed in the next section.

# Biodiversity

Public space in the adjacent Environmental Reserve already provides biodiversity and habitat through a naturalized landscape with limited active management, providing an evolving landscape that allows plants and animals to occupy and flourish. As new public spaces are developed within R+T Park and existing public spaces evolve in their design and management, additional areas of biodiversity can be developed and added, enhancing the existing offering. Space within R+T Park may offer opportunities for ecological study and investigation. Possible opportunities include:

| | |
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| **Native Plant Communities:** | Prioritize native species in all landscape design that supports local pollinators, birds, and invertebrates. Create layered plantings with canopy trees, understory shrubs, and groundcovers that mimic natural ecosystems and provide food, shelter, and nesting habitat throughout the seasons. |
| **Ecological Corridors:** | Design contiguous green corridors that connect habitats within the District and link to surrounding natural areas, allowing wildlife to move safely between patches. These corridors should vary in width and vegetation structure to serve different species' needs. |
| **Pollinator Pathways:** | Establish dedicated pollinator gardens with diverse flowering plants that bloom sequentially throughout the growing season. Include host plants for butterflies and native bees. |
| **Naturalized Stormwater Management:** | Existing stormwater ponds within R+T Park are semi-naturalized, but could be used as test-beds for fully naturalized planting approaches for ecological and civil engineering studies including naturalized filtration. As new streets are added or existing streets redesigned within R+T Park, conventional infrastructure could be replaced or supplemented with Low Impact Development strategies such as bioswales, rain gardens and other elements that provide both ecological function and habitat. |
| **Bird-Safe Design:** | Consider the incorporation of bird-friendly glass treatments into new buildings and renovations, proper lighting design to reduce light |

| | |
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| | pollution and bird strikes, and nest boxes or ledges integrated into building facades for cavity-nesting species. |
| **Ecologically Sensitive Lighting Design:** | Establish lighting design across the District that reduces light pollution. Include dark corridors adjacent to ecological corridors to prioritize bat habitats. Using motion sensor lighting, dimmers, or timers can help balance conflicts between community safety and ecological priorities. Full cut-off or “dark sky” fixtures, bollard lighting or recessed path lighting are also good options for full-time lighting that provides visibility while reducing light pollution. |
| **Green Roofs:** | Encourage the incorporation of green roofs into new building designs, creating elevated ecosystems that support pollinators, birds and insects, absorb and slowly release rainfall, and provide building insulation that reduces heating and cooling demands. |

# 7.7 Indigeneity

The open landscape and large Environmental Reserve on the North Campus of the University, adjacent to R+T Park, represent a significant opportunity to deepen the University of Waterloo's commitment to Truth and Reconciliation, and support further opportunities for Indigeneity and land-based learning initiative led by the Office of Indigenous Relations.

The Office of Indigenous Relations is actively planning for the creation of Kiinomaage-Aki or the Land of Knowledge, a new Indigenous land-based teaching and learning space located at Columbia Lake on the University of Waterloo's North Campus. This will be an Indigenous learning space that centres land-based education, informed by Indigenous ways of knowing and providing a new setting for relearning and practicing cultural activities, intercultural interaction and interdisciplinary discussion. This will build on the proposed Two Row Path enhancements, the Healing Forest, and the Arboretum Trail envisioned in the 2026 Campus Plan, which will further incorporate Indigenous approaches to land stewardship and water protection along the Laurel Creek watershed.

Simultaneously, the Waterloo Region Health Network (WRHN) has been engaged in an ongoing dialogue with the University of Waterloo's Office of Indigenous Relations and the Faculty of Health, alongside Indigenous Host Nation leaders, to bring Indigenous knowledge, teaching and learning into the design and operation of the New WRHN @ the University Hospital site to be located in R+T Park.

In re-imagining the Laurel Trail along the western edge of R+T Park, we have an opportunity to intentionally bridge the connection between the Campus Plan, Kiinomaage-Aki, and WRHN to strengthen Indigenous inclusion and leadership.

## Connections and Gateways

It is recommended R+T Park management work closely with the Office of Indigenous Relations and the City of Waterloo to enhance the trail connection between WRHN and Kiinomaage-Aki, and gateway connections by:

- Adding way-finding signage along the route.
- Creating an active transportation crossing over the Laurel Creek before the creek enters Columbia Lake allowing for more seamless connection along the Laurel Creek watershed.

- It is recommended R+T Park management work closely with the Office of Indigenous Relations to enhance the gateway connections to R+T Park along the Laurel Trail, such as:

- Creation of a prominent gateway structure where the Laurel Trail intersects the trail connection to Frank Tompa Drive. This could be a Haudenosaunee Palisade gathering structure featuring lighted wooden columns on a pea gravel or stamped concrete base.

- Gateway and education signage at connection points such as the active transportation bridge across the creek to Kiinomaage-Aki, at the transition to the Hospital lands,
and enhancement of the Columbia Street trailhead by the South-West edge of Columbia Lake.

## Ecological Restoration & Plantings

Ecological restoration through native plantings, such as willows, cattails, and other water-loving species that can thrive in the low-lying, semi-aquatic area.

Naturalized restoration and rehabilitation of SWM ponds and the Eastern edge of Columbia Lake to create cleaner, more usable natural spaces for passive recreation and land-based learning.

## Land-Based Learning

Following the lead of the Office of Indigenous Relations, support the development and enhancement of Land-based Learning through:

- Installation of educational signage.

- Indigenous placemaking.

- Outdoor learning spaces.

- Welcoming Indigenous Water Keepers at the shores of Columbia Lake for teaching and learning opportunities.

# District Integration

When it comes to incorporating Indigeneity into the built form of R+T Park, the Office of Indigenous Relations recommends a more subtle approach that leads gradually towards the Laurel Trail gateway, branching out towards Kiinomaage-Aki, the Arboretum Trail and WRHN.

Consider aligning the four quadrants of the District with the four cardinal directions of the Medicine Wheel:

**Community Quadrant:** North, white, sweetgrass

**Sustainability Quadrant:** East, yellow, tobacco

**Transformative Technologies Quadrant:** South, red, cedar

**Health and Science Quadrant:** West, black, sage

This integration could include:

- Color elements within building and signage to indicate the cardinal direction of the Medicine Wheel.
- Design elements that incorporate the four Sacred Medicines: tobacco, cedar, sage, and sweetgrass.
- Medicine Gardens or planting that incorporate the four Sacred Medicines.
- Educational signage to highlight the teachings of the Medicine Wheel.

This section is only the first step of an ongoing dialogue and collaboration with the Office of Indigenous Relations for future planning. Upon approval of this plan, further work, led in partnership with the Office of Indigenous Relations, will commence to develop a more comprehensive and detailed strategy for supporting and integrating opportunities for Indigeneity and land-based learning in R+T Park.

# 7.8 Implementation Strategy

## Phasing

The following section outlines implementation actions over periods of 1-3 years (quick wins), 1-5 years (short term), 5-10 years (medium term), and 10-20 years (long term. In addition, a few implementation actions are identified as “flex” actions, which are characterized as as-needed or ongoing actions.

Each implementation action is described in terms of level of impact, required time investment by University of Waterloo staff resources, and cost. These are rated as either low, medium and high and are meant to be indicative only, giving a high-level understanding of the relative importance of the actions and the level of effort and infrastructure or contracting costs that are likely required to achieve them.

# Quick Wins—1-3 yrs

## Meanwhile Use Public Space Activation

This action involves two sub-actions, which could be undertaken concurrently with moderate cost and complexity. Temporary sports courts require fabrication of temporary structures for a range of sports, and may require a storage strategy for winter. A temporary activation space could take the form of a shipping container village, a food truck village, or another community activation concept that clusters a few different activities in temporary, moveable structures.

## Design and implement a series of temporary sports courts

- Develop management and activation strategy for sports courts. This will involve working with leaseholders to identify appropriate locations in their parking lots, and with UWaterloo Athletics and Recreation to support management of the sports courts. Community recreation partners may also be desirable
- Identify a consultant or fabricator to develop and cost designs for temporary, moveable sports courts.
- Secure funding for fabrication
- Build and operate temporary sports courts

## Design and implement a temporary market/community activation space

- Engage with the City of Waterloo to understand permitting, design and operational requirements for a temporary market or other type of community activation space
- Develop specific programming, a management strategy, and determine who will operate the market or activation space
- Identify lessees
- Construct and operate the activation space

| | |
|---|---|
| Level of Impact | High |
| Staff Resources | Medium |
| Cost | Low or Medium, depending on specific form of temporary installation |

| | |
|---|---|
| Lead Responsibility | R+T Park Staff |
| Supporting | R+T Park Leaseholders, UWaterloo Athletics and Recreation |

## Support Indigenous Relations to Explore Indigenous Placemaking and Placekeeping Opportunities

Indigenous Relations is developing concepts for the Land of Knowledge as well as various other locations on UWaterloo lands from the main campus north to the planned hospital. Elements of this could be supported within R+T Park.

- In collaboration with Indigenous Relations, make recommendations for next steps on Indigenous engagement for future Indigenization and incorporation of Indigenous Placemaking and Placekeeping in R+T Park.

| | |
|---|---|
| Level of Impact | Medium |
| Staff Resources | Low |
| Cost | Low |
| Lead Responsibility | UWaterloo Indigenous Relations |
| Supporting | R+T Park Staff |

# Short Term—1-5 yrs

## Prepare and Implement a Wayfinding Strategy

This action involves developing a plan, ideally in conjunction with an R+T Park brand refresh strategy, and implementation of the elements of the strategy over a 5-year period. This work can be led by R+T Park Staff in collaboration with UWaterloo Staff.

- Engage wayfinding consultant to develop a wayfinding strategy, addressing directional signage, public art, public space improvements at R+T Park gateways, and digital wayfinding (if desired)
- Implement new wayfinding signage and other improvements that may be specifically identified by the wayfinding strategy

| | |
|---|---|
| Level of Impact | High |
| Staff Resources | Low |

| | |
|---|---|
| Cost | Medium |
| Lead Responsibility | R+T Park Staff |
| Supporting | UWaterloo |

## Design and Implement Ira Needles Park Redesign (Phase 1)

As R+T Park grows in both jobs and residents, redesign of Ira Needles Park to encourage more active use and year-round programming will add value and expand programming opportunities.

