

FORT SASKATCHEWAN Downtown ACTION PLAN





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Introduction

Downtown Fort Saskatchewan has been the historical, commercial, and geographic centre for much of the city's history – with most of the residents living within, or adjacent to, the commercial areas of the downtown core. In the early 2000's, as the city grew and expanded, this situation changed. Newer neighbourhoods extended further and further away from the downtown, and new competing commercial areas sprung up along the highway corridor to serve the new and growing population.

These newer commercial areas benefit from the close proximity to larger residential areas, as well as the busy highway corridor – which also provides them with significant visibility, compared to the downtown. Given these advantages, the downtown must develop a tailored approach to attract customers and new development.

This situation is not unique to Fort Saskatchewan. Shifting demographics and growing suburban populations are a common part of a city's evolution. Municipalities across North America struggle with how to support their downtowns revitalize, evolve, and be successful.

The purpose of the Downtown Action Plan is to provide a strategy to support our downtown. Four primary goals have been identified to increase the vibrancy of the downtown:

1. Increase the number of visitors to the downtown;
2. Increase the frequency in which visitors come downtown;
3. Increase the length of time visitors stay downtown; and
4. Increase private sector investment in the downtown.

To achieve these goals, there needs to be a multi-faceted approach that encourages increased visitations and development in the downtown. The Downtown Action Plan is designed to be short-term in nature (1 to 3 years) and to identify those initiatives that will have a more immediate impact and are readily achievable.

Within this Plan, you will find:

- An overview of the downtown, including:
 - » Why the downtown matters;
 - » Redevelopment history; and
 - » Current profile.
- A summary of previous public consultation.
- Motivation for acting now.
- Recommendations and options on how to best support the business and development community achieve the above listed goals.

The purpose of this strategy is to provide a roadmap for supporting the downtown. The recommendations contained within this document were developed to address a specific need or gap within the existing downtown ecosystem. Each of the recommendations include individual timelines and resource requirements for implementation. They can be incorporated as a set as identified through the options contained within this document, or individually depending on available resources and desire.

The ultimate goal is to establish downtown as the community's gathering place where events, programming, and activities, bring people together to socialize, celebrate, engage, and support the business community in the district. In achieving this vision, the plan focuses on increasing coordination between the City and external stakeholders, adding new and enhancing existing programming, adding amenities to attract visitors to the downtown, and promoting the district to a broad audience within the city and around the region.

Why the Downtown Matters

Because revitalization can be an extensive process, it is important to understand why downtowns are an important part of the community. Downtowns are a critical part of many cities, providing value that extends far beyond the boundaries of the district or area. These benefits include, but are by no means limited to:



Community Gathering Place

“Third Place” refers to locations that are not our home (“First Place”) or our place of employment (“Second Place”), but rather those public and commercial places where we gather, socialize, celebrate, and interact with others. Third places enhance the quality of life and strengthen resident ties to their community. Downtowns provide a rich mix of “Third Places” such as cafes, restaurants, shops, parks, activities, festivals, and events that encourage and facilitate gatherings and socializing.



Community Identity

Newer commercial centres are designed for convenience and frequently possess a similar look and feel, regardless of the community in which they are located. Downtowns are often very unique. Images of the downtown can be used to identify the community without context. In short, downtowns serve as the historic and cultural “heart” of a community.



Opportunity for Small/Local Business

Large commercial centres prefer established brands and can be reluctant to lease space to smaller, independent businesses, and start-ups. Furthermore, the lease rates of these centres are too high for small business owners and entrepreneurs to afford. With lower than average rents, a variety of rental options, and a unique environment, downtowns offer small business owners opportunities that are typically not available in larger commercial centres.



First Impression

Because they are so readily identifiable, downtowns often provide visitors to the community with their “first impression”. The downtown core is often the first stop for tourists, visitors, potential developers as well as potential investors. Their view of the municipality can be heavily influenced and shaped by what they see and experience downtown. A vibrant and dynamic downtown can leave a positive first impression and encourage repeat business and visits.



Highly Efficient Land-Use

Given their unique make up, downtowns offer a wide variety of residential, commercial and institutional uses in a compact amount of land. This often reduces the cost to the municipality to provide servicing. This variety of uses also provides a wider range of services to residents in the area, resulting in a positive impact on overall quality of life. It also can have the added benefit of increasing walkability, while reducing Green House Gas (GHG) emissions.

