

TOWN OF COBOURG

Downtown Vitalization **ACTION PLAN**

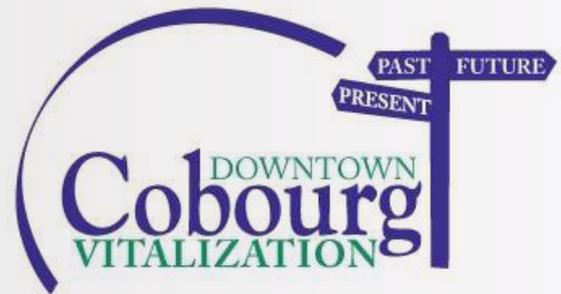


Cobourg's Downtown Vitalization Project is a partnership of Town of Cobourg, Downtown Cobourg Business Improvement Area (DBIA), Northumberland Central Chamber of Commerce and Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs with funding by the Northumberland Community Futures Development Corporation (CFDC), Canada's Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario

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Overview

This action plan is the synthesis of a year of public meetings, surveys, gleaned best practices and expert advice.

It commences with a primer exploring those factors that lead to the deterioration of a downtown. The need for prescribed planning and efforts required to reverse those factors are detailed before launching into the Vision Statement that guided our own plan.

Data collected from surveys and the realities of our trade area are preceded by the recommendations made by the Downtown Task Force. These recommendations are the elements that coalesce to form the action plan.

Central recommendations are featured separately with additional detail followed by conclusions of the overall action plan.

About This Downtown Vitalization Action Plan



Executive Summary

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Fundamental to this action plan is the Vision Statement adopted by the Cobourg Downtown Vitalization Task Force:

Downtown Cobourg is Ontario's foremost cultural and recreational small town destination forged from a beautifully preserved historic community on the waterfront. As the economic hub of Northumberland County, it will deliver accessible experiences and opportunities generated from local agriculture, environmental consciousness and active, health-centered living.

Through surveys and conversations, it was noted, that Cobourg residents were concerned over the decline of their downtown as it no longer satisfies their daily needs. They asked for more services and shops that would allow them to access groceries, hardware and other essentials. Further, they wanted downtown to provide enhanced experiences such as restaurants and entertainment. They also expressed concern over the state of many downtown heritage buildings and felt preservation and repair of these important assets needed to be foremost in any downtown plans.

Downtown Cobourg consists of approximately 230 businesses. Some are thriving and others are struggling to meet new age consumer demands. Cobourg's baby boomers are retiring and with this demographic reality we are witnessing the closing of mainstay shops. Add to this the arrival of new businesses, some which have no formal business or marketing strategies, heritage buildings that require more than just a face-lift, and climbing vacancy rates. It is time to develop a long-term sustainable plan for downtown Cobourg.

There is a desire by Town of Cobourg staff and Council, the Downtown Business Improvement Area (DBIA) and the Northumberland Central Chamber of Commerce to be proactive in addressing the challenges our downtown is facing. As a result, the Downtown Vitalization Task Force was established as an Ad Hoc Committee of the Town of Cobourg.

The Task Force took on the monumental task of providing answers to the challenges noted on previous page and to present solutions to Cobourg Council. The Task Force's mission states: *Incorporate best practices and provide the leadership and drive to produce a concrete, dynamic plan for Cobourg's downtown that will build a productive and successful downtown area for business, visitors and citizens alike.*

The first task was to determine the study area. The geographic boundaries include: Ball Street, to Green Street, to James Street, and the marina, beach and Victoria Park.

Following a model provided by the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA), the Task Force deployed working teams; Physical Improvements; Economic Development; Marketing and Communications; and Technical Advisory. These were comprised of representatives from local community groups, volunteers and town staff who engaged the residents of Cobourg through a series of surveys and public meetings. Each team developed a set of recommendations. These were reviewed and augmented by a Technical Advisory Team.

Landscape architects, GSP Group, were hired to review and provide recommendations to improve gateway and directional signs as well as increase pedestrian traffic and improve linkages to the downtown. Utilizing visual renderings along with details on costs for improvements, GSP Group presented their findings during a public viewing in which comments were compiled. Other public engagements included a Customer Origin Survey, a Resident Survey and a Business Owner Survey. (See **Appendix B, C and D** for survey details.

From the Customer Origin Survey OMAFRA developed the Cobourg Market Analysis. Data was derived from the 2006 Statistics Canada Census as well as 2012 estimates from MapInfo. This gave us a snapshot of the existing climate, as well as an understanding of what is important to those who patronize our downtown.

As part of the process, residents and business owners flocked to the launch event, streetscape improvement open house, and also volunteered en masse. Team members travelled to other towns in the vicinity and spoke with colleagues across the province and further afield, seeking expert advice in order to glean best practices.

The working teams came back with numerous recommendations that were based on feedback of area residents and business owners, the data from the Market Analysis Report, and best practices from other communities. Based on this input, the following is considered a priority by the Task Force:

CREATION OF A DOWNTOWN MASTER PLAN WITH SIX KEY COMPONENTS:

Municipal Heritage Master Plan

The Municipal Heritage Master Plan will be overlaid with key recommendations from the DBIA, Planning, Economic Development and Tourism, denoting an emphasis on heritage buildings, as well as harmonious business clusters and potential tourism product nodes.

3D Model

A 3D Model using SketchUp will be enhanced to create a new vision for the downtown featuring streetscape details.

Engineering Survey

An engineering survey of buildings on King Street, from Spring Street to McGill Street, will be undertaken.

Virtual Tour

The updated 3D Model and Virtual Tour will simplify complex decisions. Effectively, anyone looking to locate downtown, upgrade a building or add a sign will have seen the virtual tour.

Feasibility Study

A feasibility study will be conducted on the value and potential uses of town-owned properties, which could be developed to enhance tourism products.

Improvement Financing

A Community Improvement Venture Initiative will provide financial loans and ensure the standards set by Cobourg Town Council are implemented.

Why Downtown Vitalization?

Cobourg Council's *2011-2014 Strategic Plan Corporate Mission and Supporting Objectives* highlights several goals applicable to downtown vitalization. These include: "managing sustainable growth and development", "supporting preservation and enhancement of heritage assets", and "promoting a diverse range of economic opportunities". The *2011 Economic Development & Tourism Strategic Plan* also identifies business retention and expansion as a priority, along with downtown development.

Downtown vitalization was initiated as a proactive approach to addressing the challenges not only faced by Cobourg's downtown, but by many others across Ontario. These challenges include: increasing vacancy rates of highly visible retail space, businesses opening with little or no formal business experience or business planning, as well as the deteriorating appearance of heritage buildings.

What Contributed to the Decline of our Downtown?

At the May 23, 2013, Prosper in Northumberland gathering, downtown revitalization specialist Kennedy Lawson-Smith clearly articulated how a town can arrive at the gloomy place she described as "market failure". In her view, parking issues or short business hours are mere symptoms. Adjustments in these areas should not be seen as approaches to correcting the real economic problems.

In Cobourg's case diminishment of a once prosperous downtown has had many accomplices: changing traffic patterns, shifting retail preferences, a low-wage population and demographic changes.

Another factor negatively influencing downtown retail is the emerging consumer preference for low-cost, big-box shopping. Well-managed, well-planned retail machines such as Wal-Mart, Winners and Target are here to stay. Those giant retailers voraciously consume the disposable incomes of local and regional residents. Byproducts of our consumer culture, they take skillful advantage of desires for the latest fashions, accessories and electronics – at the lowest price. Their ability to squeeze suppliers and demand lower prices leave an indelible mark on the retail landscape.

Towns traditionally provide for the majority of their communities' commercial needs and offered a wide range of goods and services, including groceries, hardware, and apparel and home furnishings. Many towns have ceded this role as the region's primary shopping district to the suburbs or big-box districts. The businesses that remain in our towns tend to be based on entertainment, dining, or tourism, or are so unique that they have limited appeal to local residents.

– **Bob Gibbs**, Principles of Urban Retail Planning

This was reiterated in our Resident Survey with over 50% of residents noting that they prefer to shop elsewhere due to better selection. Nearly 40% cited they could find a better variety of stores, products and services elsewhere. 30% said pricing was better elsewhere.

Quarterly figures show receipts from American travellers in Canada fell 1.5% from the previous quarter as the number of trips they made declined.

– **Statistics Canada January 2013**

DEMOGRAPHIC CHANGES

In many ways, Cobourg is a microcosm of Canada's future. With an older-than-average population, Cobourg has more residents who no longer are among the biggest spenders. Their households already are well furnished; and the desire to stay a step or two ahead of fashion fads has ebbed. Instead, many people are in the market for experiences and services to fulfill their daily needs.

The Market Analysis Report prepared by OMAFRA for this downtown vitalization project reveals that 25% of the Cobourg trade area is over 65 years of age. By contrast, [Human Resources and Skills Development Canada's 2011](#) statistics note that Ontario's population 65 and over is 14.2%. The mean annual consumption level of households headed by individuals 65 to 74 was about 70% of the mean annual consumption level of households headed by individuals 55 to 64 in 2003. The average consumption level of households headed by individuals 75 and over was even lower, amounting to only 50% that of households headed by individuals 55 to 64.

– **Statistics Canada**, Chawla and Wannell 2005

The other major trend in retail commerce is online shopping in a virtual store that requires no upkeep or costly showrooms. To appreciate the impact of online enterprise, consider this: sales at Amazon.com alone are expected to surpass those at Wal-Mart sometime during the next three or four years. Another factor, one beyond our control and common across Canada, is a drop in the number of American visitors. The recession, higher fuel prices and a stronger Canadian dollar are economic factors that have slowed traffic from the U.S. On the political front, stricter border crossing rules and passport requirements have contributed to the decline.

A DOWNWARD SPIRAL

In her Prosper in Northumberland presentation, Kennedy Lawson-Smith showed a powerful graphic depicting a cycle that snares many downtowns. The cycle begins with low rental rates created from low traffic counts and an oversupply of retail.

Those low rental rates attract inexperienced business people possessing little or no knowledge of business fundamentals and typically undercapitalized. They soldier on with no business plan, no marketing strategy and no succession plan. Literally, they have no plan for success. Ms. Lawson-Smith calls such businesses “occupied vacancies” that will never reach their potential. When they’re undercapitalized, as is often the case, they cannot weather an economic storm. Eventually, they will fail.

Nearly 30% of downtown businesses indicated in the Business Owner Survey that they have no operating plan. Over 30% said they had no marketing plan and 60% revealed they had no succession plan.

To fill vacant premises, landlords are forced to keep rents low. And when they do find a new tenant, he or she likely has all the same business-model shortcomings as the previous occupant and the cycle of failure repeats. Landlords are left with less and less rental income to put into necessary building improvements. Little wonder that such downtowns begin to look rundown and less appealing.