- Engage a landscape design consultant to redesign Ira Needles for more active use. Anticipated Phase 1 implementation actions include:
  - Improve existing trails to repair damage, eliminate substantial ponding, and improve usability
  - Improvements to existing volleyball court, including new net, improved equipment storage, and seating
- Secure funds for Phase 1 design improvements.
- Tender and construct Phase 1 improvements.

| | |
|---|---|
| Level of Impact | Medium |
| Staff Resources | High |
| Cost | Medium |
| Lead Responsibility | R+T Park Staff |
| Supporting | UWaterloo, City of Waterloo (permitting) |

## Design and Implement Public Space Improvements to Stormwater Ponds

Existing Stormwater Ponds are theoretically an amenity for R+T Park, but are not designed to support use and enjoyment currently.

- Engage a landscape design consultant to prepare improvement plans for stormwater ponds
- Implement improvements over several years
- Utilize the Sustainability Quadrant pond as a test site for sustainability ideas, at a minimum

| | |
|---|---|
| Level of Impact | Medium |
| Staff Resources | Medium |
| Cost | Medium |
| Lead Responsibility | R+T Park Staff |
| Supporting | UWaterloo, City of Waterloo (permitting) |

## Initiate Redesign Process for Great Circle Roundabout (Phase 1)

This action ultimately needs to be undertaken by the City of Waterloo, but R+T Park has an essential role to play in putting a redesign on the City's agenda and shepherding a design through to implementation.

- Open discussion with the City of Waterloo regarding redesign of the roundabout
- Build support for the change with UWaterloo, the campus community, and the surrounding community through informational campaigns and surveys
- Support the City of Waterloo during the redesign process, aiming for initiation of this process in the 1-5 year short-term window.

| | |
|---|---|
| Level of Impact | High |
| Staff Resources | High |
| Cost | Medium |
| Lead Responsibility | City of Waterloo |
| Supporting | R+T Park Staff |

## Prepare Land Use Framework for Northwest Campus

R+T Park is regularly asked to consider facilities or uses that may not fit within the District's context (e.g. light industrial, secure government or research facilities, power generation, etc), but lacks a clear decision-making framework. This action should align with governance transformation with respect to real estate expertise, and would identify decision-making criteria and general use thinking for Northwest Campus lands, to complement this land use plan. This action is

| | |
|---|---|
| Level of Impact | Medium |
| Staff Resources | Low |
| Cost | Low |
| Lead Responsibility | R+T Park Staff |
| Supporting | UWaterloo |

# Medium Term—5-10 years

## Implement Redesign of Great Circle Roundabout (Phase 2)

Assuming successful initiation of Phase 1 in the short-term window, implementation should occur in the 5-10 year medium term window.

- Support City of Waterloo in tendering and construction of roundabout reconstruction.
- If required, work with UWaterloo to identify UWaterloo fund contributions to the reconstruction.

| | |
|---|---|
| Level of Impact | High |
| Staff Resources | Low |
| Cost | High (may be primarily borne by the City of Waterloo) |
| Lead Responsibility | City of Waterloo |
| Supporting | R+T Park Staff |

## Design and Implement Ira Needles Park Redesign (Phase 2)

As R+T Park grows in both jobs and residents, ongoing improvement of Ira Needles Park will encourage more active use and year-round programming will add value and expand programming opportunities.

- Anticipated Phase 2 implementation actions may include:
  - Expansion of volleyball courts to accommodate more games
  - Improved seating, installation of shade structures and social spaces with spectator area for sports
  - Expanded programing and meanwhile use activity
  - Introduce educational/storytelling signage
  - Other possible improvements as defined through Phase 1 detailed design strategy
- Secure funds for Phase 2 design improvements.
- Tender and construct Phase 2 improvements.

| | |
|---|---|
| Level of Impact | Medium |
| Staff Resources | Medium |

| | |
|---|---|
| Cost | Medium |
| Lead Responsibility | R+T Park Staff |
| Supporting | UWaterloo, City of Waterloo (permitting) |

# Long Term—10-20 years

## Design and Implement Ira Needles Park Redesign (Phase 3)

As R+T Park grows in both jobs and residents, ongoing improvement of Ira Needles Park will encourage more active use and year-round programming will add value and expand programming opportunities.

- Anticipated Phase 3 implementation actions may include:
  - Conversion of trails to outdoor fitness track
  - Installation of an outdoor fitness centre
  - Additional improvements and programming as identified
  - Upgrades and maintenance of existing equipment/infrastructure
  - Other possible improvements as defined through Phase 1 detailed design strategy
- Secure funds for Phase 3 design improvements.
- Tender and construct Phase 3 improvements.

| | |
|---|---|
| Level of Impact | Medium |
| Staff Resources | Medium |
| Cost | Medium |
| Lead Responsibility | R+T Park Staff |
| Supporting | UWaterloo, City of Waterloo (permitting) |

# Flex

## Relocation of Meanwhile Use Public Space Activation

As development occurs on vacant lots or infill of surface parking lots, meanwhile uses (temporary sport courts and shipping container village) may need to be relocated to other locations within the District.

| | |
|---|---|
| Level of Impact | High |
| Staff Resources | Low |
| Cost | Low |
| Lead Responsibility | R+T Park Staff |
| Supporting | R+T Park Leaseholders |

# Metrics and Performance Indicators

The following metrics can be used to track and assess performance of the District as it evolves over time. Some metrics are objective whereas others are subjective and would need to be measured via user surveys.

Note: some land use plan metrics and performance indicators overlap with Business Strategy and Ecosystem Integration metrics and performance indicators.

## Land Use Performance

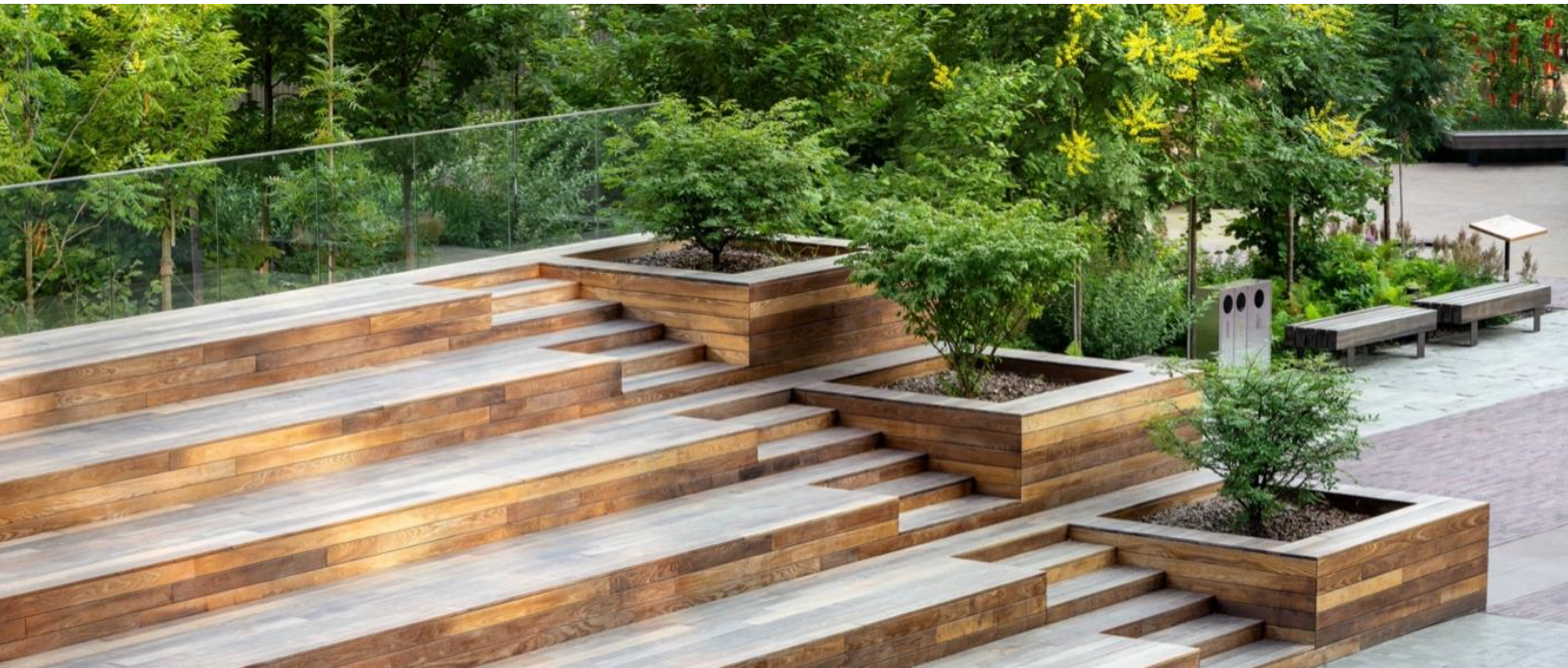
Evaluates the performance of R+T Park regarding progress towards full build-out and intensification of the District over time.