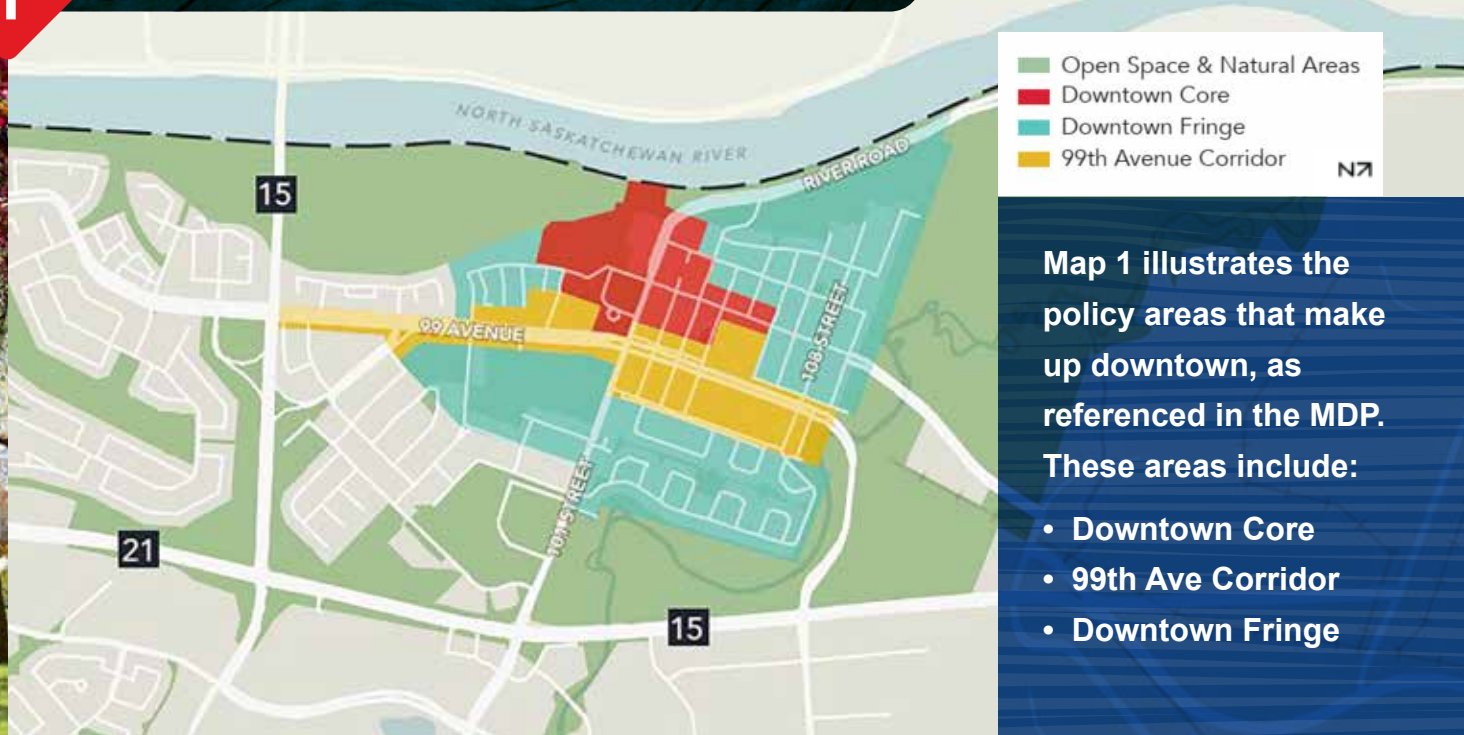
Downtown Fort Saskatchewan

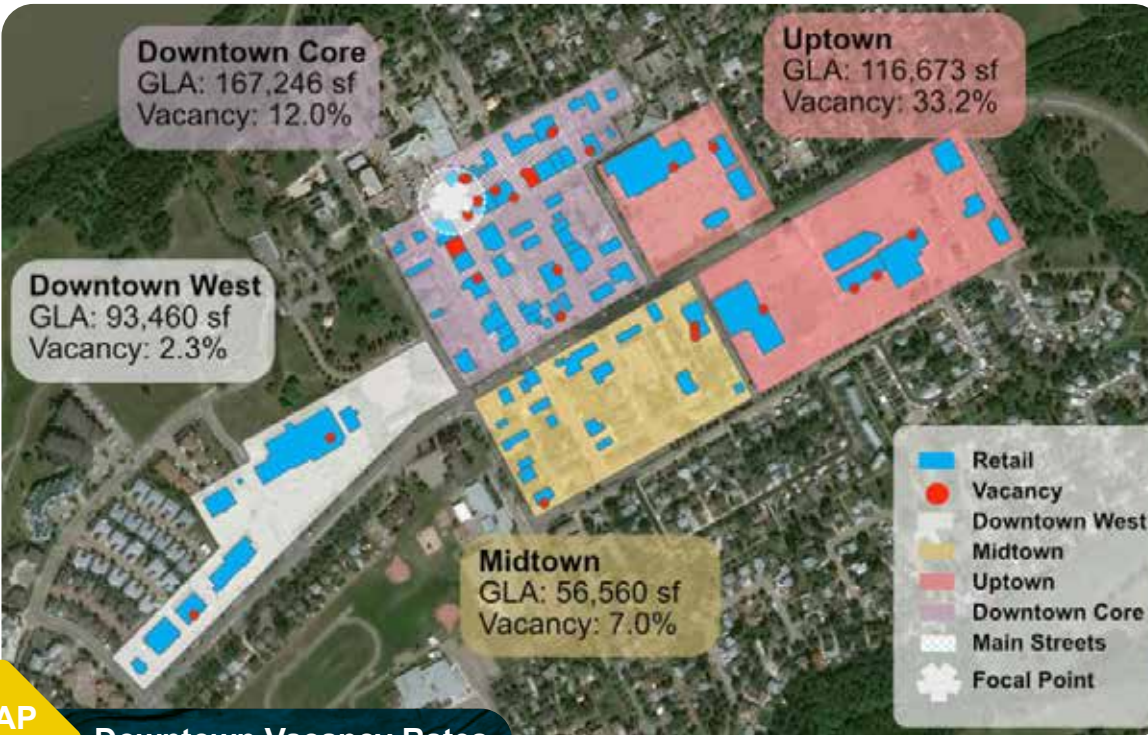
As identified in the City's Municipal Development Plan (MDP), Downtown Fort Saskatchewan is 'Everyone's Neighbourhood'. It is where visitors come to experience Fort Saskatchewan, where our community gathers to celebrate, and is the focal point of the city's social activities.



MAP
1

Municipal Development Plan Downtown Policy Areas

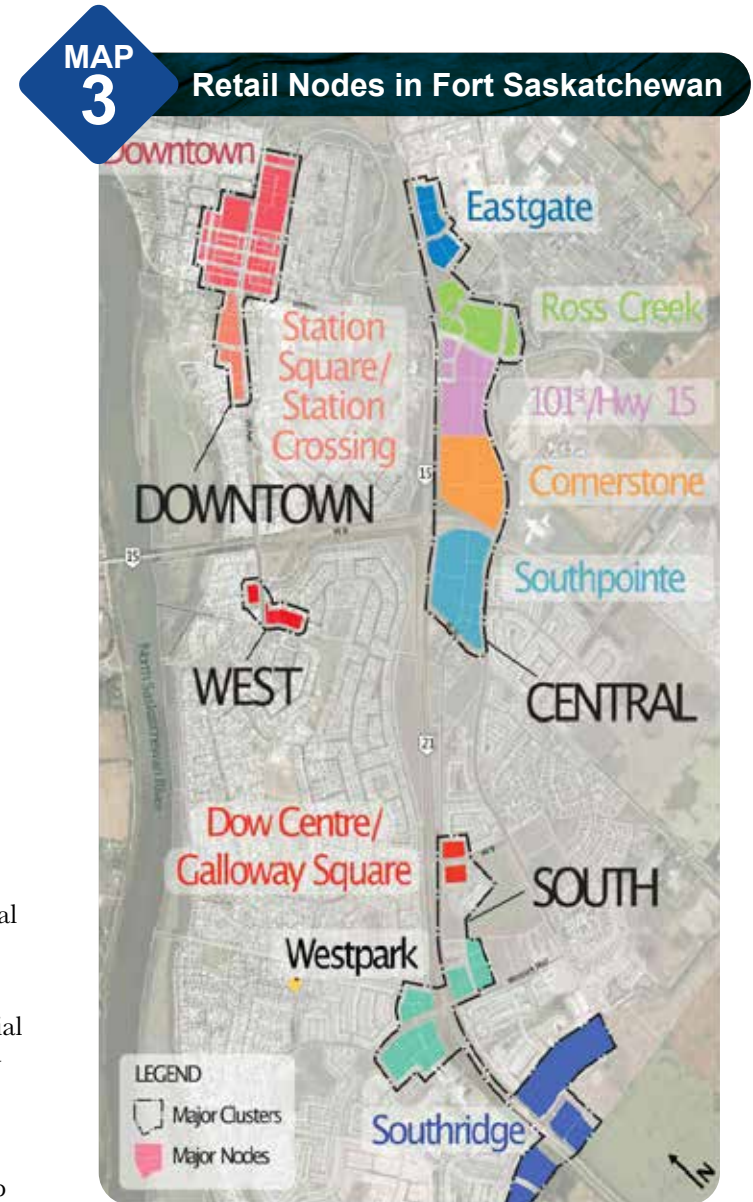




MAP 2 Downtown Vacancy Rates

As the *Downtown Core* and *99th Avenue Corridor* comprise the main business zones of the downtown district, this strategy will focus primarily on those two policy areas. These areas have faced several challenges in the past two decades. The *2019 Retail Market and Gap Analysis* identified a city-wide retail vacancy rate of 5.3% for the city, suggesting a healthy retail market overall. However, the overall commercial vacancy rate for the downtown was 15%. When factoring for new commercial construction, this is the highest vacancy rate within the city. As illustrated in Map 2, the vacancy rate in the *99th Ave Corridor* was particularly high, reaching approximately 33% in some areas.

With the rapid growth and expansion of the city beginning in the early 2000's, the residential growth and population shifted further from the traditional downtown core. As illustrated in Map 3, new commercial growth followed this trend with big box stores and smaller retailers establishing along the Highway 15/21 corridor, becoming the main commercial hub for most residents. As the city continues to grow, it is anticipated that commercial areas along the highway corridor including Southridge, Westpark, and Southpointe, will continue to grow along with it, increasing the competition with the downtown.



MAP 3 Retail Nodes in Fort Saskatchewan

Downtown Redevelopment History

As mentioned previously, beginning in the early 2000’s, residential and commercial growth began to expand along the highway corridor, increasing competition and pushing the city’s population further from the downtown. This resulted in a noticeable decline in businesses in the downtown, prompting a response from the City and external stakeholders. The following timeline presented in Table 1.0 illustrates the work undertaken by the City and its external partners to address the challenges faced by the downtown.