A tattered, poorly maintained, or outdated shopping district conveys to consumers that whatever they purchase at that location will be out of style, overpriced and of questionable quality. All elements of the shopping experience, including lighting, colour, merchandising, fixtures and music, must be meticulously planned and designed to meet the expectations of consumers and to increase the amount of time and money they are willing to spend.

– **Bob Gibbs**, Principles of Urban Retail Planning

ECONOMIC REALITIES

A combination of low resident wages and lower spending visitors presents a conundrum for downtown retail. Cobourg tends to attract day trippers enticed by the beach who spend the day then head home. Our fragile businesses gain little in revenue or profit to reinvest in growth. This inability to invest and grow leads to stagnant employment levels. With little competition for jobs, wages stay low and downward pressure continues.

Household incomes in the downtown Trade Area estimates for 2012 are: 20% between \$40,000 to \$59,999; 18% between \$20,000 and \$39,999; 16% between \$60,000 and \$79,000.

– **Source:** Statistics Canada Adjusted Census, 2006 and MapInfo Canada, 2012

EFFECTS OF DOWNTOWN INFRASTRUCTURE DECAY

A decaying downtown can generate feelings of apathy and defeat. Residents see little value in investing downtown and begin to demand improvement priorities shift toward areas that are attracting new residents. This scenario also can become self-fulfilling and cyclical. Important downtown and community assets capable of driving employment and tourism are not recognized as powerful engines to boost fortunes across the broader community.

THE NEED FOR FORMAL PLANNING

Many towns and business improvement associations lack formalized plans and attempt to escape this downward cycle by slapping on a coat of paint here and there or holding parades and special events. Such tactics offer short-lived outcomes with tenuous connections to business success while diverting attention from seeking a solution to fundamental economic problems.

Service businesses feel that most of the major events have no effect or they result in a moderate increase in sales. The exception is the Waterfront Festival, which, for 20% of service respondents, resulted in a large increase in sales. By contrast, retail respondents generally feel that many of the events (especially Sidewalk Sales, Buskers, Waterfront Festivals and Santa Clause Parades) resulted in moderate or large increases in sales. Countering this view, however, is the opinion of 20-30% of retailers that these events actually decrease sales. This contrast is most evident in the results of the Waterfront Festival where retail respondents noted a large increase in sales and a large decrease, in equal proportion.

– **Source:** Business Owner Survey

More formal planning needs to be a focus of downtown businesses. Businesses often do not take advantage of local programs and initiatives to spruce up their operations or tap into the community's collective intelligence. Many entrepreneurs prefer "to go it alone," relying on instinct. Downtown businesses need structured operating plans and they need to work in harmony – coordinating the timing of sales, strategically locating their operations in harmonious clusters, agreeing on store hours, and attaining a healthy business mix.

Without an integrated plan encompassing the activities of Economic Development, the DBIA, the Chamber of Commerce, community organizations and local business, escape from these downward cycles is impossible. Events and tourism also need to plan and work strategically with downtown organizations to ensure that businesses can capitalize on downtown tourism. Further, the development of a four season tourist destination needs to be a focus of future tourism planning.

Cobourg's decision to vitalize and create a long-term plan – to act early and effectively – is the only way out of this downward cycle.

A strong downtown will be a magnet for savvy businesses. It will similarly entice people to move downtown and gain the amenities of a well planned, safe, pedestrian-friendly rural community with easy access to some of Canada's premier markets. New jobs, new business, new residents will spread the tax burden.

Today historic downtowns and planned new towns have a brilliant opportunity to capitalize on emerging social and economic trends – a potential renaissance of urban retail centres as the regional focus for retail and commerce.

– **Bob Gibbs**, Principles of Urban Retail Planning

Kennedy Lawson-Smith advocates financial intervention and measured tactics as the solutions to break the downward spiral. She can't overstate the importance of creating a sense of place identifying a downtown's uniqueness. She prescribes an aggressive strategy to recruit and attract the right businesses downtown – that is, businesses that fulfill the needs of local residents.

Finally, Ms. Lawson-Smith says towns such as Cobourg need to attract new-age industries downtown. Enterprises on the leading edge of the digital age, including 3D printing and businesses that serve a global or international market that also require easy access to fibre optics for long distance communications.

Attracting creative economy sector businesses to Cobourg is a priority.

– **Source:** Cobourg Economic Development & Tourism Strategic Plan 2011

The Process

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Ontario Ministry of Agriculture Food and Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) piloted and offered training in a proven main street revitalization process. In partnership with the Northumberland Central Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Business Improvement Area (DBIA), Town of Cobourg staff as well as the Business Advisory Centre Northumberland, the Downtown Vitalization Task Force was approved by Council and formed. The Task Force, as a Committee of Council, set out using the OMAFRA Model as a framework, to study the downtown and formulate a plan. Throughout the year, some Task Force members left and new members were added.

The Task Force was provided recommendations by three working teams: Physical Improvement, Marketing and Communications, and Economic Development. These teams were guided in their work by a Vision Statement and set of strategic objectives. That Vision Statement and its strategic elements are the foundation of the Downtown Vitalization Action Plan.

The Vision Statement that inspired this action plan reads:

Downtown Cobourg is Ontario's foremost cultural and recreational small town destination forged from a beautifully preserved historic community on the waterfront. As the economic hub of Northumberland County, it will deliver accessible experiences and opportunities generated from local agriculture, environmental consciousness and active, health-centered living.

The four-stage OMAFRA process, principles and work plan, as well as the Task Force mission, vision, composition, objectives, team objectives and list of the original Task Force members can be found in **Appendix "A"**.

The overall initiative was overseen by the town's Economic Development Officer under the direction of the C.A.O. A Business Development Officer was hired to coordinate activities and keep the initiative on track.

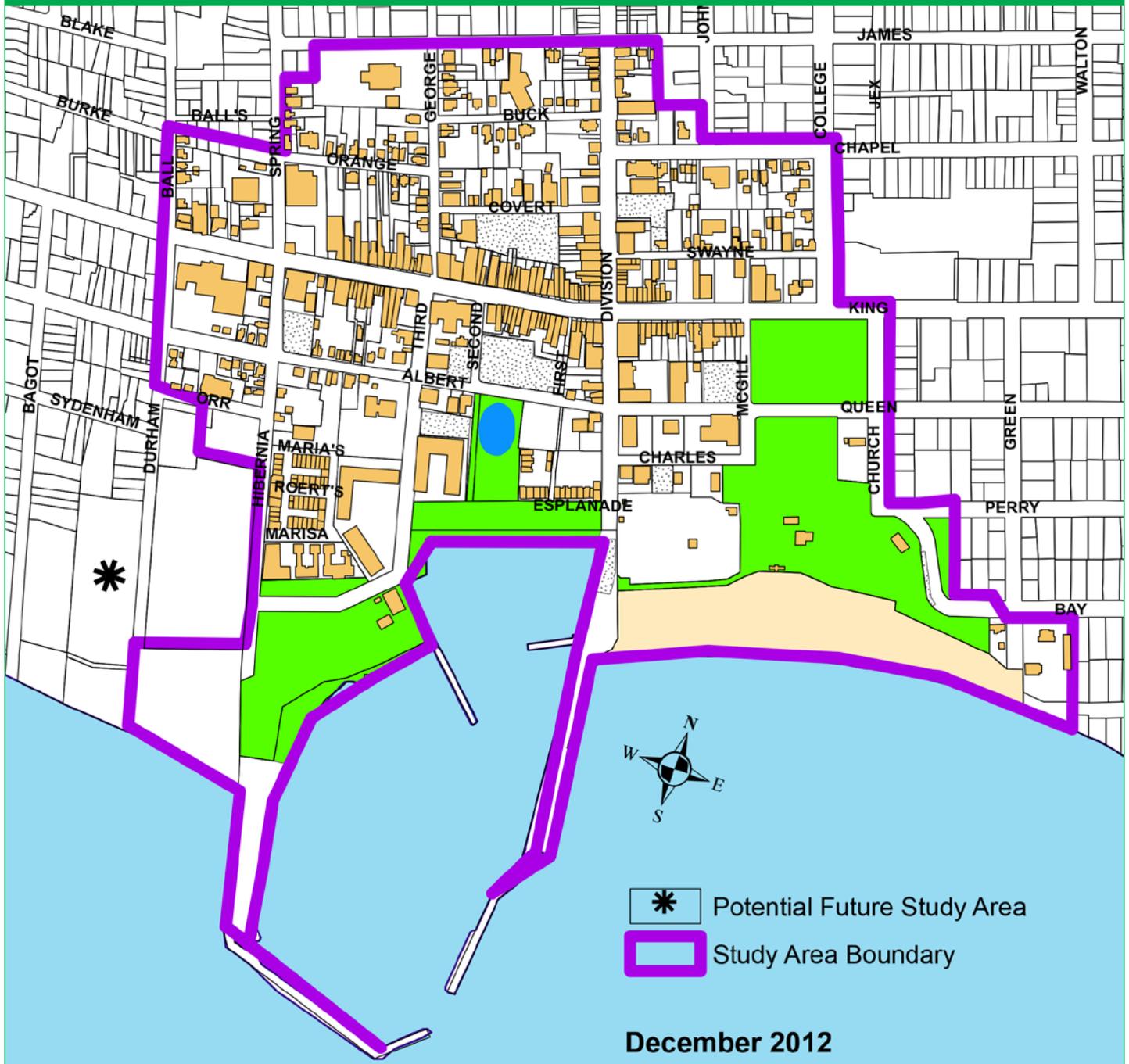
Volunteer job descriptions were developed and the call for volunteers was advertised. A Volunteer Coordinator was selected as the main point of contact for organizing all activities of the volunteers and an orientation session was provided utilizing the town's volunteer policy. Volunteers played a vital role – not only those who sat on committees, but many who painstakingly collected survey information, distributed surveys and reports to

businesses, tabulated and entered reams of data and organized events and programs. The Volunteer Coordinator was a tireless contributor who mobilized and maintained the enthusiasm of an ever-growing

pool of volunteers. Friends of Downtown Cobourg similarly served as a great generator of volunteers.

The Task Force identified the geographic boundaries that would encompass the "study area" (See Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: Cobourg Downtown Vitalization Proposed Study Area



This section provides a brief summary of the results from systematic surveys and analyses that were done to gather information about Cobourg's downtown. Three surveys were conducted:

A) CUSTOMER ORIGIN SURVEY

Downtown visitors were polled on a variety of days in November 2012 at several different street locations. They were asked for their postal code and a few questions about the purpose of their visit on that occasion. The total number of respondents was 635. See **Appendix "B"** for details on the results.

B) RESIDENTS SURVEY

Residents of Cobourg and the surrounding areas completed a survey in early 2013 pertaining to their use and opinions of downtown businesses, the appearance of downtown, the activities that they enjoy downtown, and the additional services that may be needed there. Over 1000 residents responded. See **Appendix "C"** for details on the results.