- Land absorption rate (acres developed per year)
- Vacancy rate
- Floor Area Ratio by quadrant (measured as built floor area to land area)
- Employees per acre
- Residents per acre
- Streetwall continuity ratio: percentage of street frontage along the two main streets occupied by building façades
- Percentage of building ground floors with transparent glazing (windows, entrances) along Wes Graham and Hagey Boulevard street-facing frontages

## Public Space Performance

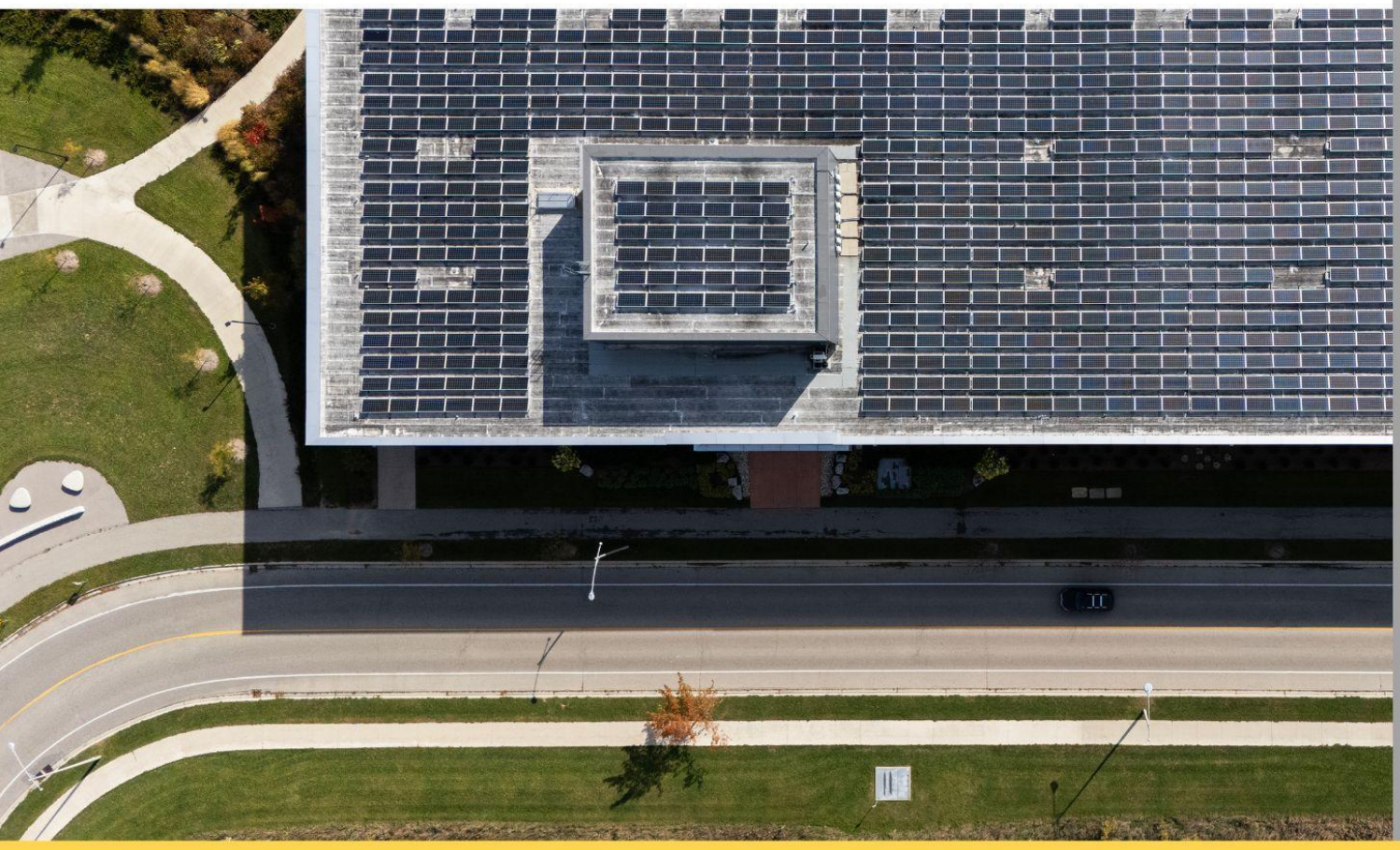
Tracks value of public spaces to the performance of R+T Park as a desirable place to live and work.

- Tenant satisfaction with public space and district amenities (measured through recurring surveys)
- Tenant perception of public spaces as a factor in talent attraction and retention (measured through recurring surveys)
- Resident satisfaction with public space and district amenities (measured through recurring surveys)
- Average daily/weekly foot traffic counts in key public spaces (measured via sensors or manual counts)
- Number of programmed events held in public spaces per year
- Number of cross-tenant events or collaborations hosted in public spaces per year



# 08 | Mobility Strategy





# 8.1 Overall Mobility Concept

The mobility concept proposes a more finely grained grid of streets and movement corridors to support new development placement and public realm activation within R+T Park (Figure 8.1: Transportation Network Concept). The concept reconceives the internal pedestrian network to ensure more direct and intuitive connections to existing and future buildings, including the new regional hospital, while better integrating these pathways into natural features and avoiding the traversal of surface parking areas.

Collectively, these changes are intended to promote access to and movement within R+T Park and between adjacent institutional uses, while avoiding the perpetuation of corridors that function primarily as cut-through routes for traffic with neither an origin nor a destination in the District.

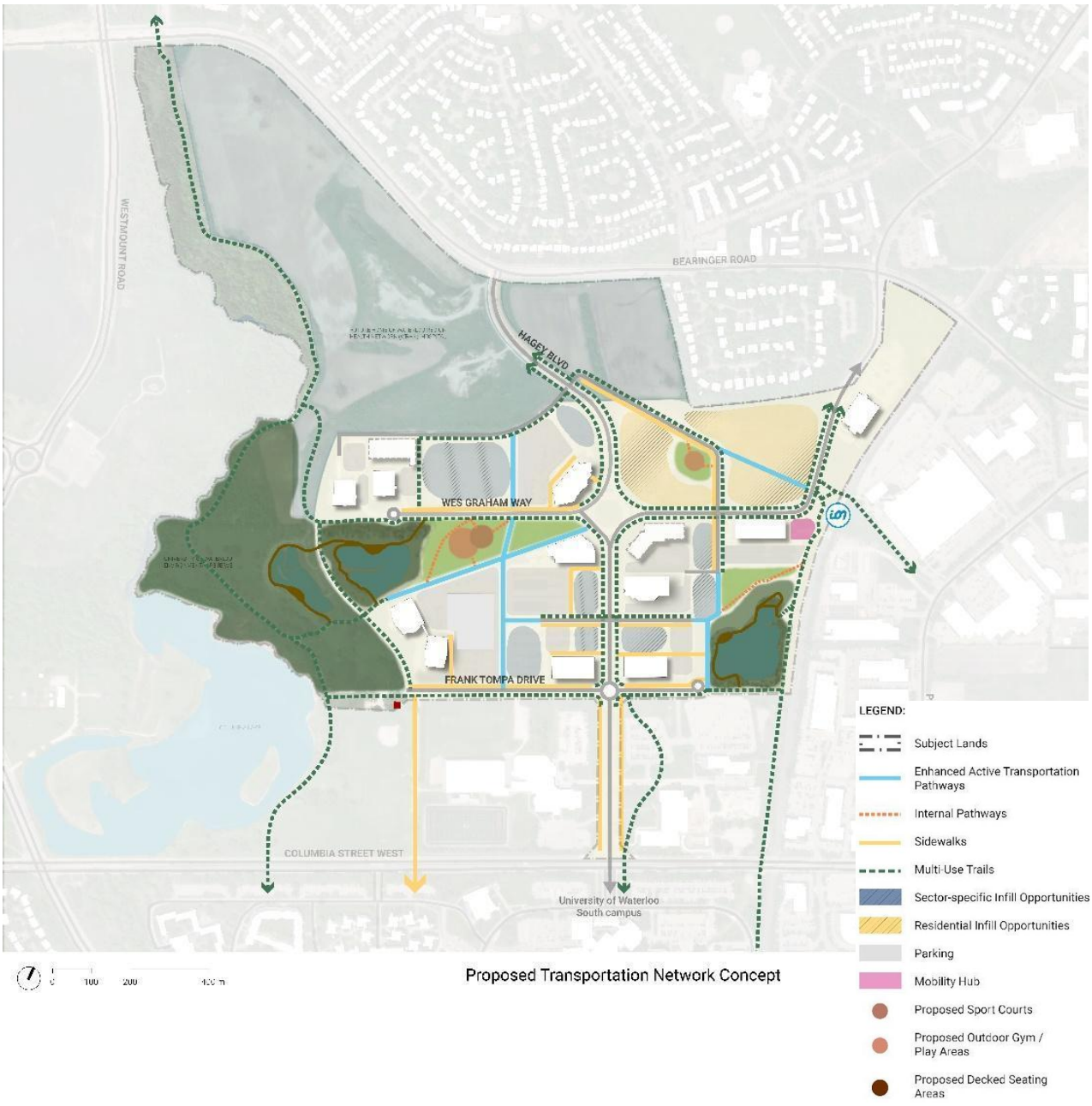
Key characteristics of the mobility concept include:

- A finer-grained street network that supports infill and smaller blocks.
- Direct, legible pedestrian and cycling connections aligned with desire lines.
- Local streets that prioritize access over through-movement.
- Corridors designed to support placemaking, landscaping, and year-round use.

New streets and corridors create opportunities to balance the needs of all transportation system users while reinforcing R+T Park's role as a destination rather than area to pass through. Street and corridor design should support local access, service needs, and multimodal circulation, while discouraging non-local travel. At the same time, these corridors offer significant placemaking potential through coordinated landscaping, pavement treatments, lighting, and public amenity choices. As within the larger discussion of public space design continuity, corridor design choices will serve as the visual and physical bridge linking currently fragmented sites. Design should encourage all-day, all-season use, potentially incorporating sheltered pathways and street furniture, for example, to promote movement and time spent outdoors even during colder months.

Vehicle access will continue to be an important way for tenants, visitors, and new residents to arrive at, depart from, and travel through R+T Park, even as transit, walking and cycling become more important over time. By introducing new local roadways and reimagining existing infrastructure, the plan seeks to preserve options for motorists while working toward greater transportation system balance, necessary to realize an inviting human-scaled environment. Complementary parking strategies respond to current utilization trends, enabling infill opportunities while preserving the ability to construct future capacity.

Figure 8.1: Transportation Network Concept



# 8.2 Vehicular Movement and Access

Vehicle access will continue to be an important way for tenants, visitors, and new residents to arrive at, depart from, and travel through R+T Park, even as transit, walking and cycling become more important over time. By introducing new local roadways and reimagining existing infrastructure, the plan seeks to preserve options for motorists while working toward greater transportation system balance, necessary to realize an inviting human-scaled environment. Complementary parking strategies respond to current utilization trends, enabling infill opportunities while preserving the ability to construct future capacity.