TABLE 1.0: PREVIOUS REDEVELOPMENT AND REVITALIZATION INITIATIVES

YEAR	HIGHLIGHTS	YEAR	HIGHLIGHTS	YEAR	HIGHLIGHTS	
2002	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Chamber of Commerce and City host a downtown workshop Downtown Steering Committee is formed within the Chamber of Commerce Downtown Business Council is formed 	2009	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DARP is adopted by Council 	2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council adopts 4-year Strategic Plan. With the Community Vision, downtown was recognized as “...the heart of the community; it is a vibrant destination for business or play and an attractive place to live”. The Strategic Plan lists “Update the approach to downtown redevelopment” as a strategic initiative” 	
	2004	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> City’s Economic Development Board recommends the creation of a Downtown Redevelopment Advisory Committee (DRAC) 	2010		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of DARP (Year 1) Downtown marketing and branding strategy is adopted by Council Storefront Improvement and Curbside Enhancement programs launched 	
		2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council approves the creation of the DRAC Council adopts the Strategic Plan which identifies Downtown as a major priority area 		2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of DARP (Year 2)
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Downtown engagement survey conducted 		2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implementation of DARP (Year 3) 	2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MDP and downtown specific consultations are undertaken A Retail and Market Gap Analysis specific for downtown is conducted
2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dr. Avi Friedman presents a vision for the downtown Planning for the Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan (DARP) begins, using the vision developed by Dr. Avi Friedman as its basis 	2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construction of new City Hall is completed Downtown beautification projects initiated (hanging baskets, streetlights, wayfinding signs, etc.) Storefront Improvement program expanded city-wide 	2020		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Work begins on the Downtown Action Strategy
	2014		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Curbside Enhancement and Storefront Improvement programs are consolidated 		2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Our Fort, Our Future: The City of Fort Saskatchewan’s Municipal Development Plan</i> is adopted by Council
			2016			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New city-wide Business Support programs are developed

Downtown Profile

In 2019, the City conducted a *Retail and Market Gap Analysis*. A supplemental retail profile was prepared for the downtown to better understand the unique economic conditions and demographics. The findings of this report are included as Appendix A and are summarized below.

TABLE 2.0 – DOWNTOWN RETAIL PROFILE SUMMARY

RETAIL PROFILE SUMMARY	
COMMERCIAL DISTRICT SIZE	50 acres
TOTAL GROSS LEASE AREA	304,011 square feet
VACANCY	15.0%
DOWNTOWN VISITS	83% visit Downtown on a monthly basis or more
PURPOSE OF VISIT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shopping (32.3%) • Services (26.8%) • Entertainment / Dining (19.7%) • Walk / Browse (5.1%) • Work (4.5%)
VISIT DURATION	85% of visitor spend less than two hours downtown
COMMERCIAL INVENTORY BREAK-DOWN (TOP 5)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Professional Services (23.2%) • Vacant (15.0%) • Grocery & Specialty Food (9.3%) • Specialty Retail (7.8%) • Personal Services (6.3%) • Full Service Food & Beverage (6.1%)
DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE SUMMARY	
POPULATION	4,296
HOUSEHOLDS	1,854
AVERAGE DWELLING VALUE	\$396,089
AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME	\$106,930 (24% below the city average)
HOME OWNERS	1,129 (60.9%)
POPULATION AGE	Higher than average percentage of adults 55+

Downtown Fort Saskatchewan has a current catchment area of approximately 4,250 residents. That means, only 16% of the City’s almost 27,000 residents live closer to downtown than the other commercial areas along the highway. At 304,011 square feet of retail space, the downtown holds over 23% of the city’s entire retail inventory.

Traditionally a catchment area of 4,250 residents has the capacity to support a retail inventory of approximately 100,000 square feet – less than a third of the current inventory today. This should translate into a very high commercial vacancy rate in the downtown, yet the data shows the vacancy rate to be only 15%, much lower than expected. While 15% is considered a high vacancy rate, and is higher than the rest of the average across the city (5.3%), it is not as high as the data suggests it could be. This speaks to the unique draw that downtown offers.

The data also suggests that downtown, as it exists today, is a service hub, as opposed to a retail hub. This is reflected in the high percentage of residents who listed “services” as their reason for visiting the downtown (26.8%) as well as the high percentage of professional service inventory (23.2%). Both of these figures are higher than is typically seen in a traditional commercial district.

The data illustrates that residents do visit downtown, to shop (32.3%), access services (26.8%), and for entertainment/dining purposes (19.7%). Overall this suggests that there is an opportunity to build on the unique draw that the downtown offers and that increasing visitors will have a positive impact on the business community. To support the business and development community, redevelopment and revitalization initiatives should focus on creating and promoting the area as a destination and experience.

Consultation and Public Engagement

Over the years, the City has conducted a number of public engagement initiatives specific to the downtown. One of the most comprehensive was the Downtown Redevelopment Advisory Committee survey conducted in 2006 which identified a defined public vision that formed the basis of the Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan. Additional engagements include a Brand Identity survey in 2010, a parking survey conducted in 2013, and a business and property owner survey conducted in 2017. In conjunction with the MDP consultations conducted in 2019 the City also conducted downtown stakeholder surveys and engagement workshops for the purpose of drafting this strategy.

The key findings from the consultations held in 2017 and in 2019 were quite similar and pointed to:

- Widespread public support for revitalization efforts in the downtown
- Frustration with regulations and processes for starting and making changes to downtown businesses
- A desire for more ‘street life’ including sidewalk cafes, downtown events, and activities
- A need for a strategy to address vacant lots and encourage development
- Strong support for the attraction of retail and shopping options downtown



Why Now?

In 2018, Council adopted the 2018-2022 Strategic Plan which identifies the downtown as a key piece of the overall community vision.

“...Downtown is the heart of the community; it is a vibrant destination for businesses or play and an attractive place to live...”

**FORT SASKATCHEWAN
STRATEGIC PLAN**

The City’s approach to downtown redevelopment is also specifically referenced as part of the goal of being ‘Positioned for Growth’ within the strategic plan.

Further to this, In January of 2021, Council formally adopted the MDP, which outlined a roadmap for the growth and development of the city, including the downtown. It contains a series of objectives as well as policies for the downtown that were based on extensive public consultation, as well as available data. These policies and objectives (summarized below in Table 3.0) align with the community vision contained within the strategic plan, and have helped inform the development of the *Downtown Action Strategy*.

TABLE 3.0 – SUMMARY OF MDP OBJECTIVES AND POLICIES

		DESCRIPTION
MDP OBJECTIVE/POLICY	OBJECTIVE 6.3.A	Land, development, and public investment is strategically utilized to enhance the small-scale urban quality of downtown
	OBJECTIVE 6.3.D	Downtown is home to more local businesses that are financially viable and growing
	OBJECTIVE 6.3.E	Downtown's commercial vacancy rates are down from 15% to 7% by 2029
	OBJECTIVE 6.3.G	More people visit and enjoy downtown for longer
	POLICY 6.3.3	Invest in strategic Downtown infrastructure projects to foster growth and development
	POLICY 6.3.8	Enhance downtown vibrancy by increasing its residential density and active street-level uses
	POLICY 6.3.9	Encourage locating housing units in the downtown
	POLICY 6.3.10	Encourage locating high-quality residential development at appropriate downtown locations through incentive measures such as policy approaches and strategic land management
	POLICY 6.3.11	Develop a central trailhead and tourism hub downtown, leveraging the river valley, the Historic Precinct, and the city's position at one end of the regional trail network to attract visitors
	POLICY 6.3.12	Simplify and expedite the Sidewalk Café application process to encourage their use
	POLICY 6.3.13	Work with the downtown business community to extend the hours of business operations
	POLICY 6.3.14	Promote business support programs including City grants and incentives to encourage new and existing business expansions in the downtown
	POLICY 6.3.15	Attract targeted businesses and development to appropriate downtown locations, which may include activities such as entertainment, cultural, educational, retail and office uses
	POLICY 6.3.16	Encourage the development of mid-rise street-oriented buildings to complement the existing downtown core built form