C) BUSINESS OWNERS SURVEY

Business owners in downtown Cobourg responded to a survey in early spring 2013 to solicit their opinions on the current business climate in downtown and the opportunities and challenges they face, as well as their plans for business development. Seventy owners completed all or part of the survey. See **Appendix "D"** for details on the results.

Based on the postal code data from the Customer Origin Survey, OMAFRA prepared a Market Analysis report (see **Appendix "E"**) that established the Trade Area for Cobourg and also provided key demographic data for this area.

The following gives the highlights of these surveys and analyses.

RESIDENT SURVEY

Resident Survey respondents say that they visit the downtown often, mainly for recreation, restaurants and entertainment, financial services and – less frequently – to shop. Overwhelmingly, respondents say that they patronize the downtown to support the local businesses, and because the downtown services are close to home. However, they believe that businesses outside Cobourg provide a better variety of products and services, as well as better selection, price and hours – issues noted as needing improvement in the Cobourg downtown. Limited – and inconsistent – business opening hours were a particular frustration for respondents.

Residents are very concerned about the vacant business premises in the downtown. The many empty storefronts, coupled with the poor upkeep of many buildings and the several discount-type stores, create – according to respondents' comments – a tired and rundown feeling in the downtown.

The poor appearance of back lanes and parking lots are an added concern. Many respondents expressed the opinion that the building owners are not being held accountable for maintaining their properties. For example, timely snow and ice removal from sidewalks in the winter was noted as a concern. While residents are generally satisfied with the flowers, planters and landscaping done by the town, they feel improvement is needed in recycling facilities and litter/garbage collection, especially on the beach after summer weekends. Finally, respondents indicated the need for significant improvement in the availability of public washrooms. The issue of the parking facilities in the downtown provoked a mixed reaction – both positive and negative – from respondents.

While residents offer a variety of suggestions concerning additional stores or services needed downtown, the need for food-related shops, such as a green grocer, butcher and specialty food stores – as well as affordable restaurants – was consistently highlighted. Furthermore, there were many suggestions made for facilities geared to special groups (i.e., youth, families and seniors). These are presented in **Appendix "C"**.

BUSINESS OWNER SURVEY

Business Owner Survey respondents consider middle-aged (45 to 64 year-old) local residents to be their most important customers, followed closely by young families. Retailers benefit from tourists more than services do, while service businesses target retirees and seniors more than retailers. Walk-in traffic is a very important source of business for retail respondents, while telephone inquiries are just as important as walk-in traffic as a source of business for services.

Respondents are generally positive about the downtown atmosphere as a place to do business, but with concern being expressed about the building façades, the existing business mix and the parking. Indeed, they note that the small-town atmosphere, streetscape, visibility and easy access of downtown offer distinct advantages to their businesses. While downtown events such as festivals and parades do result in higher sales for some retailers, they have almost no effect on sales for services.

In general, only a slight majority of respondents report an increase in sales over the last two years – more so for services than retailers. However, they have generally positive expectations about the sales in 2013 compared to 2012 – that sales will be higher, or at least the same. The majority of business respondents expect to remain the same size over the next two years, although some service respondents anticipate expansion. A majority of respondents would like to improve their marketing skills and skills related to customer attraction and retention. (Note that a significant proportion of businesses have neither an operating plan nor a marketing plan.) Indeed, respondents feel that marketing the downtown and attracting local customers is the key factor that would impact the growth of their business and, furthermore, that the town has a role to play in the marketing of the downtown per se (not just the beach).

Parking consistently tops the list of challenges for respondents, followed by littering, vagrancy and loitering. However, the latter are of more concern for retail respondents, while parking accessibility is of greater concern for services. In addition, respondents note that main street vacancies, inconsistent business hours, restrictive bylaws and taxes, and business turnover are disadvantages of operating in the downtown area.

Downtown Vitalization Action Plan



The process of developing the Downtown Vitalization Action Plan involved extensive contributions by the three Task Force Working Groups. See **Appendix “A”** for team structure.

The Objectives under the Strategic Elements were distributed to these working teams for their recommendations that formed the basis of our action plan, which is outlined in the following section. However, two important components were contributed prior to the development of the action plan.

First, the Task Force determined that downtown vitalization needed six measurable goals to chart progress:

- A.** More tax revenue from a larger tax base
- B.** Job creation (retail, services and manufacturing)
- C.** Increased community and visitor spending
- D.** A larger downtown business base
- E.** Understand what is working through annual tracking of business and consumer satisfaction
- F.** Gauge progress through annual check-ups based on the initial customer origin survey, traffic counts, pedestrian counts, value of building permits, surveys of residents, business owners and value of building permits

Second, the Marketing and Communications working group was handed an important assignment: to develop a concise Market Position Statement as a guide for other working groups.

The Position Statement is as follows:

Downtown Cobourg is the preferred destination of people looking for feel good experiences, healthy-active living, great food and Ontario's favourite beach.

This statement may be broken down by the following key words and phrases:

Preferred destination underscores the need to create an important sense of place downtown.

Feel good experiences builds upon Cobourg's "Feel Good Town" slogan. The slogan, viewed through the lens of experiences, becomes a staging area for building mini-vacations, cross-promotional partnerships, events and other programming.

Healthy, active living supports the need to consider cycling, walking, sports and other outdoor-inspired activity in the future of downtown Cobourg.

Great food underscores the town's goal of strengthening Cobourg's position as a burgeoning food centre energized by restaurant entrepreneurs, chefs, food lovers and regional farmers. The resident opinion survey said locals want culinary adventure as well as good food. Indeed, it had quality grocers, butchers and restaurants located downtown on almost everyone's wish list.

Ontario's favourite beach highlights one of Cobourg's prime development assets. Many participants in the vitalization project regard the beach as the downtown's economic engine. A link and enhanced destination tourism product are needed to connect and encourage visitor spending in the downtown. This is a key component to economic revival.

The Task Force adopted a list of nine key strategic elements derived from the Vision Statement. These are listed below, along with the recommended actions that follow:

STRATEGIC ELEMENT 1: ENGAGE THE PUBLIC AND STAKEHOLDERS

1.1 OBJECTIVE

Finalize, prioritize and develop timelines for implementing the Downtown Business Improvement Area list (Appendix "F").

1.1 a) Recommended Action: That town staff implement a test program to remove frosted glass from light standards. This action has been completed and according to all reports, it is effective. Remaining fixtures should be completed by November 2013, as this is a priority.

1.1 b) Recommended Action: That the town has a further opportunity to turn Cobourg's downtown into a must-see holiday season destination by expanding the Christmas Magic event and creating a themed lighting program that will encompass both Victoria Park and the downtown. The expected outcome of this expanded event along with a year-round focus on better lighting will have a positive impact by increasing seasonal shopping for visitors and residents.

1.1 c) Recommended Action: That the town commence with immediate fulfillment of the DBIA priorities list, noted below:

- Addition of one more closed circuit camera downtown
- Fewer, more consistent street and parking signs
- Improved overall wayfinding signs
- DBIA input on commercial signs – *Action complete*
- Input from DBIA on banners and flags displayed on King St. – *Action complete*
- Development of gateway signs to downtown
- Audition process for buskers and street performers – *Action complete; not recommended*
- Improved and more visible waste receptacles
- Annually apply fresh paint on street furnishing

1.2 OBJECTIVE

Create a communication strategy that includes opportunities for public input.

1.2 a) Recommended Action: It is recommended that the town's Communication Officer, Tourism, Economic Development and DBIA pool resources and align budgets and communications plans on an annual basis.

STRATEGIC ELEMENT 2: IDENTIFY AND ESTABLISH A CORNERSTONE BUSINESS OR BUSINESSES THAT SUPPORT COBOURG'S ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

2.1 OBJECTIVE

Begin a shift toward commercial categories that enhance the town's economic strategy and promote the downtown Vision.

2.1 a) Recommended Action: Identify and pursue a list of prospective businesses, in categories residents told us they most wanted in their downtown. These should be supported by the Market Analysis Report and align with the Market Position Statement. These broad categories include: creative economy, hardware, clothing, brewers, vintners, entertainment promoters and food related businesses and services.

2.1 b) Recommended Action: It is recommended that a municipal business certification and recognition program be implemented. This zero cost certification will be issued through the Economic Development office. This will help improve the success of local entrepreneurs who will be provided with the option of assistance in planning their business and accessing local market intelligence before opening.

2.2 OBJECTIVE

Create a climate conducive to business retention and expansion.

2.2 a) Recommended Action: It is recommended that a formal client referral program be developed linking Northumberland Central Chamber of Commerce, DBIA, the Business Advisory Centre Northumberland, CFDC and the Venture Initiative. The goal should be to facilitate improved communication and to connect local businesses with resources and local market intelligence to spur business growth.

2.2 b) Recommended Action: It is recommended that a newly established Downtown Coalition be formed to host a quarterly roundtable session to ensure alignment of messages, resources and activities. A yearly session will identify important business retention, attraction and succession objectives while allowing for pooling of resources for cooperative marketing. The coalition should include: Economic Development, Tourism, Planning, DBIA, Chamber and Venture Initiative.

2.2 c) Recommended Action: The Town of Cobourg's Downtown Business Relations Team should assist businesses in identifying potential for expansion. Growth oriented businesses should be encouraged to take advantage of local educational and professional development opportunities. The DBIA should be invited to attend business visits.

STRATEGIC ELEMENT 3:

ESTABLISH A MOTIVATING, CONSISTENT COBOURG POSITION/BRAND STATEMENT

3.1 OBJECTIVE

Market Cobourg to residents and visitors in an effective, professional manner.

3.1 a) Recommended Action: Expanding on the "Ontario's Feel Good Town" slogan, the town and downtown partners should collaborate to build feel good experiences for residents and visitors. Feel good experiences should 'surprise and delight' everyone that comes in contact with a downtown business, a downtown event or visits our town for cultural or social functions. Feel good experiences may be packaged and marketed as part of our proposed enhanced tourism products.

3.2 OBJECTIVE

Cultivate the town's image of Cobourg as a friendly, professional, capable place to locate a business.

3.2 a) Recommended Action: A key recommendation in this action plan is the establishment of a venture initiative. This agency, working in collaboration with Economic Development, the DBIA, the Chamber of Commerce and others, will promote an "open for business, investment ready" attitude. Early feedback from the private sector indicates that this attitude broadly resonates with developers and investors.

3.3 OBJECTIVE

Educate the public and businesses on the value and benefits of hospitality to all our visitors.

3.3 a) Recommended Action: It is recommended that a communication campaign be developed to include a press release and radio ad to discuss the benefits of tourism in Cobourg. *Action complete.*

STRATEGIC ELEMENT 4: MONEY FOR RESOURCES

4.1 OBJECTIVE

Offset marketing and other expenditures.