## Street Network and Design

The mobility concept introduces a modified street network intended to structure future development, enhance multimodal circulation, and strengthen connections within and beyond R+T Park (Figure 8.2: Modified Street Network Concept).

### Reconsidering the Role of the “Great Circle” Intersection

As part of the broader approach, opportunities have been identified at the centre of the District to reconsider the role and function of the existing “Great Circle” roundabout where Hagey Boulevard and Wes Graham Way meet. Rather than presenting a fixed design solution, this concept highlights the potential to rethink the intersection configuration to better support a traffic-calmed environment and reclaim portions of roadway for outdoor public use and placemaking.

Today, the large roundabout acts more as an obstacle than a gateway:

- Pedestrian crossings are indirect and uncomfortable.
- On-street bicycle lanes are interrupted.
- Landscaped space within the roundabout is visually prominent but largely inaccessible.

One potential approach explored conceptually involves transitioning away from a large, vehicle-oriented roundabout toward a multiple intersection arrangement. Intended outcomes of any future redesign include:

- Reduced vehicle operating speeds.

- Clearer and more predictable movements.
- Reduced attractiveness of R+T Park as a cut-through route for non-local cut-through traffic, particularly for drivers seeking an alternative to Westmount Road when travelling to Bearinger Road.
- Prioritized local access for R+T Park tenants, visitors, and potential new residents.
- Reclaimed space for public realm and district identity.

Slower speeds and more controlled movements would also improve safety for pedestrians and cyclists, an outcome that becomes increasingly important with the introduction of the new regional hospital and its associated patient, visitor, and service traffic. As the site evolves, a traffic-calmed central intersection could play a key role in disciplining traffic to and through R+T Park, especially in areas of concentrated public activity, and in reinforcing the future district's identity as a busy centre rather than a shortcut.

Preliminary discussions with the City of Waterloo, which owns the intersecting roadways, have confirmed openness to exploring alternatives, while recognizing the need for substantial analysis and refinement. Further technical work will be required to test design concepts, assess operational performance, and explore public realm opportunities in greater detail. Continued collaboration with City Integrated Planning & Public Works will be required to advance this exploration, ensure alignment with municipal standards and long-term network objectives, and determine an appropriate path forward.

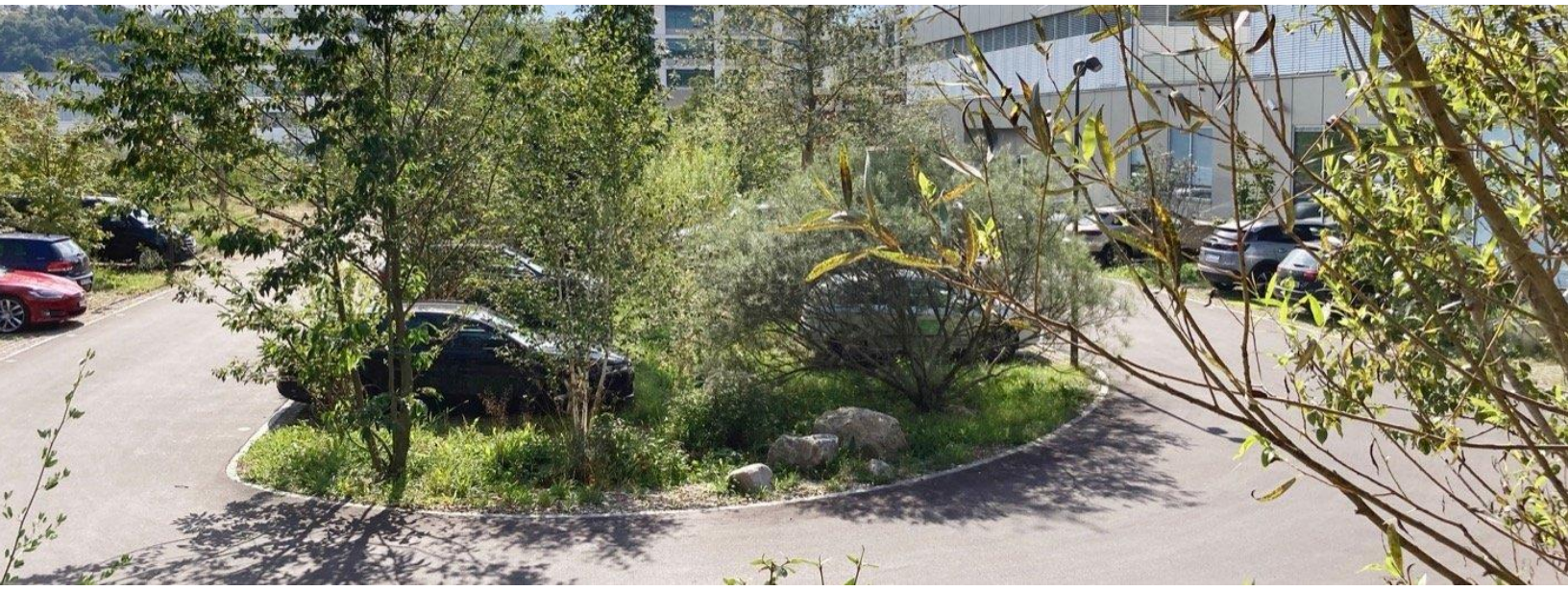


Figure 8.2: Modified Street Network Concept

## Primary Mobility Corridors

The mobility concept places an emphasis on the eastern leg of Wes Graham Way and Hagey Boulevard from Wes Graham Way to Frank Tompa Drive as primary activity streets and mobility corridors. Single travel lanes, continuous landscaping and multimodal facilities that connect buildings, public plazas, and transit stops characterize that roadway typology, which should embody the feel of a livable street once implemented *(Figure 8.3: Primary Activity Street Concept Example)*.

Figure 8.3: Primary Activity Street Concept Example

## New Local Roadways

The proposed includes the introduction of additional local roadways. While anticipating a phased and lengthy implementation period, plans would introduce a new east-west street between Frank Tompa Drive and Wes Graham Way to facilitate access to retained parking lots in the southern half of R+T Park. Additionally, the concept creates new vehicular access through the Community Quadrant for new residents and provides a new service road along the northern edge of existing Health and Science Quadrant development that will provide secondary access to the Research Advancement Centre, the Waterloo Free Electron Laser, and additional sector specific development opportunities, as well as new WRHN regional hospital parking lots or hospital-related development anticipated to be developed to the north.

The introduction of new, more closely-spaced roadways within R+T Park will create new mid-block crossings, offering travellers more frequent and direct routes across roadways currently lacking permeability. Smaller blocks enhance active transportation activity by reducing travel distances and increasing route options. In addition to enhancing mobility, these new connections help break down large, monolithic parcels into smaller pieces, which supports a more human-scaled environment, encourages mixed-use development, and enables better integration of buildings with the public realm. Smaller blocks also allow for more flexible land use patterns, improved sightlines, and increased opportunities for placemaking elements.

All new or redeveloped streets within the site should promote the design of roadways that safely and comfortably accommodate all users—pedestrians, cyclists, transit riders, and drivers—regardless of age, ability, or mode of travel. Each should feature dedicated infrastructure for multiple modes of travel, including protected multi-use paths, wide sidewalks, and clearly marked crosswalks that prioritize pedestrian safety. Between the curbs these roads should incorporate traffic calming measures such as narrower travel lanes, curb extensions, and reduced speed limits to slow vehicle traffic and create a more comfortable environment for vulnerable road users. Universal design principles will ensure accessibility for people of all ages and abilities, with features like curb ramps, tactile paving, audible crossing signals, and adequate street lighting.

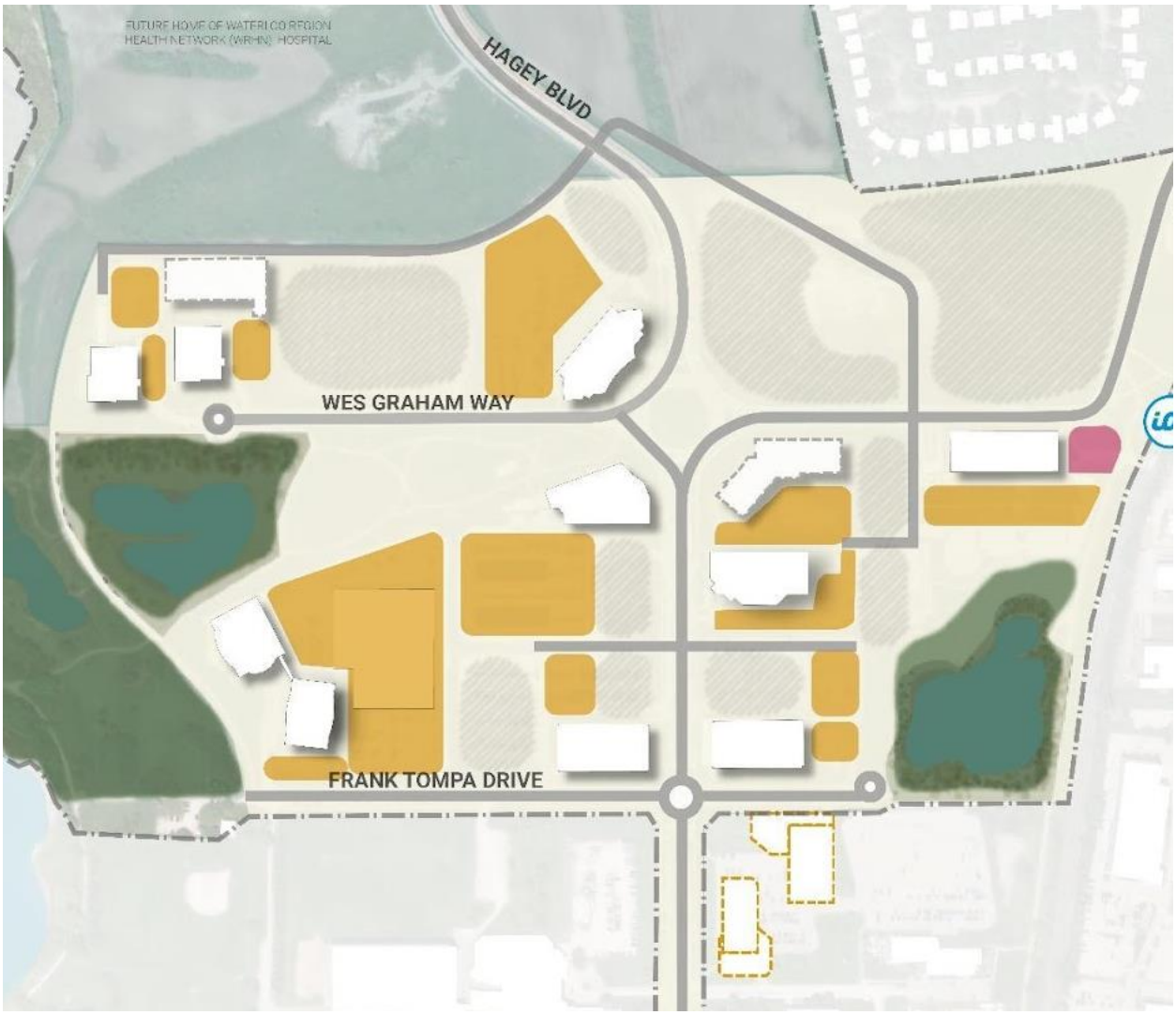
All new streets should also emphasize placemaking through the integration of street trees, landscaping, and green infrastructure that manage stormwater while enhancing aesthetics and comfort. Design often includes amenities that encourage people to linger—benches, public art, outdoor seating for cafés, and spaces for community gathering. The underlying philosophy is that streets are public spaces for people, not just conduits for cars, and that good street design can improve safety, support businesses, and reduce environmental impacts.