		DESCRIPTION
MDP OBJECTIVE/POLICY	POLICY 6.3.17	Encourage the redevelopment of vacant lots in the downtown through marketing and economic development initiatives
	POLICY 6.3.19	Work with property owners to activate vacant and underutilized sites through temporary uses
	POLICY 6.3.20	Continuously review and monitor business and development incentives for downtown
	POLICY 6.3.21	Explore the development of a Business Revitalization Zone (BRZ) and other downtown resources to support business vitality and downtown focused staff resources
	POLICY 6.3.22	Promote existing and pursue new events and programming that animate and activate the downtown core on a frequent basis
	OBJECTIVE 9.2.C	Heritage assets are preserved and leveraged for economic and tourism potential
	OBJECTIVE 9.2.E	The city attracts knowledge-based professionals that support economic diversification
	POLICY 9.3.15	Preserve and enhance heritage assets including buildings, landmarks, viewpoints, and parks
	POLICY 9.3.16	Enhance and leverage the river valley's natural assets through the development of trailheads and connected greenways
	POLICY 9.3.19	Encourage and incentivize short-term and temporary use of commercial spaces by local or creative businesses
	POLICY 9.3.20	Explore incentives and financing methods for downtown commercial development and highway commercial intensification, such as community revitalization levies (CRL)
	POLICY 9.3.21	Explore public-private partnerships (P3s) to attract commercial and mixed-use development to downtown
	POLICY 9.3.22	Review Land-use Bylaw (LUB) to update the commercial districts to provide better distinction between uses that are suitable along the highway, within neighbourhoods and in the downtown

Source: Fort Saskatchewan Municipal Development Plan

Strategy

The Downtown Action Plan (the Plan) is designed to be short-term in nature and to identify those initiatives that will have a more immediate impact, and are readily achievable within a reasonable amount of resources. These initiatives build on the concept of downtown being our “Third Place” and aim to position downtown as a community gathering place where people gather, socialize, and celebrate. This approach will help downtown achieve a greater vibrancy and boost consumer spending in the district, increasing business profitability and increasing investment.

Goals

The Plan presents initiatives and activities designed to achieve four primary goals. These are:

- 1 Increase the number of visitors to the downtown
- 2 Increase the frequency in which visitors come downtown
- 3 Increase the length of time visitors stay downtown
- 4 Increase private sector investment in the downtown

Longer-term goals such as increasing the diversity and density of housing options and increasing the number of residents in the downtown are beyond the scope of this plan.



The Approach

To achieve these goals, there needs to be a multi-faceted approach that encourages increased visitations and development in the downtown. Simply put, the strategy needs to implement initiatives that will accomplish the following:

- Establish downtown as the city's primary gathering place
- Encourage events and activities that will draw people downtown and keep them there for longer periods of time
- Promote downtown specific events, activities, businesses and opportunities
- Streamline regulations and create an investment climate that makes downtown an attractive place for development

To that end, initiatives contained within this strategy are designed to achieve the following objectives:

- 1 Product Development** – Creating an atmosphere that is unique and appealing to visitors. These initiatives will primarily focus on visual aesthetics that create a distinct and inspiring downtown core, and a destination that looks and feels warm, inviting, welcoming, safe, and engaging.
- 2 Programming & Activities** – Establishing downtown as a destination not only means creating an atmosphere that is unique and appealing to visitors, it also means providing them with something to do, and providing a reason to visit. Programming will focus primarily on activities and events to attract visitors to downtown and keep them there for extended periods.
- 3 Marketing & Promotion** – Creating awareness of the downtown, the businesses and organizations that operate there, as well as the events and activities that are offered is an important part of drawing potential visitors and investors to the district.
- 4 Stakeholder Engagement** – Revitalizing the downtown cannot be accomplished by the City alone. Downtown business owners, landlords, tenants, and non-profit groups will need to be active partners in establishing downtown as a vibrant and engaging area.
- 5 Regulations & Permitting** – Regulations and permits as it pertains to development and redevelopment, special events, and activities, should be streamlined to ensure they do not present an obstacle or barrier. While there is much work already being undertaken in this area, more awareness of these changes needs to be communicated to external stakeholders, property and business owners, and potential investors.
- 6 Business Recruitment** – Similar to *Regulations & Permitting* work needs to be undertaken to create an investment climate in the downtown that encourages business growth and expansion, as well as the attraction of new businesses to the area.

THE INITIATIVES

To achieve these goals and to action the approach, the Plan focuses on undertaking the following initiatives:

INITIATIVE 1

Activate Vacant and Under Utilized Spaces

INITIATIVE 2

Enhance Programming and Events to Attract Visitors

INITIATIVE 3

Increase Marketing and Promotion of the Downtown

INITIATIVE 4

Establish the Downtown as a Desirable Place to Invest and Develop

INITIATIVE 5

Dedicate Downtown Resources

1

INITIATIVE
**Activate Vacant
and
Under-Utilized
Spaces**

This Plan, in its simplest form, is about providing visitors with **an experience** when they are downtown. A variety of activities and events in the public realm on a regular basis will serve as the “Anchor Tenant” or the primary attraction for downtown. Visitors will come for the diversity of regular activities and stay for complimentary activities, such as eating and drinking, shopping and additional entertainment.

One of the most important aspects of this Plan is the fact that this approach looks to leverage the parts of the downtown that are under the City’s control, such as streets, laneways, sidewalks, public parking lots, parks, and other City-owned property. However, through collaboration with our downtown businesses and property owners, we can encourage activation of privately owned under-utilized and vacant spaces to increase vibrancy and create a dynamic atmosphere and environment that draws visitors to the downtown.

To *Activate Vacant and Under-Utilized Spaces*, the following focusing areas are recommended:

- » Create a Central Gathering Space along 100th Avenue;
- » Use Artwork to Enhance Vacant Storefronts; and
- » Activate Under-Utilized City-owned spaces.
- » Create Interactive and Inviting Spaces on Private Property

**Create a Central Gathering Space along
100th Avenue**

Many urban centres create a lively streetscape through the use of lights to create a central gathering space for events and festivals. On a daily basis, the lights can be used to promote vibrancy and deter criminal behaviour. Showcase lighting can be particularly beneficial during winter months, when shorter days can have a negative impact on the well-being of many Canadians.

Local examples of using lighting to create a gathering space can be found in Calgary (Stephen Avenue), and Edmonton (Neon Sign Museum). Larger examples of using lighting to create a gathering space can be found in Las Vegas (Fremont Street), and London (Regent Street).

Within the City, string lights can be added to 100th Avenue, between 101st Street and 103rd Street. This will create a central gathering space in the downtown core, that is vibrant and visually appealing. The added light will also help create a safer space for people to gather. Lights would be multi-coloured and programmable so they could be changed to help promote the seasons, events, or celebrations.

RECOMMENDATION

1.1 Install string lights above 100th Avenue between 101st Street and 103rd Street to create a central gathering space in the downtown. Lights should be programmable to promote different events, seasons, and occasions.

Calgary’s Stephen Ave during the GLOW Winter Festival
(Photo Courtesy of Global News)



Use Artwork in Vacant Storefronts

To contribute to a visually appealing and vibrant downtown, vacant shop windows and storefronts can be transformed into mini-art galleries. Local artists can be invited to showcase their work in partnership with property owners. The arrangement creates mutually beneficial promotional opportunities for the artist and the property owner. Artists can promote their work and also potentially benefit from selling the displayed artwork to window shoppers. Property owners can promote the vacant space and also potentially benefit from increasing visitors.

Several communities around North America have implemented similar approaches, including Victoria and Surrey. The Village of Southhampton in New York went so far as to pass a municipal bylaw requiring landlords of vacant storefronts to display local artwork.