4.2 OBJECTIVE

Offset potential action plan expenditures, i.e., a fund to help refurbish historical downtown buildings.

4.1 & 4.2 a) Recommended Action: The Task Force recommends funds be sought through the Provincial Rural Economic Development Fund to establish a venture initiative. This agency will leverage an initial town sponsored investment to fund and partner in redevelopment of heritage buildings. The venture initiative will be the mechanism that implements the redevelopment of downtown. The Task Force recommends the model for this entity is an autonomous, independent corporation reporting to an appointed board of directors with town Council representation.

STRATEGIC ELEMENT 5: ESTABLISH CRITERIA FOR NEW DOWNTOWN BUSINESS CATEGORIES ATTRACTIONS

5.1 OBJECTIVE

Provide necessary variety of downtown shopping experiences.

5.1 a) Recommended Action: See Recommended Action 2.1 a)

5.2 OBJECTIVE

Begin a shift toward business categories that enhance the town's economic strategy and promote the downtown Vision.

5.2 a) Recommended Action: See Recommended Action 2.1 a) & 3.2 a)

STRATEGIC ELEMENT 6: CREATE STRATEGIES FOR A SUSTAINABLE, EDUCATED WORKFORCE, INCLUDING A YOUTH STRATEGY

6.1 OBJECTIVE

Develop an action plan designed to expedite the location of a college or university campus in downtown Cobourg in order to enhance the town's economic development strategy.

6.1 a) Recommended Action: Foster an ongoing dialogue with Fleming College to explore the viability of bringing programs to downtown as well as engaging other secondary and post secondary institutions to integrate the downtown vitalization actions into the curriculums of their programs.

6.2 OBJECTIVE

Enhance the proposition identifying Cobourg as a great place to open a business in identified sectors.

6.2 a) Recommended Action: Establish a business incubator/accelerator that will leverage Provincial, Federal and local programs encouraging entrepreneurs, especially youth, to embrace business concepts that enhance the Market Position Statement. Examples of incubator businesses may include integration of local agricultural commodities into high demand consumer products or development of software or social media applications that enhance local commercial or tourism related businesses.

Also See Recommended Action 3.2 a

STRATEGIC ELEMENT 7: FACILITATE PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT/ BEAUTIFICATION OF DOWNTOWN BUILDINGS, AND EFFECTIVE DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES

7.1 OBJECTIVE

Establish a model and standards for physical appearance, conservation, rehabilitation and structure of downtown buildings.

7.1 a) Recommended Action: It is recommended that the town create a Downtown Master Plan. The foundation of the master plan will be the Municipal Heritage Master Plan. This will be overlaid with key recommendations from the DBIA, Planning, Economic Development and Tourism denoting an emphasis on heritage buildings as well as harmonious business clusters and potential tourism product nodes.

7.1 b) Recommended Action: It is recommended that the town adopt recommendations from the completed parking study.

7.1 c) Recommended Action: It is recommended that a King Street property be purchased and redeveloped. This building would become a working model for heritage building improvements and a repository for knowledge and best practices and guidelines for other redevelopment projects. Further, this location would become the home to an entrepreneur incubator.

7.1 d) Recommended Action: It is recommended that the town reevaluate and complete the final phase of the Victoria Square Precinct Plan.

7.2 OBJECTIVE

Incorporate and improve linkages of downtown and other town businesses, community assets, the waterfront, transportation and Northumberland County.

7.2 a) Recommended Action: It is recommended that new way-finding signs and improved links between the waterfront and downtown be prioritized and completed. (see Appendix “G” GSP Group recommendations); These works also include construction of new directional signs along William Street and Division Street; improvements to Henley Arcade in order to improve the experience of arriving downtown by connecting the marina, Second Street, Victoria Hall, Victoria Square and the Covert Street parking lot; gateway structures providing physical definition of the downtown in order to establish a strong sense of place. These recommended actions are reiterated in the Parks Master Plan.

7.2 b) Recommended Action: It is recommended that the town work quickly to address complaints about poorly maintained downtown properties and consider creative solutions to encourage property owners to improve the appearance of heritage properties. Some towns and cities have entered into development agreements with property owners providing amendments to zoning in return for prescribed commitments to improve structures.

7.2 c) Recommended Action: The town must ensure accessibility and make pedestrian traffic in our downtown a priority. This would begin with a cooperative effort between the town and business owners to efficiently remove snow and ice during the winter season.

7.2 d) Recommended Action: The town and DBIA should collaborate to improve garbage collection from waste receptacles especially during large events or parades.

STRATEGIC ELEMENT 8:

ESTABLISH KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS TO MEASURE THE FUTURE SUCCESS OF OUR PROGRAM ON AN ONGOING BASIS

8.1 OBJECTIVE

Ensure a continuing focus on the program.

8.1 a) Recommended Action: Economic Development and the venture initiative in collaboration with the DBIA and Chamber of Commerce will produce an annual public report card detailing successes and achievement of the measurable goals.

8.2 OBJECTIVE

Identify flaws in the strategy and recommend adjustments according to the business environment.

8.2 a) Recommended Action: A yearly review of outcomes associated with the measurable goals will allow for evaluation and course corrections as our strategy unfolds.

STRATEGIC ELEMENT 9: ENHANCE THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF DOWNTOWN

9.1 OBJECTIVE

Increase business and services identified as contingents of the “creative economy”.

9.1 a) Recommended Action: It is recommended that, in support of the town’s Economic Development & Tourism Strategic Plan, an emphasis be placed upon attracting the creative economy to the downtown. Key economic growth lies in the ability to attract creative workers and to translate that into economic outcomes in the form of new investment and development ideas, new high-tech businesses and regional growth.

9.1 b) Recommended Action: It is recommended that as part of a long-range plan, Cobourg should create a Municipal Cultural Plan (MCP). A MCP leads to building local economies through culture. Cultural mapping is about attracting jobs in a new knowledge-based economy and ensuring our downtown is livable and environmentally sustainable. Tools to assist include the “Cultural Resource Planning – A Guide for Municipalities 2010” as well membership in the organization “Municipal Cultural Planning Incorporated” at www.ontariomcp.ca.

Also See Recommended Action 6.2

9.2 OBJECTIVE

Identify current cultural assets and consider potential new cultural assets/activities that will enhance downtown as a multi-day destination.

9.2 a) Recommended Action: It is recommended that a feasibility study be commissioned on the value and potential uses of town-owned properties that could be developed to enhance tourism products – specifically identifying the impact of a four-season destination product for downtown Cobourg.

9.2 b) Recommended Action: It is recommended that the town target one event each year, to perform an economic impact study in order to identify those that are of most benefit to the town as a whole.

Central Recommendations

7

Downtown Master Plan

The Downtown Master Plan contains 6 key components, and they are:

1. MUNICIPAL HERITAGE MASTER PLAN

Under the direction of the town's Planning Department and in collaboration with Economic Development staff, a Downtown Master Plan will be developed for Cobourg Council approval. The foundation of this master plan will be the Municipal Heritage Master Plan overlaid with key recommendations from the DBIA, Planning, Economic Development and Tourism, denoting an emphasis on heritage buildings as well as harmonious business clusters and potential tourism product nodes.

2. 3D MODEL

As part of the downtown vitalization initiative, a 3D Model using SketchUp was created. This model may now be enhanced to create a new vision for the downtown featuring all streetscape details, location of proposed public washrooms, installation of public art, additional trees and gardens.

3. ENGINEERING SURVEY

An engineering survey of buildings on King Street, from Spring Street to McGill Street will also be undertaken. This will identify the breadth of improvements required to specific properties. Once complete, this may be added to the 3D Model and then converted to a web-based virtual tour for marketing the downtown to potential commercial business recruits, developers and residents.

4. VIRTUAL TOUR

The updated 3D Model and Virtual Tour will simplify complex decisions within the existing heritage framework as important building features and proposed architectural improvements will be recorded.

Effectively, anyone looking to locate downtown, upgrade a building or add a sign will have bought into the model's vision.

5. FEASIBILITY STUDY

A feasibility study on the value and potential uses of town owned properties, which could be developed to enhance tourism products, is integral to the downtown master plan. Emphasis will be on identifying the impact of a four-season destination product for downtown Cobourg.

6. IMPROVEMENT FINANCING

Armed with factual information on existing buildings and a Heritage Master Plan identifying the preferred features and streetscapes of our future downtown, we will then establish a Community Improvement Venture Initiative. This entity will provide financial loans and ensure the standards set by Cobourg Town Council are met and implemented.

A Community Improvement Venture Initiative

In order to create and maintain momentum for Downtown Vitalization, a key component of this action plan is the creation of an autonomous funding entity. This entity will guide those undertaking heritage building improvements through the entire process and will be fundamental to the success of the initiative.

This task will require the infusion of capital, planning and time. Among our action plan's central recommendation is the call for the immediate creation of a Community Improvement Venture Initiative, an important new agency to spearhead and direct downtown redevelopment. The emphasis of the venture initiative will be the rejuvenation of downtown heritage buildings, development of vacant or underutilized downtown property and on identifying development opportunities that adhere to The Downtown Master Plan.

The Venture Initiative will provide bridge financing, mortgage financing, construction loans, loan guarantees, subordinated debt and/or equity participation for small and medium-size real estate developments. The Venture Initiative may also assist owners of heritage properties in accessing heritage conservation incentives. In addition, the Venture Initiative will assist developers exploring the offerings of traditional lenders like banks and credit unions.

This action plan further urges that the town move with haste to provide and secure funding for the Venture Initiative.

The Venture Initiative will leverage an initial investment to fund and create partnerships in development projects. The Winnipeg model, Centre Venture, upon which our own initiative will be structured, has an enviable 14 year track record of returning \$10 of new tax assessment for every \$1 that city invested.

THE COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT VENTURE INITIATIVE'S MISSION:

The Community Improvement Venture Initiative will protect, promote and preserve Cobourg's heritage assets through the provision of appropriate low-cost financing. As a function of its role to promote development of downtown Cobourg, the Venture Initiative will market itself and identify and recruit developers deemed beneficial to the new Downtown Master Plan and in keeping with the Market Position Statement.

The Venture Initiative will advance loans to qualified applicants best demonstrating adherence and respect for Cobourg's Downtown Master Plan as well as the established guidelines for new downtown commercial business categories, ensuring an adequate variety of shopping experiences for residents and tourists.

Consideration will also be given to green, affordable residential development of upper floors in downtown buildings.

An effective partnership will be developed between the Town, Economic Development and the Venture Initiative. Delivering jobs and prosperity to downtown will be the foremost criteria for accessing loans under this program.

Conclusion

This action plan dovetails with Planning Department goals, as well as both Council and the Economic Development & Tourism strategic plans, including: targeted sectors – creative economy, food manufacturing, clean manufacturing, new technology and the town’s tourism emphasis on food, culture, entertainment and recreation.