# Parking

Noting very low utilization levels in the northwest, northeast and southeast quadrants of R+T Park that reflect broader trends in commercial office occupancy, the concept plans propose a significant reconfiguration of existing parking lots (Figure 8.4: Future Parking Configuration Concept). The reconfiguration generally reduces lot sizes and reorients them to support optimal routing of roadways and active transportation pathways along their edges. Consolidation of parking facilities allows for further infill and activation of smaller parcels, while preserving flexibility to construct higher-capacity structured parking if a combination of future infill, tenant occupancy, and travel trends induce demand.

Parking generation analyses often rely on the ITE's periodic report, Parking Generation, the North American standard for expected parking demand. ITE standards are based on studies from various sources, often reflecting peak hour demands of suburban sites with isolated, single land uses and free parking. To estimate parking demand, analysts multiply a peak demand factor for each land use type by its useable floor area. A first order parking demand estimate for existing developed area within R+T Park, inclusive of the planned hotel development, reflects a need for far fewer spaces than the 3,764 that currently exist or are planned to accompany the new hotel. Compared with spot counts taken in early October 2025, only the Opentext parcel demonstrates an observed demand exceeding the ITE estimate. Maintaining supply on the OpenText parcel of 120 percent of observed demand, and 110 percent of the ITE formula at all other properties to allow for a reserve that ensures availability for tenants and visitors, R+T Park could comfortably remove approximately 1,100 parking spaces from its current parking inventory (Figure 8.5: Initial Parking Reduction Potential).

Figure 8.4: Future Parking Configuration Concept




LEGEND:

- Subject Lands
- Infill Opportunities
- Parking
- Future Parking (as per UW Campus Plan)

Figure 8.5: Initial Parking Reduction Potential

| Building | Stalls | 10/2 Occupancy | Rate | Units | ITE Demand Estimate | Reduced Capacity |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Accelerator Centre** | 381 | 167 | 44% | 100,000 Sq. Ft. GFA | 239 | 263 |
| **Innotech** | 374 | 102 | 27% | 100,000 Sq. Ft. GFA | 239 | 263 |
| **Toby Jenkins Building** | 260 | 83 | 32% | 60,000 Sq. Ft. GFA | 143 | 158 |
| **The Cora Building** | 400 | 69 | 17% | 102,000 Sq. Ft. GFA | 244 | 268 |
| **Opentext I/II** | 1051 | 723 | 69% | 222,000 Sq. Ft. GFA | 531 | 868 |
| **evolv1** | 384 | 78 | 20% | 100,000 Sq. Ft. GFA | 239 | 263 |
| **SAP** | 456 | 69 | 15% | 105,000 Sq. Ft. GFA | 251 | 276 |
| **RAC I/II** | 187 | 70 | 37% | 133,000 Sq. Ft. GFA | 89 | 98 |
| **Future Hotel** | 271 | N/A | N/A | 7,000 Sq. Ft. Conference Space + 216 Guest Rooms | 180 | 198 |
| **Total** | 3,764 | | | | 2,155 | 2,655 |

The overall development concept seeks to not only add infill properties, but also operate as a mixed-use district that relies less on single-occupancy automobiles to access and travel throughout the site. The study team applied a procedure adapted from Urban Land Institute's (ULI) Shared Parking Manual that integrates ITE data with complementary land use, transit access, walkability, and transportation demand management program reduction factors to reflect parking demand and behaviour at full realization of the development concept as a mixed-use district.

Ranges of potential future infill development types and sizes characterize a sample parking analysis scenario. Demand modelling tests the midpoints of those ranges, the addition of 480,000 square feet of laboratory/light industrial space, 120,000 square feet of new office, and 45,000 square feet of commercial service/retail space along with full leasing of existing properties (Figure 8.6: Secondary Parking Reduction Potential). The model assumes that the parking needs of residential uses introduced in the northeast Community Quadrant are met internally in that area. Model results suggest that R+T Park may accommodate an even greater reduction of parking inventory as future use, activity, and mobility goals are met and R+T Park evolves into a denser, more urban district with associated transportation behaviour, supported by interventions such a local active modes improvements, the enhancement of transit service, both regional and between local destinations, and the reduction of vehicle trips as the District becomes more walkable and mixed use.

Figure 8.6: Secondary Parking Reduction Potential

| Building | Stalls | 10/2 Occupancy | Units | Modelled Peak Occupancy | Modelled Required Capacity |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Accelerator Centre** | 381 | 167 | 100,000 Sq. Ft. GFA | 113 | 126 |
| **Innotech** | 374 | 102 | 100,000 Sq. Ft. GFA | 113 | 126 |
| **Toby Jenkins Building** | 260 | 83 | 60,000 Sq. Ft. GFA | 68 | 75 |
| **The Cora Building** | 400 | 69 | 102,000 Sq. Ft. GFA | 115 | 128 |
| **Opentext I/II** | 1051 | 723 | 222,000 Sq. Ft. GFA | 251 | 279 |
| **evolv1** | 384 | 78 | 100,000 Sq. Ft. GFA | 113 | 126 |
| **SAP** | 456 | 69 | 105,000 Sq. Ft. GFA | 119 | 132 |

| Building | Stalls | 10/2 Occupancy | Units | Modelled Peak Occupancy | Modelled Required Capacity |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **RAC I/II** | 187 | 70 | 133,000 Sq. Ft. GFA | 55 | 61 |
| **Future Hotel** | 271 | N/A | 7,000 Sq. Ft. Conference Space + 216 Guest Rooms | 118 | 131 |
| **Future Lab/Light Industrial** | | | 480,000 Sq. Ft. GFA | 197 | 219 |
| **Future Office** | | | 120,000 Sq. Ft. GFA | 159 | 176 |
| **Future Commercial** | | | 45,000 Sq. Ft. GFA | 93 | 103 |
| **Total** | **3,764** | | | **1,512** | **1,680** |

## Management Considerations

Currently, parking is provided for each building by individual leaseholders. Further reductions in parking supply, as reflected in the proposal to pursue infill development on currently developed parcels, may require a shared parking approach across sites. Although this would require reciprocal agreements between leaseholders for access, control of parking within R+T Park is now largely concentrated among a small number of parties—primarily Cora Group, OpenText, and the University—making such arrangements relatively straightforward to implement. This, in turn, would unlock the opportunity for additional development across the site, increasing revenue with minimal additional investment in infrastructure.

Intensification of the site will necessitate a more strategic, demand-managed approach. The long implementation lead time of both factors provides a valuable transition period to adapt to and reshape travel behaviour and shift toward a more balanced transportation mode share. During this transition, R+T Park has a unique opportunity to urbanize thoughtfully. The rationale for reclaiming surface parking for other uses is grounded in both current underutilization and the desire to support a more compact,

mixed-use environment. As development intensifies, surface parking must inevitably dwindle to make room for buildings, public spaces, and mobility infrastructure. At the same time, the plan anticipates a gradual reduction in driving due to several reinforcing factors: greater viability of transit service, enhanced active transportation networks, persisting flexible work patterns, especially for knowledge-based and institutional employment, and the appeal of a more vibrant, walkable district.

Should infill development result in parking shortages over the long term that cannot be adequately addressed through mode shift or other demand-management strategies, additional shared parking opportunities could be explored. Existing large parking inventories such as those associated with the OpenText parcel and the SAP building could function as shared access parking resources serving multiple developments across R+T Park.

In addition, the proposed modification of Hagey Boulevard to a single travel lane in all locations, together with the planned relocation of on-street bicycle accommodations on Wes Graham Way to the curb level, creates an opportunity to introduce parallel curbside parking. This on-street parking would support new ground-level activity along these key roadways while reinforcing their role as local, pedestrian-oriented streets.

Looking ahead, the anticipated opening of the WRHN regional hospital also represents an inflection point for parking management. While current peak parking utilization across R+T Park is just 39 percent, the hospital's arrival may increase competition for parking in the area. Dependent on the amount of supply created by the hospital, and the regulations under which it is managed (e.g., public-access paid parking in structures, employee permit parking in more distant lots), potential exists for spillover effects that may challenge the continued provision of free parking by R+T Park tenants. As University facilities continue to expand on South Campus, increasing scarcity of student and staff paid parking on the South Campus may also put pressure on free and plentiful parking within R+T Park. Lot X, immediately to the south of the District boundary serves as an indicator of expanding University parking demand strain, but may be mitigated by the addition of parking structures indicated in the Campus Master Plan.