RECOMMENDATION

1.2 Invite property owners and landlords to use vacant storefronts to display local artwork.

Activate Under-utilized City-Owned Spaces

Under-utilized City-owned property in the downtown includes vacant lots, alley ways, sidewalks, green spaces and pocket parks, and so forth. These spaces provide an opportunity to create interactive and inviting spaces, designed to encourage people to gather, play, socialize, and stay downtown. Incorporating play structures, such as large chess/checkers sets or table-top games, can invite people to gather and socialize. An inventory of City-owned property in the downtown can identify possible locations for these types of setups. Partnerships with downtown stakeholders such as the Fort Saskatchewan Public Library or Downtown Business Council can further help identify potential locations as well as assist in implementing this initiative.

In addition to the City developing these interactive spaces on public property, business owners in the downtown can be encouraged to expand their current footprint to include a sidewalk café or temporary retail space that can extend onto City property such as the sidewalks or laneways.

The City recently revamped its *Sidewalk Cafe* program to streamline the regulatory process and eliminate required fees for businesses wishing to temporarily expand their operations onto City-owned property. This approach can be expanded to encourage businesses to activate other adjacent City-owned property such as laneways and greenspaces with interactive uses such as table-top games, benches and seating, or similar installations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.3 Complete an inventory of downtown public spaces and identify those areas that could realistically be activated with City-led investment in amenities or infrastructure such as benches or interactive structures.

*1.4 Expand the **Sidewalk Café** program to encourage businesses to activate other City-owned property such as laneways and greenspaces.*

Create Interactive and Inviting Spaces on Private Properties

Partnerships with local businesses and property owners is vital to the success of this plan. This includes encouraging the development of interactive and inviting spaces on private property, with vacant lots offering the greatest opportunity for improvement.

Root 107 in Edmonton is an example of a recently enhanced vacant space.

The Downtown Business Association in Edmonton, in partnership with the City of Edmonton, Explore Edmonton, Edmonton Arts Council, and the Federal Government converted a large parking lot in the downtown into an interactive and inviting “park” to encourage visitors. The pop-up park includes public art displays, lighting, and seating for visitors.

Food trucks are invited to set up on the property, and visitors are provided a list of local restaurants in the area where they can access take-out. The installation welcomed over 700 visitors during its opening weekend.

By establishing a pop-up park such as this, the City can engage local restaurants and shops who can include the space for their customers. Restaurants in particular could access the space as a secondary patio for take-out customers. Advertisements for local businesses in the area can be incorporated into the space to encourage visitors to shop and stay longer.

These types of installations on private property would be temporary in nature so as not to interfere with the property owners ability to develop or sell the property.

Currently there are existing City-led funding programs that support this type of initiative. The *Shape Your Community Grant*, supports projects that make the community and neighbourhoods more vibrant and inclusive. Maximum funds available is \$1,500 per project which would be adequate to cover small installations such as public seating, but would be insufficient to develop a larger more comprehensive public space such as the one undertaken by Edmonton’s Downtown Business Association.



Root 107 Pop-up Park in Edmonton (Photo supplied by Edmonton Downtown Business Association)

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.5 Modify the existing **Shape Your Community Grant** and increase funding to be more accessible to downtown business and property owners. Promote the modified program to local business owners and organizations.

1.6 Continue to remove barriers and obstacles such as fees and regulatory processes associated with temporary parks/patios and other installations that encourage activation.

1.7 Develop a large City-led pop-up park that is open for public use in the downtown.

2

INITIATIVE**Enhance
Programming and
Events to Attract
Visitors**

As noted previously, establishing downtown as a destination is more than creating an atmosphere that is unique and appealing to visitors. It also requires providing visitors with something to do, a reason to visit, and a reason to return. Programming will focus primarily on activities and events to attract visitors to downtown and keep them there for extended periods. Programming can range from a large, complex event such as the Canada Day Festivities to smaller gatherings like a Paint Night at a local pub.

Similar to activating spaces downtown, programming should be a mix of City-led and privately organized events. Effective partnerships with external stakeholder groups is vital to achieving a level of programming that can provide sustainable and impactful benefits to the downtown.

To *Enhance Programming and Events to Attract Visitors*, the following focus areas are recommended:

- Support and Encourage Externally Organized Events and Programming; and
- Enhance Opportunities for Businesses to Benefit from City-led Events

Support and Encourage Externally Organized Events and Programming

As noted, private businesses and stakeholder groups have an important role to play. Table 4.0 below illustrates just some of the more popular externally organized programs within the downtown.

TABLE 4.0 – EXTERNALLY ORGANIZED EVENTS

EVENT	TIME OF YEAR	ORGANIZER
Winterfest & Vintage Snowmobile Show	February	Historical Society
Downtown Easter Egg Hunt	March/April	Downtown Business Council
Peoples of the North Saskatchewan Festival	May	Historical Society
Pancake Breakfast & Bake Sale	May & September	Pioneer House
Farmers Market	June – September	Chamber of Commerce
Concerts in the Park	June – September	Rotary Club
Touch-A-Truck	June	Little Minion Events
Downtown Sidewalk & Community Garage Sale	August	Downtown Business Council
Fall Festival	September	Downtown Business Council
Halloween Handout	October	Downtown Business Council
Christmas Pudding & Tea hosted	November	Historical Society
Perogy Supper	November	Pioneer House
Santa Claus Parade	November/December	Chamber of Commerce

Hosting events and activities can be a costly and risky venture for an organizing committee.

The City currently offers grant programs that support the organization of events and festivities. These include:

- 1 Non-Profit Organizations Grant:** grant provides funding to eligible non-profit organizations in the city to support their operations, including the organization of events and festivities that contribute to a vibrant and thriving city. These grants are available city-wide and are not specific to the downtown.
- 2 Tourism Hosting Grant:** provides funding that does not normally exceed \$5,000 to eligible non-profit organizations to host sanctioned events that demonstrate an economic benefit through increased tourism and profile of the city at an international, national, or provincial level.
- 3 In-Kind Support:** Non-profit organizations are also eligible for in-kind support for from the City for events and festivals. Examples of in-kind support include the installation of:
 - a. Street barricades
 - b. Garbage and recycling bins
 - c. Picnic tables, etc.

While this funding is helpful, these grants are limited to non-profit organizations. This leaves out a major contributing partner to downtown programming; private businesses. As with any type of programming, there are costs associated with the organization of an event or activity, which are often paid in advance. Private businesses are often reluctant to offer any sort of programming or event as it presents a material risk. Expanding the grant programs to include private businesses can help reduce the risk and change the economics of organizing an event.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Modify the existing **Tourism Hosting Grant** so that it can be leveraged by external stakeholders to assist in covering costs associated with programming and events that attract visitors to the downtown.*
- 2.2 Partner with external stakeholders to increase promotion and marketing of downtown events and programs to a broader audience.*
- 2.3 Review the **Special Event Permit** process to remove unnecessary obstacles and barriers to external stakeholders.*

Enhance Opportunities for Businesses to Benefit from City-Led Events

The City, through various departments including Culture & Recreation as well as Family and Community Support Services already offer a number of downtown specific events and programming that attracts visitors to the area. These include signature-level events such as the Canada Day Festivities, the Sheep Leaving Parade, and Lights Up. Additional events include:

EVENT	TIME OF YEAR
Legacy Park Family Festival	June
Canada Day Festivities	July
Movie Under the Stars	August
Sheep Grazing Program	June to September
Sheep Leaving Parade	September
Enchanted Forest	November to January
Lights Up	November
Youthfest (through YAC)	June

Each of these City-led events require a significant amount of time to plan and implement. Staff responsible for organizing these events liaise and engage with external stakeholders such as the business community whenever possible. However capacity to do so is often limited by the complexity and magnitude of the event itself, and other duties/responsibilities. As a result, businesses may not be in a position to fully participate and benefit.