Further, a vitalized downtown could become a working classroom for architects and green engineering students. Rescue and revival of heritage building assets will foster an ideal working classroom environment for architects, green energy, and restoration students and professionals. This would be an opportunity for Cobourg to specialize and become a living workshop on how to redevelop a heritage downtown.

Long-term, the Venture Initiative has the capacity to expand its priorities to include other projects requiring Cobourg-specific funding. As a development machine for Cobourg, the Venture Initiative could add other functions to assist local industry and commerce. This Cobourg-centric mindset will produce benefits that existing economic programs and funds cannot attain.

Strategic focus on events and development of enhanced tourism products will result in multiple benefits for the town: a concerted emphasis on higher spending tourists will have the net outcome of trimming the number of visitors to the beach and Victoria Park, thereby improving access for local residents. Welcoming more tourists interested in local culture, restaurants, entertainment and overnight getaways will reduce wear and tear on assets such as Victoria Park. Improved tourism products will also mean more overnight visitors spending more money on meals, entertainment and shopping.

A strengthened downtown and heightened sense of community will make Cobourg sprawl resistant. Having a “made-in-Cobourg” mindset will keep jobs here and reduce the lure of the big city. As an important cultural feature, downtown contributes to our friendly, neighbourly community.

In closing, the Venture Initiative, the Downtown Master Plan and other strategies presented in this Downtown Revitalization Action Plan establish the town’s presence at the development table, ensuring that the highest standards and desires of the community are upheld in all future development. Further, this action plan encourages ongoing collaboration between the Northumberland Central Chamber of Commerce, the DBIA, downtown businesses, building owners, residents and Council.



Strategic Elements

Objective,
Recommended
Action, Notes,
Timelines, Resources
and Responsibility

RECOMMENDED ACTION	NOTES	TIMELINES	RESOURCES	RESPONSIBILITY
Strategic Element 1 – Engage the Public and Stakeholders				
Objective 1.1 Finalize, prioritize and develop timelines for implementing the Downtown Business Improvement Area list.				
1.1 a) Town staff implement a test program to remove frosted glass from light standards.	This action has been completed and according to all reports, it is effective.	2014 budget		Public Works
1.1 b) Turn Cobourg's downtown into a must-see holiday season destination.		Fall 2013	\$25,000	Public Works; DBIA; Events
1.1 c) Fulfillment of the DBIA priorities list: a. Addition of one more closed circuit camera downtown b. Fewer, more consistent street and parking signs c. Improved overall wayfinding signs d. DBIA input on commercial business signs e. Input from DBIA on banners and flags displayed on King St f. Development of gateway signs to downtown g. Audition process for buskers and street performers h. Improved and more visible waste receptacles i. Annually apply fresh paint on street furnishing	d. Action complete e. Action complete g. Action complete – not recommended	2014	2014 Budget	a. Police Services b. Engineering (parking study) c. Public Works d. Action complete e. Action complete f. Public Works g. Action complete – not recommended h. Public Works i. Public Works
Objective 1.2 Create a communication strategy that includes opportunities for public input.				
1.2 a) Pool resources and align budgets and communications plans. On an annual basis between the Town, Economic Development, the DBIA and the Venture Initiative.		Fall 2013		Ec. Dev.; Chamber; DBIA; Communications; Tourism
Strategic Element 2 – Identify and Establish a Cornerstone Business or Businesses that Support Cobourg's Economic Development Strategy				
Objective 2.1 Begin a shift toward commercial categories that enhance the town's economic strategy and promote the downtown Vision.				
2.1 a) Identify and pursue prospective businesses in categories that include: creative economy, hardware, clothing, brewers, vintners, entertainment promoters and food related businesses and services.		Spring 2014		
2.1 b) Implement a municipal business certification and recognition program.		January 2014		Ec. Dev.; DBIA; Chamber; BAC

RECOMMENDED ACTION	NOTES	TIMELINES	RESOURCES	RESPONSIBILITY
Objective 2.2 Create a climate conducive to business retention and expansion.				
2.2 a) Develop a formal client referral program linking partner organizations.				Ec. Dev.; DBIA; Chamber; CFDC
2.2 b) It is recommended that a newly established Downtown Coalition be formed to host a quarterly roundtable session to ensure alignment of messages, resources and activities.		Fall 2014		Ec. Dev.; Planning; DBIA; Chamber; Venture Initiative; Public Works
2.2 c) Cobourg's Downtown Business Relations Team assist businesses in identifying potential for expansion. Growth-oriented businesses should be encouraged to take advantage of local educational and professional development opportunities. A member of the DBIA staff should be invited to attend business visits.		Immediate		Ec. Dev.; Mayor; DBIA Staff
Strategic Element 3 – Establish a Motivating, Consistent Cobourg Position/Brand Statement				
Objective 3.1 Market Cobourg to residents and visitors in an effective, professional manner.				
3.1 a) Spring boarding off of the "Ontario's Feel Good Town" slogan, the town and downtown partners should collaborate to build feel good experiences for residents and visitors.		Fall 2013		Ec. Dev.; Tourism; Communications Officer; DBIA; Chamber
Objective 3.2 Cultivate the town's image of Cobourg as a friendly, professional, capable place to locate a business.				
3.2 a) Establishment of a Venture Initiative		2014/15	\$1 million in accessible credit (2015 Budget)	Ec. Dev.; Planning; C.A.O.; Council
Objective 3.3 Educate public and businesses on the value and benefits of hospitality to all our visitors.				
3.3 a) A communication campaign be developed to include a press release and radio ad to discuss the benefits of tourism in Cobourg	Action complete			Marketing & Communication Team
Strategic Element 4 – Money for Resources				
Objective 4.1 Offset marketing and other expenditures.				
4.1 a) The Task Force recommends application be made to the Provincial Rural Economic Development Fund in order to finance start-up costs for establishing the venture initiative.		Fall 2013		Ec. Dev.
Objective 4.2 Offset potential action plan expenditures (i.e. a fund to help refurbish historical downtown buildings).				
4.2 a) The Task Force recommends application be made to the Provincial Rural Economic Development Fund in order to finance start-up costs for establishing the venture initiative.		Fall 2013		Ec. Dev.

RECOMMENDED ACTION	NOTES	TIMELINES	RESOURCES	RESPONSIBILITY
Strategic Element 5 – Establish Criteria for New Downtown Commercial Categories Attractions				
Objective 5.1 Provide necessary variety of downtown shopping experiences.				
5.1 a) See Recommended Action 2.1 a)				
Objective 5.2 Begin a shift toward business categories that enhance the town's economic strategy and promote the downtown Vision.				
5.2 a) See Recommended Action 2.1 a) & 3.2 a)				
Strategic Element 6 – Create Strategies for a Sustainable, Educated Workforce, including a Youth Strategy				
Objective 6.1 Develop an action plan designed to expedite the location of a college or university campus in downtown Cobourg in order to enhance the town's economic development strategy.				
6.1 a) Foster an ongoing dialogue with Fleming College to explore the viability of bringing additional programming to downtown as well as engaging other secondary and post-secondary institutions to integrate the downtown vitalization actions into the curriculums of their programs.		Ongoing	N/A	Ec. Dev.; venture initiative; Fleming College; Durham College; CDCI West; Other Secondary/Post Secondary Schools
Objective 6.2 Enhance the proposition identifying Cobourg as a great place to open a business in identified sectors.				
6.2 a) Establish a business incubator/accelerator that will leverage Provincial, Federal and local programs encouraging entrepreneurs, especially youth, to embrace business concepts that enhance the Market Position Statement. Examples of incubator businesses may include integration of local agricultural commodities into high demand consumer products or development of software or social media applications that enhance local commercial business or tourism related businesses. Also See Recommended Action 3.2 a)		2015/2016	2015 Budget – To be determined.	Ec. Dev./ Vitalization Initiative; BAC
Strategic Element 7 – Facilitate Physical Improvement/Beautification of Downtown Buildings and Effective Design of Public Spaces				
Objective 7.1 Establish a model and standards for physical appearance, conservation, rehabilitation and structure of downtown buildings				
7.1 a) It is recommended the town create a Downtown Master Plan. The foundation of this master plan will be the Municipal Heritage Master Plan overlaid with key recommendations from Planning, Economic Development & Tourism denoting an emphasis on heritage buildings as well as harmonious business clusters and potential tourism products nodes.		2014	\$250,000 50% Grant	Bldg. Owners; Business Owners; DBIA; Realtors; Ec. Dev.; Tourism; Engineering; Developers; Financial Institutions

RECOMMENDED ACTION	NOTES	TIMELINES	RESOURCES	RESPONSIBILITY
7.1 b) It is recommended that the town adopt recommendations from the completed parking study.		Ongoing		Engineering; DBIA; Ec. Dev.
7.1 c) It is recommended a King Street property be purchased and redeveloped. This building would become a working model for heritage building improvements and a repository for knowledge and best practices and guidelines for other redevelopment projects. Further, this location would become the home to an entrepreneur incubator.		Ongoing		Ec. Dev.; Planning; C.A.O.; Council
7.1 d) It is recommended that the town reevaluate and complete the final phase of the Victoria Square plan. Identify complimentary uses of Victoria Square, Victoria Hall, the Firehall and Market Building that best support the Market Position statement.	Review the plan 2014 Work carried out 2015	2014		Engineering; DBIA; Ec. Dev.
Objective 7.2 Incorporate and improve linkages of downtown and other town businesses, community assets, the waterfront, transportation and Northumberland County.				
7.2 a) It is recommended that new wayfinding signs and improved links between the waterfront and downtown be prioritized and completed. (see Appendix "G" GSP recommendations); construction of new directional signs along William St and Division St; improvements to Henley Arcade in order to improve the experience of arriving downtown by connecting the marina, Second Street, Victoria Hall, Victoria Square and the Covert Street parking lot; gateway structures providing physical definition of the downtown in order to establish a strong sense of place.			To be carried out over a 3 year budget: 2014 - \$100,000 2015 - \$150,000 \$2016 - \$150,000	Engineering; Planning; DBIA; Ec. Dev.; Public Works
7.2 b) It is recommended the town work quickly to address complaints about poorly maintained downtown properties and consider creative solutions to encourage property owners to improve the appearance of heritage properties. Some towns and cities have entered into development agreements with property owners providing amendments to zoning in return for prescribed commitments to improve structures.		2014		Building Dept.; Planning; Ec. Dev.; DBIA
7.2 c) The town must ensure accessibility and make pedestrian traffic in our downtown a priority. This would begin with a cooperative effort between the town and business owners to efficiently remove snow and ice during the winter season.		2014/2015		DBIA; Downtown Businesses; Public Works; Town Council
7.2 d) The town and DBIA should collaborate to improve garbage collection from waste receptacles especially during large events or parades.	Will require 1 extra pick-up per week	Summer 2014	\$700 per pick-up	DBIA; Public Works