# 8.3 Active Transportation

As R+T Park transitions toward a more connected and sustainable urban environment, active transportation emerges as a cornerstone of its mobility plan. Walking, cycling, and micromobility options will work together to create a safe, accessible, and vibrant public realm. Prioritizing infrastructure that supports diverse travel modes and reduces reliance on private vehicles can provide greater choice for workers, visitors, and new residents while enhancing their overall experience.

Each active mode plays a distinct role, and its integration presents an opportunity to reinforce R+T Park's potential as an innovation district. Active transportation priorities include:

- Safe and comfortable walking environments.
- Direct and legible cycling and micromobility routes.
- Infrastructure that supports year-round use, including winter conditions.
- Integration of movement corridors with public space and landscape design.

Many of the proposed active transportation infrastructure installations and modifications will require close collaboration with the City of Waterloo to ensure alignment with the City's Transportation Master Plan, cycling and pedestrian network priorities, and accepted design procedures and practices. Early and ongoing coordination will be important not only to confirm technical feasibility and jurisdictional responsibilities, but also to explore opportunities for co-investment where proposed facilities advance shared municipal objectives.

The active transportation concepts outlined for R+T Park provide a clear and defensible framework for these discussions, demonstrating how site-specific improvements contribute to broader city-wide connectivity, safety, and mode-shift goals.

By clearly articulating desired alignments, cross-sections, and functional roles for active transportation corridors, the proposed concepts can be leveraged as an advocacy tool in conversations with City Transportation Services, Integrated Planning, and Public Works staff. Framing these interventions as extensions or enhancements of the City's planned network—rather than isolated, site-driven improvements—helps position them as mutually beneficial investments that support both local redevelopment and municipal policy objectives. This approach strengthens the case for partnership, funding participation, and coordinated implementation, while ensuring that new

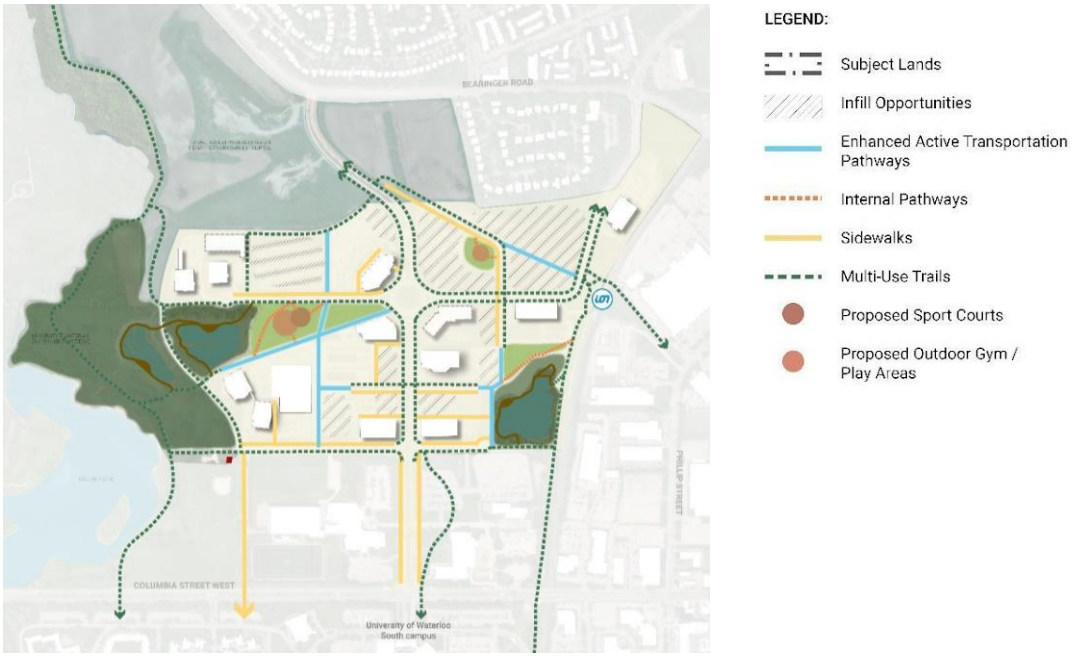
infrastructure is delivered to a standard that is consistent, legible, and integrated into the City's long-term mobility vision.

## Enhanced Active Transportation Pathways

The cornerstone of active transportation improvements, which integrate into the newly introduced roadway pattern to create new 'blocks' within R+T Park, is the introduction of enhanced active transportation pathways (Figure 8.7: Future Active Transportation Network Concept). Envisioned as corridors fully appointed with clearly demarcated pedestrian and cyclist pathways, this link typology would resemble a shared street or woonerf concept without allowing vehicular traffic. In some locations, these corridors would extend beyond a roadway's limited vehicular access function, such as providing access to parking lots, and continue to operate as a continuous movement corridor. Enhanced Active Transportation Pathways are intended to:

- Provide continuous, legible pedestrian and cycling routes.
- Reduce conflicts with vehicles.
- Support placemaking through landscape, lighting, and amenity design.
- Function as public space as well as mobility infrastructure.

Figure 8.7: Future Active Transportation Network Concept



Practical considerations are particularly important in the design of the enhanced active transportation pathway network, especially along the key north-south connection between the OpenText campus and the Accelerator Centre. Pathway design should extend beyond basic circulation to incorporate high-quality materials, landscaping, and integrated stormwater management features.

Opportunities exist to use these corridors to improve runoff management, especially where replacing existing hardscape, through techniques such as permeable surfaces, bioswales, and landscaped setbacks, allowing the pathways to function as both mobility routes and environmental infrastructure.

## Walking

The mobility concept includes a number of enhancements to not just the pedestrian network, but also pedestrian environmental quality. The reconfiguration of building sites, parking areas, and the street network would allow for more direct interior pathways better aligned with desire lines between transit options and existing/future site destinations.

The more compact urban form proposed with a higher concentration of buildings will enhance the pedestrian experience along complete transportation corridors by reducing the space between destinations, creating visual interest, providing shade and wind protection, and increasing the sense of enclosure. Additionally, development concept options described within the Land Use Plan seek to better integrate non-roadway pedestrian pathways with more natural features. A more direct pathway linking the light rail station with existing and future buildings at the southern edge of R+T Park would travel alongside the eastern stormwater management pond. A sidewalk and multi-use path along a proposed new roadway facilitating access from and through the northeast quadrant of the site to the regional hospital could be accompanied by substantial additive landscape to create and maintain complementary green corridors that enrich adjacent land uses. In concert with proposals in the Campus Master Plan, R+T Park could benefit greatly from the formalization of a dedicated pathway linking Frank Tompa Drive and Columbia Street. The pathway would run parallel to Hagey Boulevard, west of the Columbia Ice Field athletic complex. This connection would strengthen active transportation access to and from the main University campus.

## Cycling and Micromobility

Existing trails, multi-use paths, and on-street bicycle lanes generally provide good quality bicycle accommodations to, from, and through R+T Park. However, there remain some opportunities to enhance existing facilities.

The most notable instance is the crossing of Hagey Boulevard by the Laurel/Trans-Canada Trail. Owing to its proximity to the roundabout, the multi-use path crosses the roadway in a configuration that creates potential conflict between cyclists and pedestrians. The designated trail, which uses a standard pedestrian crossing and portions of a narrower concrete sidewalk, forces both pedestrians and cyclists to share a converging and constrained space before either can rejoin the multi-use path. R+T Park management should collaborate with the City of Waterloo to reexamine the crossing from an active transportation facility design perspective as well as from a safety perspective related to vehicular conflicts, potentially including improved signage, flashing beacons, and modified crosswalk markings or even raised crosswalks.

Likewise, the proposed reconfiguration of the larger roundabout intersection at Hagey Boulevard and Wes Graham Way and the re-envisioning of Wes Graham Way as a primary activity corridor creates opportunities and needs for re-examination of the function and location of cycling facilities. Curb location, tree lawn size, and existing sidewalk width present the possibility of upgrading walkways adjacent to primary roadways to multiuse paths, often simply through striping and other pavement marking. These accommodations allow for relocation of unprotected cycling lanes to curb-level, which fundamentally improves roadway safety and cyclist comfort.

Connections to surrounding neighbourhoods and campus edges are as important as the quality of internal active transportation facilities. In order to reduce the island effect of R+T Park's separation from the core campus, facilities should extend to the southern gateway and through Columbia Street. Current in-roadway bicycle crossing markings are geared toward connection to bicycle lanes along Columbia Street rather than campus access. The Discovery Trail concept in the Campus Master Plan should be further explored to upgrade and extend bicycle facilities to Ring Road, which may require collaboration with the Regional Municipality of Waterloo.

Finally, bicycle infrastructure is suitable for a variety of emerging micromobility options including pedal-assisted electric bicycles and both powered and non-powered scooters and skateboards. University staff should investigate expansion of their partnership with the Neuron Mobility e-bike and e-scooter share program that would establish designated parking stations at a potential mobility hub site as well as key focal points within R+T Park as redevelopment establishes greater density and mixed-use dynamics. Such a partnership could also create opportunities to embed research and pilot initiatives within the deployment of shared micromobility, allowing the University to evaluate usage patterns, safety outcomes, curbside management approaches, and travel behaviour change in a real-world campus context. Leveraging R+T Park as a living laboratory would support both mobility objectives and the University's broader research and innovation mandate.

# 8.4 Transit

The role of transit infrastructure in shaping mobility and development within and surrounding R+T Park continues to evolve as it becomes increasingly central. The fortuitous presence of the ION light rail station will impact future development patterns, support sustainable mobility, and enhance access to key destinations, including the anticipated site-adjacent regional hospital. However, improving connectivity within R+T Park requires addressing some connection challenges and consideration of flexible transit solutions that may be better suited to serve unique needs and respond to uncertain demand fluctuations and gradually changing land use patterns.

## ION Light Rail

Grand River Transit's ION Light Rail service is a transit anchor and a key mobility asset for R+T Park and its importance will grow significantly with the construction and beginning of operations of the new regional hospital. The presence of the station has the opportunity to catalyze mixed-use transit-oriented development, especially in the eastern half of the site, and to reduce reliance on private vehicles and correlated parking demand.