Also, as was identified in consultations with the business community, events held in locations adjacent to the downtown core such as in Legacy Park often have limited benefit to businesses in the downtown.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.4 *Undertake early and frequent engagement with the downtown business community regarding City-led events to ensure they are able to maximize their involvement and benefit.*

- 2.5 *Review existing City-led events to identify how they can be modified and/or expanded to increase involvement of the downtown business community.*

- 2.6 *Identify additional City-led events that can be reasonably incorporated into the schedule, with the goal to offer a minimum of one signature-level event per season.*



3

INITIATIVE
Increase Marketing and Promotion of the Downtown

Awareness is a driver of success. A visual identity and strategic marketing campaign can increase awareness about the downtown, the businesses, events, and development opportunities.

There are several key components to effective promotion. These include:

- Two-way communication and partnerships between the City and external stakeholders;
- Effective, comprehensive, and united messaging;
- An impactful and memorable visual identity for the downtown;
- A refined marketing strategy that identifies target audiences; and
- A dedicated website to serve as a central hub for information on all things downtown.

A central pillar to a successful marketing strategy is collaboration between the municipality and external stakeholders.

To *Increase Marketing and Promotion of the Downtown*, the following focus area is recommended:

- » Create a Downtown Specific Identity and Campaign

Create a Downtown Specific Identity and Campaign

These approaches have been successfully implemented in other jurisdictions, both large and small.

In Edmonton for example, *Downtown Spark* is the visual identity of a collaboration between the City of Edmonton, Explore Edmonton, the Downtown Business Association, Edmonton Arts Council, and Western Economic Diversification (Federal Government). Its purpose is to develop and promote downtown specific programming, events, exhibits, businesses, and amenities in an effort to attract visitors to the downtown core.



*Partnerships like the one between the City of Edmonton, Explore Edmonton, the Downtown Business Association, Edmonton Arts Council, and the Federal Government have helped create collaborations such as **Downtown Spark***



These collaborative efforts are promoted by all of the partners, with a dedicated website (downtownspark.ca) serving as a central hub of information and resources. The website contains information about various events and exhibits, links to the partner organizations, as well as provides maps and other resources that assist potential visitors in planning their visit to the downtown.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 *Develop a downtown identity and ‘campaign’, using a similar approach to the **Support Your Fort** campaign.*
- 3.2 *Create and maintain a downtown specific website to serve as a central hub of information.*
- 3.3 *Promote City-led and privately organized events and programs through City communication channels.*
- 3.4 *Seek funding opportunities from the Provincial and Federal governments to support the development and promotion of downtown specific branding and programming.*



A large population base provides long-term support to the business community, increasing the vibrancy and sustainability of the downtown. Attracting and retaining new businesses while also developing vacant and under-utilized lands will help create a healthy and diverse business climate. However, investing and developing in the

downtown comes with a unique set of challenges, particularly as it relates to project economics.

Generally speaking, the return on investment to a developer is less attractive in the downtown core than in newer areas of the city. This can be the result of multiple factors, including but not limited to:

- Demand for commercial space;
- Demand for residential space;
- Rent and lease rates for commercial and multi-family space;
- Available financing;
- Development regulations and conditions;
- Increased likelihood of unknown risks; and
- Capital and operating costs.

As with many things with regards to downtown revitalization, there are certain aspects the City can and cannot control when it comes to project economics. As such, this strategy will focus on those elements that the City can control or influence.

To *Establish Downtown as a Desirable Place to Invest and Develop*, the following focus areas are recommended:

- » Create a Climate that Supports Investment and Development;
- » Identify Commercial Opportunities Specific to the Downtown; and
- » Establish Effective Partnerships.

Create a Climate That Supports Investment and Development

Establishing an investment friendly climate is no easy task. There are multiple factors that can influence overall project economics and determine if an investment or development

will proceed. Those aspects within the City’s span of control include:

- Development regulations and permitting; and
- Development incentives (financial and non-financial)

Development Regulations and Permitting

There is a delicate balancing act between land-use policy and project economics. The desire of the residents and the municipality is to ensure development aligns with the vision of the district. This is accomplished through development regulations and permitting to ensure what is being built adheres to certain standards and achieves the desired outcomes.

However, development standards and guidelines often translate into real project costs that can push project economics to the point where the development becomes unrealistic. For example, the requirement for ground-floor commercial space can create challenges when the demand for commercial space is low, and therefore can be seen as too risky for project financiers. Similarly parking requirements in an area where space is limited (like downtown) often forces development to look for costly alternatives, such as underground parking.

Land-use policy should reflect the desire and vision of the municipality. However, it is also important to ensure regulations include a measure of flexibility so each site and application can be evaluated on their own merit. Incorporating discretion into regulations provides the City with the ability to recognize and respond to unique development challenges.

Particular attention should be given to requirements around commercial space and parking requirements, as these tend to have a disproportionate amount of impact on project economics. The City will be updating the Land Use Bylaw in 2021 - 2023, which provides an opportunity to review the requirements specific to development in the downtown.

Development Incentives

Incentives are designed to influence project economics by reducing costs, and improving project economics. Incentives should be a reflection of the municipality's investment attraction strategy and targeted to achieve those outcomes the City and residents desire.

Development incentives can include financial and non-financial incentives. Financial incentives include programs such as grants and tax abatement. Non-financial incentives include programs such as expedited permitting or public infrastructure.

Several jurisdictions across North America offer downtown specific incentives to attract development. Examples within Alberta include:

- City of Grande Prairie: the ***Urban Residential Development Grant*** offers \$10,000 per dwelling unit for multi-family residential development, and \$15,000 per dwelling unit for mixed-use development constructed within the downtown. Eligible projects may also qualify for tax deferrals in addition to the financial grants.
- City of Lethbridge: the ***Urban Core Housing Incentive Program*** offers \$7,000 per dwelling unit for multi-family residential development, and \$12,000 per dwelling unit for mixed use development constructed within the downtown.
- City of Medicine Hat: the ***Downtown Development Incentive Program*** offers up to \$25,000 for a major renovation or new construction of a multi-family residential development, and up to \$25,000 of a major renovations or new construction of commercial development within the downtown.

Incentive programs such as these typically follow a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) model, where funds are issued from a dedicated account that is replenished with a portion of the tax uplift that results from the new development or redevelopment. This helps create a sustainable funding model while avoiding placing potentially large financial burdens on the municipality.

The Municipal Government Act also includes provisions that allow the City to offer tax incentives and deferrals to encourage development and redevelopment of vacant, derelict, or under-utilized properties.

Financial incentives, such as those described above, are generally more effective at offsetting up-front capital costs. Tax-based incentives are generally more effective at offsetting ongoing operating costs. Both can influence project economics depending on the cash-flow needs of the project.

Additional research should be undertaken to determine the following:

- Type of incentive(s) that would best support achieving the goal of increasing downtown development;
- Performance-based criteria to be applied to incentive(s); and
- Extent and limitations of any incentive(s).

Under the Municipal Government Act, business improvement areas or business improvement zones (BIZ) can be established for the purpose of improving, beautifying, and promoting a business or shopping area. The City of Edmonton has established thirteen BIZ, including the Old Strathcona Business Improvement Area and the Downtown

Business Improvement Area. Establishing a Business Improvement Zone (BIZ) would enable the City to designate the downtown as a specialized district where incentives and streamlined regulations can be implemented to encourage development.