RECOMMENDED ACTION	NOTES	TIMELINES	RESOURCES	RESPONSIBILITY
Strategic Element 8 – Establish Key Performance Indicators to Measure the Future Success of Our Program on an Ongoing Basis				
Objective 8.1 Ensure a necessary continuing focus on the program.				
8.1 a) Economic Development and the Venture Initiative in collaboration with the DBIA and Chamber of Commerce will produce an annual, public report card detailing successes and achievement of the measurable goals		Develop Goals - January 2014 Prepare report - January 2015		Ec. Dev.; DBIA; Chamber; Venture Initiative; Downtown Coalition
Objective 8.2 Identify flaws in the strategy and recommend adjustments according to the business environment.				
8.2 a) Yearly review of outcomes associated with the measurable goals will allow for evaluation and course corrections as our strategy unfolds.		January 2015	—	Ec. Dev.; Venture Initiative; DBIA; Downtown Coalition
Strategic Element 9 – Enhance the Cultural Significance of Downtown				
Objective 9.1 Increase business and services identified as contingents of the “creative economy”.				
9.1 a) It is recommended that in support of the town’s Economic Development & Tourism Strategic Plan, an emphasis be placed upon attracting the creative economy to the downtown. Key economic growth lies in the ability to attract creative workers, or the creative class and to translate that into creative economic outcomes in the form of new investment and development ideas, new high-tech businesses and regional growth.		Ongoing		Ec. Dev.; Venture Initiative
9.1 b) It is recommended that as part of a long-range plan, Cobourg should create a Municipal Cultural Plan (MCP). Also See Recommended Action 6.2		January 2016		Planning; Ec. Dev.; DBIA
Objective 9.2 Identify current cultural assets and consider potential new cultural assets/activities that will enhance downtown as a multi-day destination.				
9.2 a) It is recommended a feasibility study be commissioned on the value and potential uses of town owned properties that could be developed to enhance tourism products - specifically identifying the impact of a four-season destination product for downtown Cobourg.		Fall 2014	Funding to be included with Strategic Element #4	Ec. Dev.

Cobourg Downtown Task Force

Composition, Mission, Vision, Team
Descriptions - Appendix "A"

10

An Ad Hoc Committee of the Town of Cobourg

TASK FORCE MISSION

The goal of the Cobourg Downtown Task Force is to coordinate the development and implementation of a comprehensive plan to be utilized as a guiding tool to encourage business retention, expansion and attraction in downtown Cobourg.

TASK FORCE VISION

The Downtown Revitalization Task Force will incorporate best practices and provide the leadership and drive to produce a concrete, dynamic plan for Cobourg's downtown that will build a productive and successful downtown area for business, visitors and citizens alike

TASK FORCE COMPOSITION

Members will consist of:

- 2 representatives from the Downtown Business Improvement Association
- 2 representative from the Northumberland Central Chamber of Commerce
- 1 Council representative from the Corporation of the Town of Cobourg and 3 staff members
- 1 representative from the Business Advisory Centre Northumberland
- 1 representative from Ontario Ministry of Food & Rural Affairs (OMAFRA) as a Provincial staff resource

INITIAL COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Downtown Business Improvement Association

Members - Linda Marr, Andrew Hall

Northumberland Central Chamber of Commerce

Members - Sandra Webb, April Bayer-Murchison

Corporation of the Town of Cobourg

Member - Deputy Mayor Stan Frost

Staff Resources - Wendy Gibson, Julie Savard and Stephen Ashton

Business Advisory Centre Northumberland

Member - Robert Day

Community At Large

Member – To be announced.

Ontario Ministry of Food & Rural Affairs (OMAFRA)

Provincial Staff Resource – Eric Lawlor

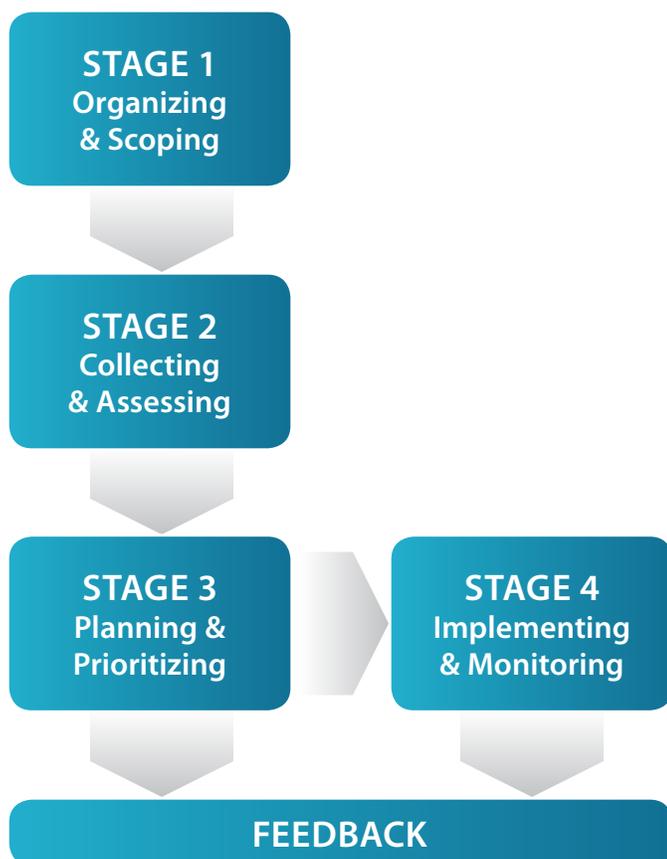
TASK FORCE OBJECTIVES

- To build consensus on common goals and priorities for downtown revitalization as set forth in the Strategic Plan and subsequent action plans
- To guide the work of the Coordinator and Working Teams
- To oversee the activities of working teams and subcommittees so that projects and activities are integrated and work toward common aims
- To reflect the full range of stakeholders from across the community
- To be the mechanism through which cooperation and partnerships among organizations in the community can be arranged
- To provide a means to engage volunteers and harness the energy and commitment of community organizations
- To disseminate information and facilitate communication to the broader community about the revitalization vision and progress toward the goals

Cobourg Downtown Revitalization Principles and Work Plan

FOUR STAGE PROCESS

As part of Cobourg's Economic Development & Tourism Strategic Plan, the overall project for downtown revitalization will be overseen by the Economic Development Officer under the direction of the C.A.O. A "Business Development Officer" will be hired to coordinate all activities of the downtown revitalization work plan using the model below as a guideline.



STAGE 1:

Organizing & Scoping - The organizing steps include forming a Management Committee (our Task Force), establishing working teams, hiring a Coordinator to manage all activities and holding a public meeting to launch the process. Preliminary scoping and assessment will lead to the development of a vision for the downtown and the identification of short-term actions that will lead to "quick wins". Completing Stages 1 to 3 will take about 9 months once a dedicated Coordinator is in place.

STAGE 2

Collecting & Assessing by Understanding our downtown - This stage involves a set of data-collection tools to deepen the understanding of our current retail service and businesses, including supply and demand in the downtown. Participatory community design activities will focus on documenting physical assets and determining how to respond to physical issues and opportunities. Cultural attributes and potential strengths will all be documented during this stage.

STAGE 3

Planning & Prioritizing & Developing our Action Plan - This includes interpreting results from Stage 2, as well as prioritizing various ideas through a Market Position Statement for action planning. Specific goals and actions will be prioritized and linked in a coherent Strategic Plan that will provide the direction for the next two years and onward.

STAGES 4

Implementing & Monitoring Our Plan & Tracking Progress

– The Implementing & Monitoring stage will take about 2 years, during which time the working teams and project teams will implement individual initiatives as part of the Strategic Plan. Two years is sufficient time to complete several projects and to see them start “bearing fruit”. When positive outcomes are being achieved, we will then renew involvement and review the types of actions that remain to be accomplished, or identify new ideas for downtown revitalization. These final steps include implementing the action plans and selecting indicators for benchmarking. Positive changes that have occurred in the downtown as a result of the Task Force’s work will be promoted to the broader community, and the achievements of volunteers will be recognized with awards or celebrations. Changes in the downtown will also be recorded in an Annual Report Card to track progress and positive impacts that have occurred in the downtown.

Human Resources

WORKING TEAMS

In order to carry out all the stages above, “working teams” will be developed consisting of a Chair person from the Task Force, community volunteers and town staff. These teams will fall under the direction of the Business Development Officer. Upon inception, each team will be responsible for providing the task force with a work plan to include time-lines and budget, if any. The chair will report back regularly to the Task Force to obtain approvals prior to proceeding with the work plan.

Work teams may include the following: Recruitment & Selection, Marketing & Promotion, Technical Advisory, and Economic Development.

BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT OFFICER

Role/Mandate - Under the direction of the Economic Development Officer, the Business Development Officer will ensure that revitalization activities are effectively carried out by:

- Assisting the Task Force in assessing downtown issues and formulating the Strategic Plan and the action plans for downtown revitalization
- Organizing volunteers and fiscal resources to accomplish the projects identified in the work plan and to implement the action plans
- Building consensus, coaches working teams, communicating shared goals and plans and implementing projects

NAME OF TEAM	DESCRIPTION
Recruitment & Selection	Recruitment and selection of a Business Development Officer who will oversee the entire project including coordinating the activities of all working teams.
Marketing & Promotion	Publicize Management Committee activities and promote the downtown through various media. This working team will also coordinate activities and events to animate the downtown.
Physical Improvements	Engage community members in design activities that benefit the downtown — tasks such as documenting local heritage assets, developing the downtown’s physical profile, and organizing a community design workshop. This team will create a list of key physical assets, design issues and opportunities for the downtown, and present them to the Task Force.
Economic Development	Focuses on business development, while taking inventory of businesses and conducting the Business Owner, Resident and Customer Origin Surveys.