R+T Park management should emphasize the premium asset that proximate access to light rail transit represents to community members and enhance connections to the light rail station through improved signage, landscaping, and comfortable pedestrian routes between the platform and key destinations. Plaza space between the evolv1 parcel, the light rail platform, and connecting bus stops should be considered an anchor for the local active transportation network and an ideal location to site a mobility hub.

## GRT Bus Service

At present, relatively few transit users complete the final leg of their journey using stops located within R+T Park itself. In contrast, express bus services operating along Columbia Street experience higher ridership, reflecting their role in serving longer-distance, regional trips and providing direct connections to major destinations.

Discussions with Grand River Transit have indicated that the development of the new regional hospital will prompt a broader re-evaluation of bus routing in the area. While a primary objective of any service redesign would be to help bridge walking distances between the hospital and the ION station, regional transit planning staff have stated an intention to consider local demand patterns, transfer opportunities, and the potential for different routes to circulate through R+T Park.

Future local bus service through R+T Park could play an important role in improving access for users who are less able or willing to walk longer distances. As travel demand within the District grows and diversifies, well-designed local routing can significantly improve the practicality of transit for everyday trips, even if overall ridership remains lower than on express corridors or the ION Light Rail. R+T Park management should continue to engage with Grand River Transit as service planning evolves, using redevelopment concepts and anticipated land use changes to demonstrate how local transit service could become increasingly viable over time. Framing R+T Park, the hospital, and the main University campus as an interconnected district with distinct but complementary roles for express and local transit will be important in advocating for service designs that respond to the longer-term mobility needs created by intensification.

# District Mobility and Circulation

As valuable as the ION light rail connection is to R+T Park, long walking distances from the station diminish the practicality of transit access for certain parcels, particularly those areas in the western half of the District. As development intensifies, the success of transit access will depend not only on regional rapid transit, which is focused solely on arrival to the area, but on the quality of local, intra-district connections that link the hospital, R+T Park destinations, and the main University campus. Improving these internal connections will be especially important for staff, students, patients, and visitors who may have reasons to spend portions of their day in different locales, but limited tolerance for time consuming walking routes or transit connections.

Previously described bus routing options that provide more direct connections between the hospital, R+T Park employment uses, and the main University campus could significantly enhance the usefulness of transit for short internal trips, not just regional travel. R+T Park management should continue to participate actively in these discussions, using the proposed development concepts to advocate for service patterns that reflect emerging density, mixed-use activity, and evolving connectivity needs as R+T Park intensifies through vacant parcel development and infill activity.

In parallel, University staff may wish to further explore the role of a local shuttle or on-demand microtransit service to supplement regional transit and provide flexible, campus-focused connectivity. Such a service could circulate between the primary University campus, R+T Park, the new regional hospital, ION light rail stations, and potentially nearby areas of concentrated student housing. The University currently operates a limited employee shuttle service between Lot X and key campus destinations during peak morning and afternoon periods. While this service is modest in scope and frequency, it demonstrates an operational foundation that could inform future district-scale mobility solutions. Over the longer term, the University may consider an autonomous shuttle solution or similar microtransit service operating within the

District. With appropriate routing, service frequency, and integration with campus and regional transit, such a service could function as a reliable “last-mile” connector, particularly for trips that are too long to walk comfortably but too short to justify private vehicle use. An autonomous shuttle could reduce reliance on private vehicles for short trips while reinforcing R+T Park’s integration with the broader campus.

As a next step, the University should undertake a feasibility study of potential service models, including fixed-route shuttles, demand-responsive microtransit, or hybrid approaches that adjust service levels based on time of day or activity patterns. The feasibility study should evaluate operational requirements, capital and operating costs, governance and regulatory considerations, potential partnerships, and scalability over time. Ideally, this work would be initiated in advance of the hospital opening to allow sufficient time for piloting. Early coordination with the Region of Waterloo and Grand River Transit would help ensure that local shuttle services complement, rather than duplicate, regional transit investments. Together, these efforts would support a layered mobility strategy in which regional rapid transit is reinforced by strong local connections, ensuring that the hospital, R+T Park, and the main University campus function as a well-connected district rather than proximate but distinct destinations.

# 8.5 Mobility Hubs and Wayfinding

A mobility hub is a clearly defined transportation node that brings together public transit, shared mobility services, and active transportation amenities in one accessible location. By offering flexible travel options and minimizing transition times between modes, mobility hubs enable users to complete trips using a combination of transportation methods. Greater ability to walk, cycle, ride transit, or take advantage of ride-sharing services enhances convenience, connectivity, and overall mobility.

Multimodal wayfinding signage provides clear, coordinated guidance for users navigating across different modes within a shared transportation network. It helps travelers seamlessly transition between modes by offering consistent visual cues, directional information, and travel time estimates tailored to each mode's needs and pace.

## Mobility Hubs

A Mobility Hub serving R+T Park would serve as a clearly defined transportation node that brings together public transit and other transportation infrastructure. By minimizing transition times and offering flexible travel options, such a hub would enhance connectivity for students, researchers, employees, and visitors navigating between R+T Park, the University campus, and surrounding destinations.

In R+T Park context, a mobility hub would support multimodal travel by integrating walking and cycling routes with public transit access, potential shared mobility services and personal vehicle amenities, all situated near research institutions, tech offices, and collaborative spaces. This approach enables users to seamlessly switch modes for different segments of their journey, promoting more sustainable and efficient travel behaviour.

Even at a modest scale, mobility hubs can elevate overall accessibility in innovation districts. They can provide high-impact amenities such as designated areas for parking, shared ride pick-up and drop-off, access to shared bikes or scooters, and real-time transit connection information. These hubs may also incorporate placemaking elements—such as seating, public art, green infrastructure, and public wireless internet—to enhance the public realm.

Implementing a mobility hub in a developed area like R+T Park often involves repurposing existing space, such as portions of surface parking lots. Cost-effective deployment is possible by leveraging existing infrastructure and amenities. As previously mentioned, the gateway area at the ION light rail station in concert with nearby underutilized surface parking, intersected by a primary, trail, sidewalk, and multi-use path connections could facilitate connections for all visitors. Ideal hub design

would integrate secure bicycle parking between the light rail platform and connecting bus stops on a relatively compact footprint, serving not only as a destination, but also as a starting point for connecting new area residents and hotel guests to the broader region.

**Figure 8.8:** Mobility Hub Conceptual Example

# Wayfinding

As R+T Park strives to become more multi-faceted, serving different tenant types as well as different types of travelers, it will be important to provide specific information and visual cues for each of those groups to reach local destinations. Building on the discussion of wayfinding signage as a placemaking element at gateways, navigational signage serves as a campus' first touchpoint for delivering a positive visitor experience. Given that the primary gateway between R+T Park and the University at Columbia Street is somewhat removed from the site's core area, R+T Park management should consider complementary gateway features that further establish a sense of arrival at the intersection of Hagey Boulevard and Frank Tompa Drive.

Beyond its role at gateway locations, wayfinding signage for R+T Park should be scaled appropriately to its intended use and audience, distinguishing between pedestrian- and cyclist-oriented signage versus vehicular signage. Active transportation wayfinding should include both distance and time estimates for walking and cycling, using generous time allowances based on below-average travel speeds. This ensures inclusivity for seniors, children, and individuals with mobility impairments. Active transportation directional signage should be located where facilities intersect to guide movement throughout the site.

Wayfinding elements should be categorized into distinct groups:

- Gateway Signage
- Vehicular Wayfinding
- Active Transportation Wayfinding
- Building Identification Markers

Signage across R+T Park should maintain a cohesive visual identity, forming a unified signage family that reflects inclusion within site boundaries. The existing branding scheme, visible in existing gateway features and street signs, should be extended to all wayfinding installations. R+T Park management should collaborate with the City of Waterloo to align signage design with local and regional standards, particularly for multi-use trails that border and traverse the site.

Frequency of wayfinding signage placement should be strategic and minimal, avoiding redundancy and visual clutter. Where possible, consolidate multiple messages into a single sign to preserve the clarity and effectiveness of communication. Signage should prioritize essential information only, as excessive detail can overwhelm users and reduce legibility. R+T Park management may consider dynamic enhancements to

wayfinding, such as QR codes and digital kiosks. QR codes may be embedded in most forms of signage, which allows users to instantly access interactive maps, directions, or real-time updates about their surroundings. Digital kiosks in public areas can serve as centralized touchpoints that offer visual maps and contextual information such as nearby amenities, transit schedules, or accessibility features.

# 8.6 Implementation Strategy

## Phasing

The following section outlines implementation actions over periods of 1-3 years (quick wins), 1-5 years (short term), 5-10 years (medium term), and 10-20 years (long term. In addition, a few implementation actions are identified as “flex” actions, which are characterized as as-needed or ongoing actions.

Each implementation action is described in terms of level of impact, required time investment by University of Waterloo staff resources, and cost. These are rated as either low, medium and high and are meant to be indicative only, giving a high-level understanding of the relative importance of the actions and the level of effort and magnitude of infrastructure and contracting costs that are likely required to achieve them.

### Quick Wins—1-3 yrs

**Winter Maintenance Upgrades**

Ensure adherence to higher snow clearing standards on key internal active transportation routes.

| | |
|---|---|
| Level of Impact | High |
| Staff Resources | Low |
| Cost | Low |
| Lead Responsibility | University of Waterloo |
| Supporting | R+T Park Staff |

### Basic District-Wide Parking Management Approach

Remove surplus surface parking based on observed underutilization where it facilitates future land use and active transportation opportunities.

| | |
|---|---|
| Level of Impact | High |
| Staff Resources | Medium |
| Cost | Low |
| Lead Responsibility | R+T Park Staff |
| Supporting | R+T Park Leaseholders |

## Sidewalk Upgrades

### Sidewalk Upgrades

Upgrade identified sidewalks to multi-use path (MUP) standards through surface/geometry/signage changes to improve the quality of active modes infrastructure.