A BIZ will also encourage the long term sustainability of the downtown by providing a mechanism to create a dedicated tax levy to fund ongoing revitalization efforts and projects. It also enables the City to establish a governing body comprised of downtown businesses, property owners, the City, as well as other stakeholders to oversee continued revitalization efforts. And while the creation of such a governing board and dedicated tax levy is not recommended as part of the Downtown Action Plan at this time, it is a future consideration that can be implemented should the City see value in it.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 Establish downtown as a ***Business Improvement Zone*** for the purposes of:

- a. *Reviewing development regulations and permitting processes to ensure flexibility and reducing barriers*
- b. *Establishing development incentives to encourage development/redevelopment*



Identify Commercial Opportunities Specific to the Downtown

The City utilizes a pro-active approach to commercial attraction. Through a *Retail Market & Gap Analysis*, the Economic Development Department conducts research and data gathering related to demographics and commercial spending habits on a regular basis. This data is then used to identify gaps within the existing market place, which informs the Department’s investment attraction activities and efforts. The Retail Market & Gap Analysis is prepared every three years to ensure data is relevant and accurate.

While this Analysis provides valuable information on the commercial sector within the city, the aggregate data is high level, and not specific to one area. As such, it provides limited data with regards to specific downtown opportunities. Gathering data at a neighbourhood level would provide a more thorough understanding of the opportunities for commercial attraction within the downtown, which could better inform the City’s approach to commercial attraction in the downtown. Downtown specific commercial data will also provide valuable statistic to existing business and potential investors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4.2 *Gather downtown-specific commercial data as a supplement to the **Retail Market & Gap Analysis***

Establish Effective Partnerships with Downtown Property Owners

A coordinated approach to attracting investment, development, and redevelopment requires a productive relationship between the City and property owners. Strong relationships help ensure opportunities in the downtown are communicated to a broader audience beyond what each stakeholder can achieve individually.

These relationships can provide each party with access to information. For property owners, the information can include resources, particularly related to incentives and development regulations, which can help remove barriers and obstacles to developing assets in the downtown. For the City, the information can include a better understanding of obstacles and barriers that may be prohibiting investment. To build stronger relationship, the Economic Development Department will take a pro-active approach, being the first to reach out to existing businesses and potential future investors.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4.3 *Establish productive relationships with property owners and landlords to assist in increasing their reach to potential businesses and developers.*

4.4 *Offer pro-active reviews of pre-design work and artist renderings to assist in preparing shovel-ready projects, which can better attract potential development, buyers, and businesses to the downtown.*

4.5 *Connect with smaller, independent and niche developers who are more likely to undertake projects in the downtown and work to connect them with potential projects or properties.*



Since the downtown first began to show signs of decline in the early 2000's, the City, along with external stakeholders have had a strong desire to support this historic district. While downtown will likely not return to the geographic and commercial centre that it once was, it is not doomed to stagnation and decay. The City can build upon the resiliency of the downtown and help ensure this unique area continues to evolve and retain its status as the heart of the city and the identity of Fort Saskatchewan.

The level of support provided depends upon funding. The Downtown Action Plan maps out what can be achieved within existing resources. It also maps out how the City would go further and faster with additional resources.

Create a Dedicated Downtown Resource Temporary Position

As stated, the Downtown Action Plan maps out what can be achieved with existing resources, as well as what is possible with additional resources.

The Downtown Action Plan provides three options for implementation:

- Option 1 – Implementation within Existing Resources;
- Option 2 – Implementation with Additional Funding; and
- Option 3 – Implementation with Additional Funding and Staff.

Much can be accomplished within the existing resources available. Depending on the level of desired support, greater steps can be taken to support the downtown with additional investment.

To realize the full benefits within the identified timelines, a two-year position dedicated to the downtown would be needed. This position would coordinate external activities and initiatives. This would open the necessary capacity within the department to establish a Business Improvement Zone. Without the staffing position, this work could proceed but it could not be guaranteed that results could be delivered within three years.

Establishing a dedicated resource for downtown is something the City has undertaken in the past. During the implementation of the Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan, beginning in 2010, the City, through the Economic Development Department, had a position whose primary responsibility was downtown revitalization. During this period, the downtown saw significant investment and attention including the new City Hall and 100th Avenue upgrades, as well as a series of programs and initiatives aimed at improving the visual appearance and vibrancy of the downtown core.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Establish a temporary 2-year position within the City to serve as a dedicated resource to downtown revitalization to fully implement the Downtown Action Plan.

Implementation Schedule

As noted, the Downtown Action Plan is a multi-faceted approach, intended to increase visitations and development in the downtown. The Downtown Action Plan is designed to be short-term in nature (1 to 3 years) and to identify those initiatives that will have a more immediate impact and are readily achievable.



The table below provides a proposed implementation schedule for the recommendations listed within this Plan.

TABLE 5.0 – PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE

2021		2022		2023
Storefront Artwork	Partner to Promote Events	Pop-up Park	Sidewalk Café program expansion	Review Community Grant
Seek Funding Opportunities	Relationship Building	Downtown Identity & Campaign	Investigate Additional City-led events	Review Tourism Hosting Grant
100th Ave Lights	Downtown Retail & Market Gap Analysis	Downtown Website	Developer Outreach	Review Existing Events to Expand Business Involvement
City-owned Property Inventory	Promote Private Events through City Channels	Review Special Event Permit Process	Engage with Businesses Regarding Events	Review Patio Regulations
				Offer Pro-Active Review
	Temporary Position	Business Improvement Zone		

LEGEND

- Option 1 – Implementation with Existing Resources
- Option 2 – Implementation with Additional Funding
- Option 3 – Implementation with Additional Funding and Staffing Resource
- Bold** Additional Cost



Summary of Recommendations

RECOMMENDATION	TIMELINE	ESTIMATED COST	NOTES/STATUS
INITIATIVE 1: ACTIVATE VACANT AND UNDER-UTILIZED SPACE			
1.1 Install string lights along 100th Avenue between 101st Street and 103rd Street to create a central gathering space in the downtown. Lights should be programmable to promote different events, seasons, and occasions.	2021	\$20,000	
1.2 Invite property owners and landlords to use vacant storefronts to display local artwork.	2021	Minimal	
1.3 Complete an inventory of downtown public spaces and identify those areas that could realistically be activated with City-led investment in amenities or infrastructure such as benches or interactive structures.	2021	Minimal	
1.4 Expand the Sidewalk Café program to encourage businesses to activate other City-owned property such as laneways and greenspaces.	Immediate	Minimal	Underway
1.5 Modify the existing Shape Your Community Grant and increase funding to be more accessible to downtown business and property owners. Promote the modified program to local business owners and organizations.	2023	\$5,500	Increase funding
1.6 Continue to remove barriers and obstacles such as fees and regulatory processes associated with temporary parks/patios and other installations that encourage activation.	2023	Minimal	Underway
1.7 Develop a large City-led pop-up park that is open for public use in the downtown.	2022	\$15,000	
INITIATIVE 2: ENHANCE PROGRAMMING AND EVENTS TO ATTRACT VISITORS			
2.1 Modify the existing Tourism Hosting Grant so that it can be leveraged by external stakeholders to assist in covering costs associated with programming and events that attract visitors to the downtown.	2023	Minimal	Utilize existing budget
2.2 Partner with external stakeholders to increase promotion and marketing of downtown events and programs to a broader audience.	2021	Minimal	
2.3 Review the Special Event Permit process to remove unnecessary obstacles and barriers to external stakeholders.	2022	Minimal	
2.4 Undertake early and frequent engagement with the downtown business community regarding City-led events to ensure they are able to maximize their involvement and benefit.	2022	Minimal	
2.5 Review existing City-led events to identify how they can be modified and/or expanded to increase involvement of the downtown business community.	2023	Minimal	
2.6 Identify additional City-led events that can be reasonably incorporated into the schedule, with the goal to offer a minimum of one signature-level event per season.	2022	TBD	Additional/new events not included in budget