**Not all members listed have been confirmed and may change as determined by the Task Force*

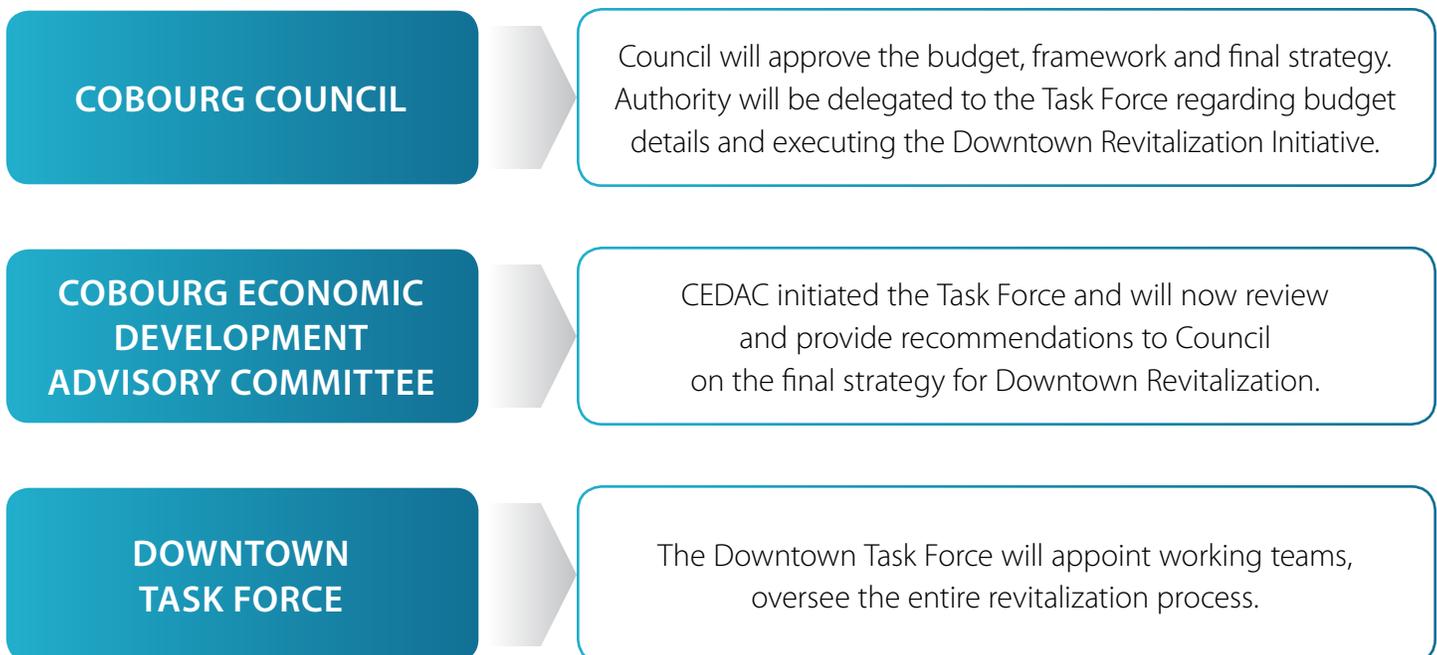
10 Task Force

Reporting Structure

ADMINISTRATION



REPORTING STRUCTURE – POLICIES AND PROCEDURES



Customer Origin Survey

Graphical Summary of Data

- Appendix "B"

11

Notes

Visitors to downtown were polled on a variety of days over 2 weeks at several different locations, mainly on King Street.

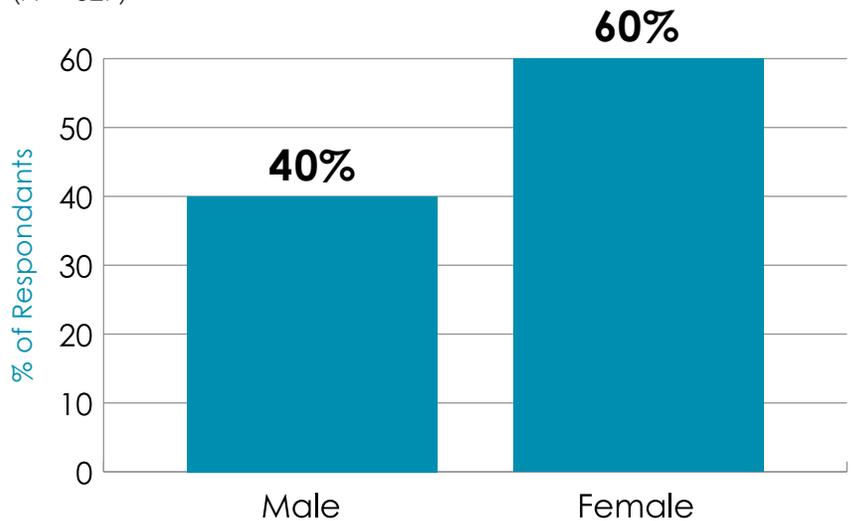
The total number of respondents was 635, although each question has slightly fewer, indicated in parentheses.

The postal code data from this survey formed the basis of the OMAFRA trade area calculation.

The notes after each graph provide some comparison between these results and the results of the **Residents Survey**.

GENDER

(N = 627)

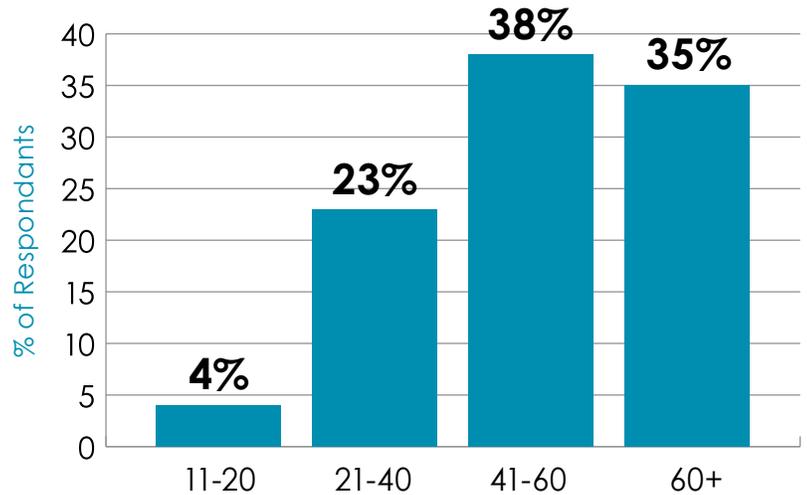


This survey has a slightly more even distribution of gender (60%/40%, female/male) than the **Residents Survey**, which was 66%/34%.

AGE

(N = 618)

Although the categories are not quite comparable to the **Residents Survey**, the sample in this survey has a distribution across age that is a bit closer to that of Cobourg. However, this sample is still skewed in favour of older residents. It also neglects younger residents.

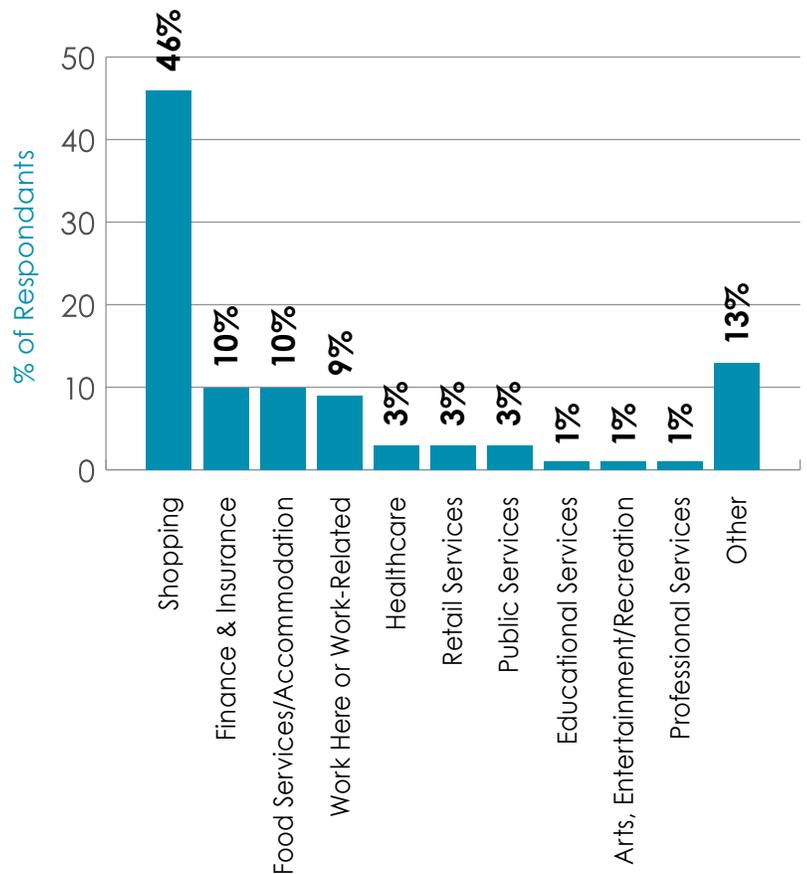


QUESTION 2.

Why are you downtown today?

(N = 631)

The categorization of the results here is different from the closest question in the **Residents Survey (Figure 9 - What are the top two reasons you choose to visit the downtown?)**. To the extent that the shape of the two graphs can be compared, however, the results are quite different. (Keep in mind that the respondents in this survey are already downtown, so the samples are not the same.) Most respondents here are **Shopping**, whereas this activity is third in the list of reasons for going downtown in the Residents Survey. **Sports and Recreation** are not as frequently mentioned here, by comparison to the **Residents Survey**, where it is fourth in the frequency list.



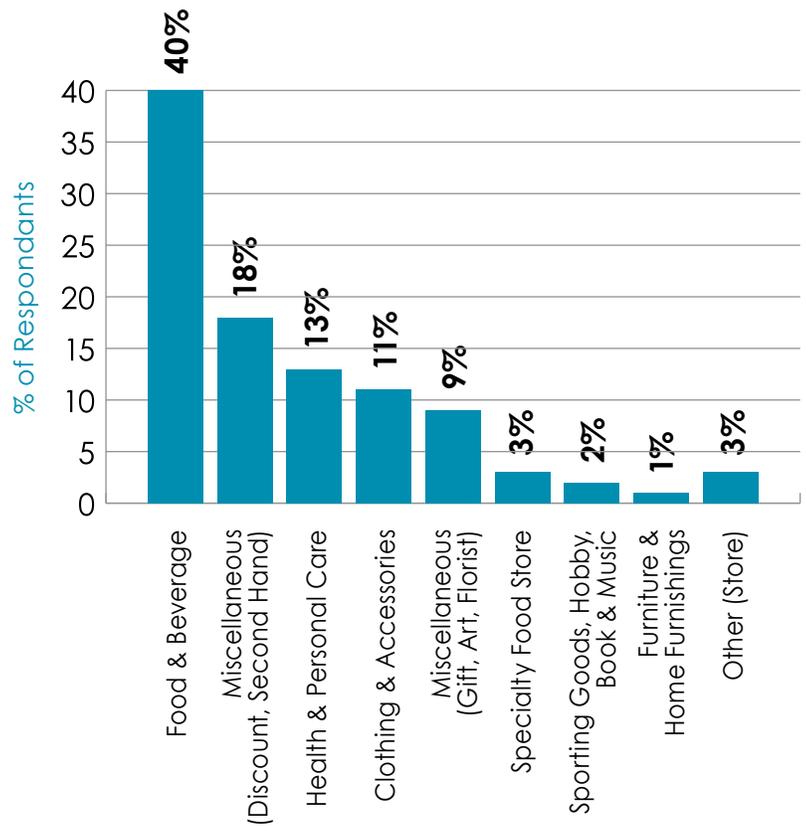
QUESTION 3.