- Convert existing extra-wide sidewalks that otherwise meet current MUP standards through surface markings and signage.
- Bring other sidewalks identified for conversion to future MUPs up to specifications related to width and surface condition.

| | |
|---|---|
| Level of Impact | Low |
| Staff Resources | Medium |
| Cost | Medium (may be primarily borne by the City of Waterloo) |
| Lead Responsibility | City of Waterloo |
| Supporting | R+T Park Staff |

**Initiate Redesign Process for Great Circle Roundabout (Phase 1)**

This action ultimately needs to be undertaken by the City of Waterloo, but R+T Park has an essential role to play in putting a redesign on the City's agenda and shepherding a design through to implementation.

- Open discussion with the City of Waterloo regarding redesign of the roundabout.
- Build support for the change with UWaterloo, the campus community, and the surrounding community through informational campaigns and surveys.
- Support the City of Waterloo during the redesign process, aiming for initiation of this process in the 1-5 year short-term window.

| | |
|---|---|
| Level of Impact | High |
| Staff Resources | High |
| Cost | Low |
| Lead Responsibility | City of Waterloo |
| Supporting | R+T Park Staff |

**Transit and Shared Mobility Changes**

This action involves a variety of actions, both proactive and in response to changes in the role and number of services different mobility options may perform in the future.

- Engage and advocate in the GRT bus routing change process tied to the opening of the new regional hospital.
- Design and implement a mobility hub at the ION light rail station that may incorporate a portion of the adjacent evolv1 lot to house protected bicycle parking, micromobility, car-share, and other navigation features.
- Expand the University's relationship with micromobility service providers to serve locations across R+T Park.
- Investigate feasibility and pilot demand-responsive microtransit service linking the main campus, R+T Park, the new regional hospital, and ION light rail.

| | |
|---|---|
| Level of Impact | High |

| | |
|---|---|
| Staff Resources | Medium |
| Cost | Medium |
| Lead Responsibility | R+T Park Staff |
| Supporting | University of Waterloo. Region of Waterloo, R+T Park Leaseholders, Shared Mobility Providers, Microtransit Operators |

## Medium Term—5-10 years

**Implement Redesign of Great Circle Roundabout (Phase 2)**

Assuming successful initiation of Phase 1 in the short-term window, implementation should occur in the 5-10 year medium term window.

- Support City of Waterloo in tendering and construction of roundabout reconstruction.
- If required, work with UWaterloo to identify UWaterloo fund contributions to the reconstruction.

| | |
|---|---|
| Level of Impact | High |
| Staff Resources | Medium |
| Cost | High (may be primarily borne by the City of Waterloo) |
| Lead Responsibility | City of Waterloo |
| Supporting | R+T Park Staff |

**Design and Implement New Internal Transportation Network Connections**

This action combines augmentation of both the vehicular travel network and reconfiguration of internal active transportation facilities.

- Formalize internal pedestrian desire lines through parking areas using paved walkways.
- Construct enhanced active transportation pathways (shared-street / woonerf typology without vehicles) as well as new local driveways to break up superblocks.
- Improve pedestrian connections between ION station and internal destinations
- Introduce on-street parking on Hagey / Wes Graham to support repurposed or new ground-floor activity.

| | |
|---|---|
| Level of Impact | High |
| Staff Resources | High |
| Cost | Medium (may be borne by developers where implemented on vacant sites) |
| Lead Responsibility | R+T Park Staff |
| Supporting | R+T Park Leaseholders |

**Corridor Level Stormwater Management Best Practices**

This action integrates stormwater management best practices into active transportation corridors and major roadway modifications.

- Integrate stormwater management (bioswales, permeable paving) into active transportation corridors.
- Design and implement stormwater management features (bioswales, permeable paving) as traffic friction measures on Hagey Blvd and Wes Graham Way (lane removal, intersection geometry such as curb extensions, on-street parking lane protection).

| | |
|---|---|
| Level of Impact | Low |

| | |
|---|---|
| Staff Resources | Medium |
| Cost | Medium (may be borne by the City of Waterloo on public roadways) |
| Lead Responsibility | City of Waterloo (public ROW), R+T Park Staff (other corridors) |
| Supporting | R+T Park Staff (public ROW), R+T Park Leaseholders |

**Design and Implement External Circulation Improvements**

This set of actions combines enhancement of local infrastructure that passes through or along the edges of R+T park along with connective infrastructure projects proposed by adjacent planning initiatives.

- Improve the Laurel / Trans-Canada Trail crossing of Hagey Boulevard through changes to connection geometry and the addition of markings and beacons.
- Implement the Innovation Trail connection south to Ring Road as proposed in the Campus Plan.

| | |
|---|---|
| Level of Impact | High |
| Staff Resources | Medium |
| Cost | Medium (some costs may be borne by the City and Region) |
| Lead Responsibility | City of Waterloo, Region of Waterloo |
| Supporting | University of Waterloo, R+T Park Staff |

## Long Term—10-20 years

**Advanced District-Wide Parking Management Approach**

As the site intensifies, a more strategic, demand-managed approach to parking will be required. Reprogramming areas currently occupied by surface parking is supported by both existing underutilization and the objective of creating a more compact, mixed-use environment.

- Implement shared off-street parking agreements as the demand profile related to infill and mobility enhancements changes.
- Monitor hospital-related parking demand and potential for spillover, adjusting management of R+T Park supply accordingly.

| | |
|---|---|
| Level of Impact | High |
| Staff Resources | Low |
| Cost | Low |
| Lead Responsibility | R+T Park Staff |
| Supporting | R+T Park Leaseholders |

# Metrics and Performance Indicators

The following metrics can be used to track and assess performance of the District as it evolves over time. Some metrics are objective whereas others are subjective and would need to be determined via user surveys and/or a district-wide travel survey.

## Infrastructure Performance

**Number of end-of-trip facilities available to cyclists**
(showers, lockers, change rooms, secure bike storage across district buildings)

**Parking occupancy levels** (should aim for movement towards 90% peak daily occupancy; measured by parking counts)

**Total surface parking district-wide** (should decline over time)

**Parking supply ratio: stalls per 1,000 sq ft of gross floor area** (should decline over time)

**Transit service frequency changes** (move toward shorter headways to make transit more practical)

## User Behaviour

**Single-occupant vehicle (SOV) mode share**

- The proportion of commute trips to and from R+T Park made by driving alone.

**Transit usage within and adjacent to R+T Park**

- Boardings and alightings at ION Light Rail stations and bus stops serving or located within R+T Park.

**Active transportation volumes**

- Counts of pedestrians and cyclists at key nodes and along primary street corridors, tracked consistently over time to identify trends.

**Combined active and sustainable transportation mode share**

- Percentage of internal and external trips made by walking, cycling, and transit combined, measured against a baseline established at plan adoption.

**Shared mobility utilization**

- Usage levels of bike share, micromobility stations (e-scooters, e-bikes), and carshare vehicles based within R+T Park.

User behaviour metrics can be assessed through data where it is available from the City of Waterloo or Waterloo Region or other mobility providers. If gaps in data exist, a mobility survey can be undertaken.

## User Perception

**Perceived safety of walking**

- User-reported sense of safety when walking within the District, assessed separately for daytime and after-hours conditions.

**Perceived walking comfort across seasons**

- User perception of walking comfort under different weather conditions, including summer shade, wind exposure, and winter maintenance.

**Perceived directness and legibility of pedestrian routes**

- User perception of how intuitive, direct, and easy to navigate walking routes are between key destinations within R+T Park.

**Bicycle parking and end-of-trip satisfaction**

- User satisfaction with the availability, security, and convenience of bicycle parking and associated end-of-trip facilities.

User perception metrics should be assessed through recurring surveys

# 09 | Plan Governance and Review

# 9.1 Plan Governance and Review

The R+T Park Strategic Plan and Innovation District Design provides a comprehensive conceptual land-use and business framework to help guide future design and development decisions for business development, land use planning, development, public realm, and mobility.

As a key part of the ongoing governance and management of R+T Park, this Strategic Plan should undergo regular review and consideration with respect to monitoring performance, and plan adherence and outcomes, particularly with respect to changing priorities and economic conditions.

It is recommended that reviews happen in the following cycle:

## Annual Review Cycle

On an annual basis, the Real Estate and R+T Park management teams should undertake a week-long assessment of the Plan and current implementation to assess:

Alignment between current priorities and plan phasing and implementation.

Progress and outcomes over the previous year with metrics and data collection, including:

- Build SF, Leased SF, Vacant SF
- Year-over-year revenue and costs
- Inquiries and pipeline for development and tenancy
- Research funding and Coop positions
- Programs delivered, participation
- Digital media engagement

Assess the plan with respect to changes in planning, markets, finances, resources and other conditions that may impact implementation and outcomes.

Ensure continued alignment with broader University strategic planning, such as the Campus Plan, Waterloo @ 100, Global Futures, Sustainability Strategy, and so on as may be amended from time to time.

Such reviews will form the basis for an Annual Report to the R+T Park Advisory Council and the Buildings and Properties Committee of the Board of Governors, and shared with other relevant committees such as PACOD, PACES, CaPS, and so on as may be appropriate at the direction of the VP, Administration & Finance.

This Annual Report should also serve as the foundation for a public Annual Report, which can be leveraged for engagement, marketing, and business development purposes.

## Five-Year Comprehensive Review

The R+T Park Strategic Plan and Innovation District Design should be comprehensively reviewed every five years with the support of qualified consulting professionals. This process should be much deeper, thorough and comprehensive than the Annual Plan reviews, looking at longer term impacts, outcomes, challenges, and alignments.

The five-year review should include:

- Broader review for alignment with the Campus Plan and Strategic Plans of the University.
- Engagement with leadership and key stakeholders in the Office of Research, Co-operative and Experiential Education, relevant faculties and research institutes.
- Engagement with the tenants, developers, the R+T Park Advisory Council and Community Impact Committee, the Waterloo Technology Ecosystem, and other users of R+T Park.
- Engagement with the City of Waterloo, the Region of Waterloo, WRHN, Grand River Transit and other government agencies as may be appropriate.

It is also recommended that the University of Waterloo maintain a landing page on the R+T Park website for the Strategic Plan that outlines in-progress and upcoming projects, key facts, figures, and additional project status and implementation information, including the Annual Report. This page will continue to maintain and raise awareness of the plan and invite ongoing engagement from a wide variety of stakeholders.

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