RECOMMENDATION	TIMELINE	ESTIMATED COST	NOTES/STATUS
INITIATIVE 3: INCREASE MARKETING AND PROMOTION OF THE DOWNTOWN			
3.1 Develop a downtown identity and 'campaign', using a similar approach to the Support Your Fort campaign.	2022	\$35,000	Delay implementation until programming and enhancements are incorporated
3.2 Create and maintain a downtown specific website to serve as a central hub of information.	2022	\$10,000	
3.3 Promote City-led and privately organized events and programs through City communication channels.	2021	Minimal	
3.4 Seek funding opportunities from the Provincial and Federal governments to support the development and promotion of downtown specific branding and programming.	2021	N/A	Underway
INITIATIVE 4: ESTABLISH DOWNTOWN AS A DESIRABLE PLACE TO INVEST AND DEVELOP			
4.1 Establish downtown as a Business Improvement Zone for the purposes of: a. Streamlining development regulations and permitting processes to ensure flexibility and reducing barriers b. Establishing development incentives to encourage development/redevelopment	2022 – 2023	\$20,000	Seed funding for development incentives
4.2 Gather downtown-specific commercial data as a supplement to the Retail Market & Gap Analysis	2021	Minimal	Completed
4.3 Establish productive relationships with property owners and landlords to assist in increasing their reach to potential businesses and developers.	2021	Minimal	
4.4 Offer pro-active reviews of pre-design work and artist renderings to assist in preparing shovel-ready projects, which can better attract potential development, buyers, and businesses to the downtown.	2023	Minimal	Some costs may be incurred to assist in resource development
4.5 Connect with smaller, independent and niche developers who are more likely to undertake projects in the downtown and work to connect them with potential projects or properties.	2022	Minimal	
INITIATIVE 5: DEDICATED DOWNTOWN RESOURCE			
5.1 Establish a temporary 2-year position within the City to serve as a dedicated resource to downtown revitalization to fully implement the Downtown Action Plan.	2022 - 2023	\$182,200	Includes salary and administrative costs (2 years)

Options for Implementation



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OPTION 1
Implementation
within Existing
Resources

Option 1 includes those recommendations that can be implemented with the City’s existing resources. This option requires minimal financial investment and focuses on creating an environment that enables external stakeholders to activate spaces and create programming that attracts visitors to the downtown.

The City’s primary role would be to address regulatory and financial obstacles and barriers by reviewing and modifying existing incentive programs and permitting processes. The City would also assist with promotions of large-scale events that attract visitors to the area.

The table below summarizes which recommendations can be achieved within three years with this option.

TABLE 6.0 – RECOMMENDATIONS THAT CAN BE IMPLEMENTED WITHIN EXISTING RESOURCES

RECOMMENDATION	TIMELINE	ESTIMATED COST
1.2 Invite property owners and landlords to use vacant storefronts to display local artwork	2021	Minimal
1.3 Complete an inventory of downtown public spaces and identify those areas that could realistically be activated with City-led investment in amenities or infrastructure such as benches or interactive structures.	2021	Minimal
1.4 Expand the Sidewalk Café program to encourage businesses to activate other City-owned property such as laneways and greenspaces.	2022	Minimal
1.5 Modify the existing Shape Your Community Grant and increase funding to be more accessible to downtown business and property owners. Promote the modified program to local business owners and organizations.	2023	\$5,500
1.6 Continue to remove barriers and obstacles such as fees and regulatory processes associated with temporary parks/ patios and other installations that encourage activation.	2023	Minimal
2.1 Modify the existing Tourism Hosting Grant so that it can be leveraged by external stakeholders to assist in covering costs associated with programming and events that attract visitors to the downtown.	2023	Minimal
2.2 Partner with external stakeholders to increase promotion and marketing of downtown events and programs to a broader audience.	2021	Minimal
2.3 Review the Special Event Permit process to remove unnecessary obstacles and barriers to external stakeholders.	2022	Minimal



RECOMMENDATION	TIMELINE	ESTIMATED COST
2.4 Undertake early and frequent engagement with the downtown business community regarding City-led events to ensure they are able to maximize their involvement and benefit.	2022	Minimal
2.5 Review existing City-led events to identify how they can be modified and/or expanded to increase involvement of the downtown business community.	2023	Minimal
2.6 Identify additional City-led events that can be reasonably incorporated into the schedule, with the goal to offer a minimum of one signature-level event per season.	2022	Minimal
3.3 Promote City-led and privately organized events and programs through City communication channels.	2021	Minimal
3.4 Seek funding opportunities from the Provincial and Federal governments to support the development and promotion of downtown specific branding and programming.	2021	N/A
4.2 Gather downtown-specific commercial data as a supplement to the Retail Market & Gap Analysis	2021	Minimal
4.3 Establish productive relationships with property owners and landlords to assist in increasing their reach to potential businesses and developers.	2021	Minimal
4.4 Offer pro-active reviews of pre-design work and artist renderings to assist in preparing shovel-ready projects, which can better attract potential development, buyers, and businesses to the downtown.	2023	Minimal
4.5 Connect with smaller, independent and niche developers who are more likely to undertake projects in the downtown and work to connect them with potential projects or properties.	2022	Minimal

TOTAL COST **\$ 5,500 (on-going)**

OPTION 2
Implementation
with Additional
Funding

Option 2 includes recommendations that can be implemented with a larger financial investment from the City. This option includes the items outlined in Option 1, but would also create signature gathering places in the downtown, using lights along 100th Avenue and a pop-up park. This option also includes downtown-specific promotion, through the creation of a downtown identity, campaign, and website.

The table below summarizes which recommendations can be achieved within three years, *in addition* to the recommendations outlined in Option 1.

TABLE 7.0 – ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS THAT CAN BE IMPLEMENTED WITH ADDITIONAL FUNDING

RECOMMENDATION	TIMELINE	ESTIMATED COST
1.1 Install string lights above 100th Avenue between 101st Street and 103rd Street to create a central gathering space in the downtown. Lights should be programmable to promote different events, seasons, and occasions.	2021	\$20,000
1.7 Develop a large City-led pop-up park that is open for public use in the downtown.	2022	\$15,000
3.1 Develop a downtown identity and ‘campaign’, using a similar approach to the Support Your Fort campaign.	2022	\$35,000
3.2 Create and maintain a downtown specific website to serve as a central hub of information.	2022	\$10,000

Estimated cost of implementation:

OPTION 1 \$ 5,500

OPTION 2 \$ 80,000

TOTAL COST \$ 85,500

*Includes \$ 5,500 of ongoing cost.



OPTION 3
Implementation
with Additional
Funding and Staff

Option 3 includes all recommendations outlined in this plan. This option is intended to have the greatest impact in the shortest period of time. This option includes the items outlined in Options 1 and 2, but also would consider establishment of a Business Improvement Zone (BIZ). The additional staffing resource would free-up capacity within the Economic Development department to undertake this initiative.

The table below summarizes which recommendations can be achieved within three years, *in addition* to the recommendations outlined in Options 1 and 2.

TABLE 8.0 – ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS THAT CAN BE IMPLEMENTED WITH ADDITIONAL FUNDING AND STAFF

RECOMMENDATION	TIMELINE	ESTIMATED COST
4.1 Establish downtown as a Business Improvement Zone for the purposes of: a. Streamlining development regulations and permitting processes to ensure flexibility and reducing barriers b. Establishing development incentives to encourage development/redevelopment	2022 - 2023	\$20,000
5.1 Establish a temporary 2-year position within the City to serve as a dedicated resource to downtown revitalization to fully implement the Downtown Action Plan.	2022 - 2023	\$182,200

Estimated cost of implementation:

OPTION 1	\$ 5,500
OPTION 2	\$ 80,000
OPTION 3	\$ 202,200
TOTAL COST	\$ 311,500

*Includes \$ 5,500 of ongoing cost.





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