What type of store will you be visiting?

(N=356)

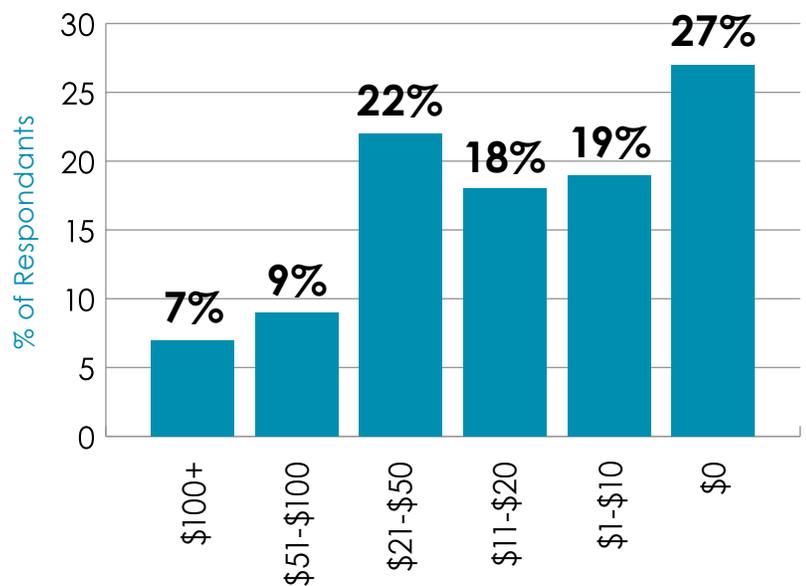
Of a total of N = 635, 56% were going to visit a store; 44% were not. Of those visiting a “store” (N= 356), the graphic shows the breakdown of type of store.

The results here seem generally comparable to those in the Residents Survey. For example, [Food and Beverage](#) is high on the frequency list as is [Restaurants & Bars](#) (**Figure 22** in the **Residents Survey** report).



How much money do you anticipate spending downtown today?

(N = 493)

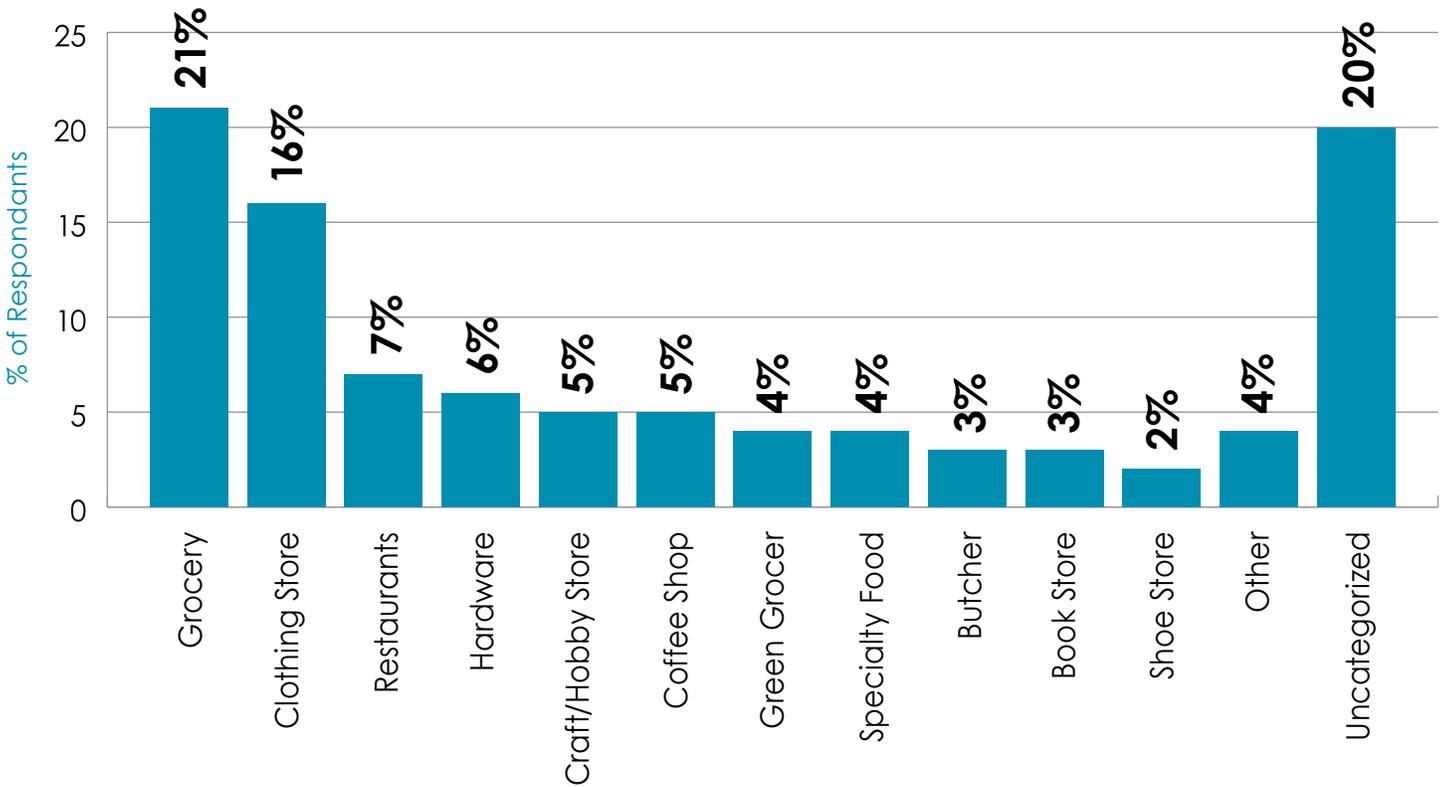


What two shops or services would you like to see added downtown?

(N= 669)

The **Other** category (< 2%) included antique store, dry cleaner, gift store, parking, shoe repair, clinic.

The results here are very consistent with those in the **Residents Survey** report (**Figure 15**), with **grocery, clothing store** and **restaurants** topping the list in each case. The remaining categories are almost identical, but in a slightly different order of frequency between the two graphs.



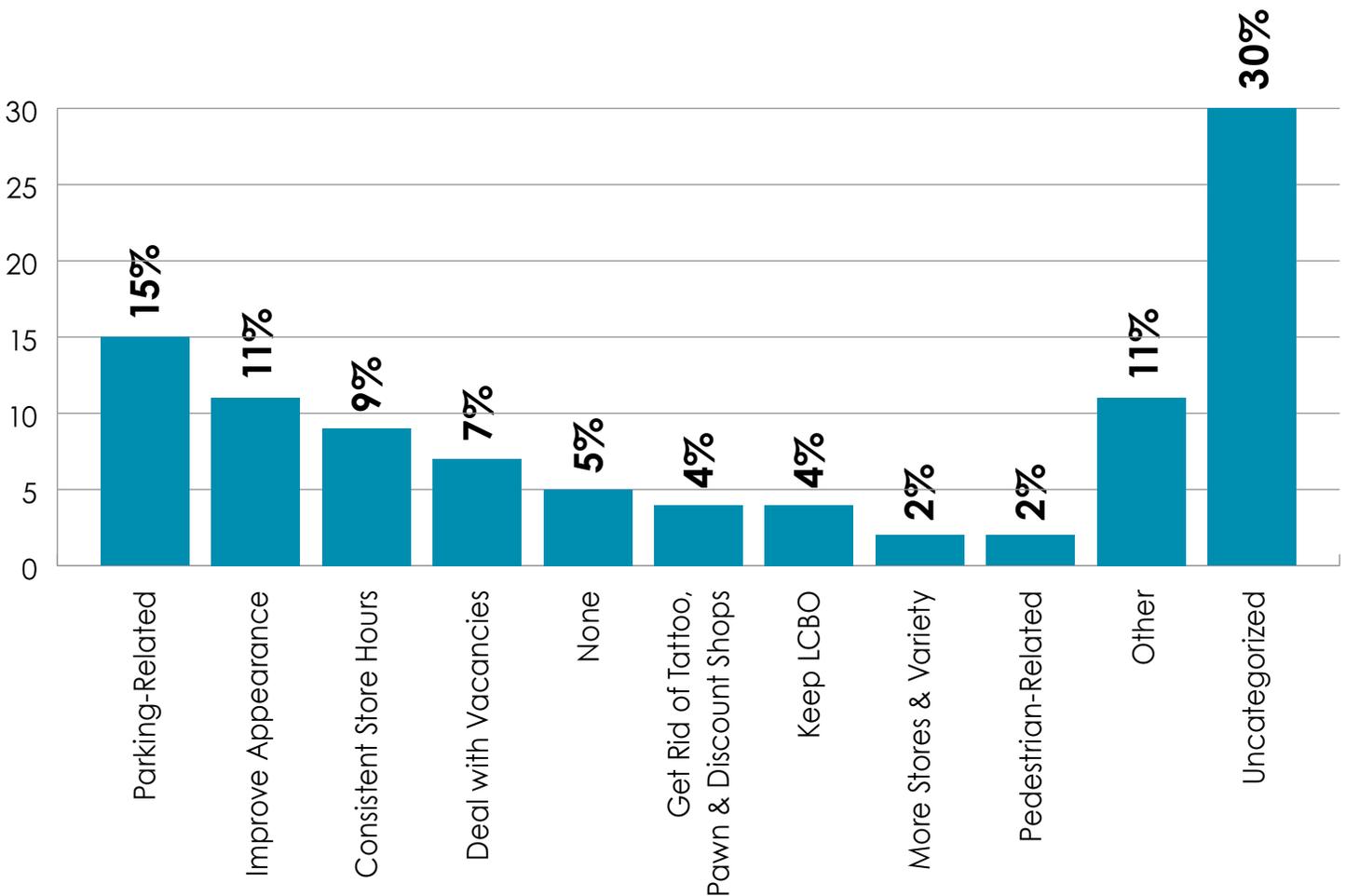
What are two changes you'd like to see occur downtown?

(N = 730)

The responses to this question were coded as comments in addition to specific changes. They have, therefore, been grouped as issues.

The **Other** category includes comments on accessibility, bar & restaurants, bikes, bylaws, clothing stores, DBIA, farmers market, grocery store, heritage, lighting, music, transportation, public washrooms, snow removal, seating. All were < 2% of total.

The top four issues mentioned here are consistent with the results in the **Residents Survey**.



Due to size, these documents may be found under separate cover:

Resident Survey.....Appendix “C”

Business Owner SurveyAppendix “D”

Market Analysis Survey.....Appendix “E”

Downtown Business Improvement Area ListAppendix “F”

GSP Group, Physical Improvement Recommendations.....Appendix “G”

Downtown Vitalization Working Group Descriptions and Members.....Appendix “H”

Downtown Vitalization Volunteer Base Members.....Appendix “I”

Under Separate Cover

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