DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

IN OUR COMMUNITY

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

MAY – SEPTEMBER, 2019

rmwb.ca/downtown

Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo

Table of Contents

Executive Summary 3

Response Summary by Survey Question 5

Question 1: Where Does the Downtown Boundary Begin and End? 5

Question 2: Why Do You Go Downtown Now? 6

Question 3: What Does Downtown Revitalization Mean To You? 7

Question 4: Where Should We Focus Revitalization Efforts To Make the Biggest Impact? 8

Question 5: What Would Your Vision Be For the Downtown In The Next Five Years? 9

Question 6: What Attractions Would Encourage You To Spend More Time Downtown? 18

Question 7: What Are the Top Things You Feel Could Be Done To Revitalize Downtown During the Summer? 19

Question 8: What Are the Top Things You Feel Could Be Done To Revitalize Downtown During the Winter? 22

Question 9: Please Provide Any Additional Feedback You Have About Downtown 26

Questions 10 and 11: Respondent Demographics 29

Appendix A: Downtown Revitalization Survey 30

Executive Summary

Downtown revitalization is a priority in the Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo's 2018 -2021 Strategic Plan. Success in achieving this priority depends on a variety of stakeholders working together to achieve goals that continue to improve quality of life for residents. The community has invested a significant amount of volunteer time and the Municipality has invested resources in projects, programs, services and initiatives in preparation for a refreshed, revitalized downtown area.

With community ambassadors by our side during public engagement that took place between May - September 2019, we created a dialogue with people across the region to help understand what people have in mind when it comes to downtown Fort McMurray.

A regional engagement strategy was implemented; and included:

- One-on-one meetings with more than 100 stakeholder representatives, community organizations and individuals including members of Council and Municipal staff.
- 24 public engagement sessions (approximately 1,000 residents attended the public engagement sessions).
- 1,200 public surveys completed by residents.

Most respondents were between the ages of 25 and 44. Engagement opportunities were shared on the Municipality's website and other communication platforms. Downtown revitalization led the Municipality's statistics for online engagement during June, July and September. The topic and the engagement opportunities were reported in the media during the engagement period.

This information will be used to initiate the creation of the community's downtown vision and help guide recommendations for next steps and long-term planning.

The 2018 Census indicated a regional population size of 78,832 residents, excluding project accommodations counts. Based on the population size, a minimum valid sample would include approximately 650 residents and through this consultation process more than 1,200 were engaged.

Respondents completed a series of eleven (11) survey questions (see appendix A) and provided general comments starting with their thoughts about where the physical boundary is. The information below provides insights into what we heard people say.

When respondents were asked about the physical boundary of Fort McMurray's downtown, more than 74% said that "downtown" includes the area(s) around Morrison Street (to the north) and King Street (to the south), with Highway 63 forming the western boundary and the Clearwater River providing the eastern boundary. Respondents primarily associated downtown with Franklin Avenue and highlighted the waterfront as a unique focal point within the boundary. Fewer than half of participants consider MacDonald Island Park to be part of "downtown" and even fewer consider Waterways to be part of "downtown".

Next, respondents indicated eight reasons that they currently access downtown. The answers below are in order of the greatest number of responses to the least from left to right.

- Recreation and entertainment
- Shopping
- Business reasons
- Work
- Other
- Living downtown
- Healthcare
- School

A series of open-ended survey questions were also asked as part of the survey and generally, the feedback about overall downtown revitalization was positive. Many people expressed concern that downtown is lacking things for people to do. Given that most of the population and new retail and service providers are located on the northside

of Fort McMurray; revitalization of downtown will require creative ways to attract people to downtown and increase investor confidence. There is also an impression that the Municipality has not followed through on past promises and continues to expand services on the northside of Fort McMurray which makes some people concerned about revitalization efforts. It is important that part of revitalization should include rebuilding the trust between residents and the Municipality.

When asked what are the top three to five things that would encourage people to spend more time in Fort McMurray's downtown? The responses in order of the most responses to least were:

- Retail and shopping
- Restaurants and cafes
- Waterfront development
- Improved cleanliness
- Sense of personal safety and security

When asked where you live in the region? The responses in order of the most responses to least were from left to right were:

1. Timberlea
2. Thickwood
3. Lower Townsite
4. Beacon Hill
5. Abasand
6. Gregoire
7. Saprae Creek Estates
8. Waterways
9. Anzac
10. Janvier
11. Gregoire Lake Estates
12. Draper
13. Fort McKay
14. Conklin
15. Fort Chipewyan

The top recurring survey themes that emerged overall are:

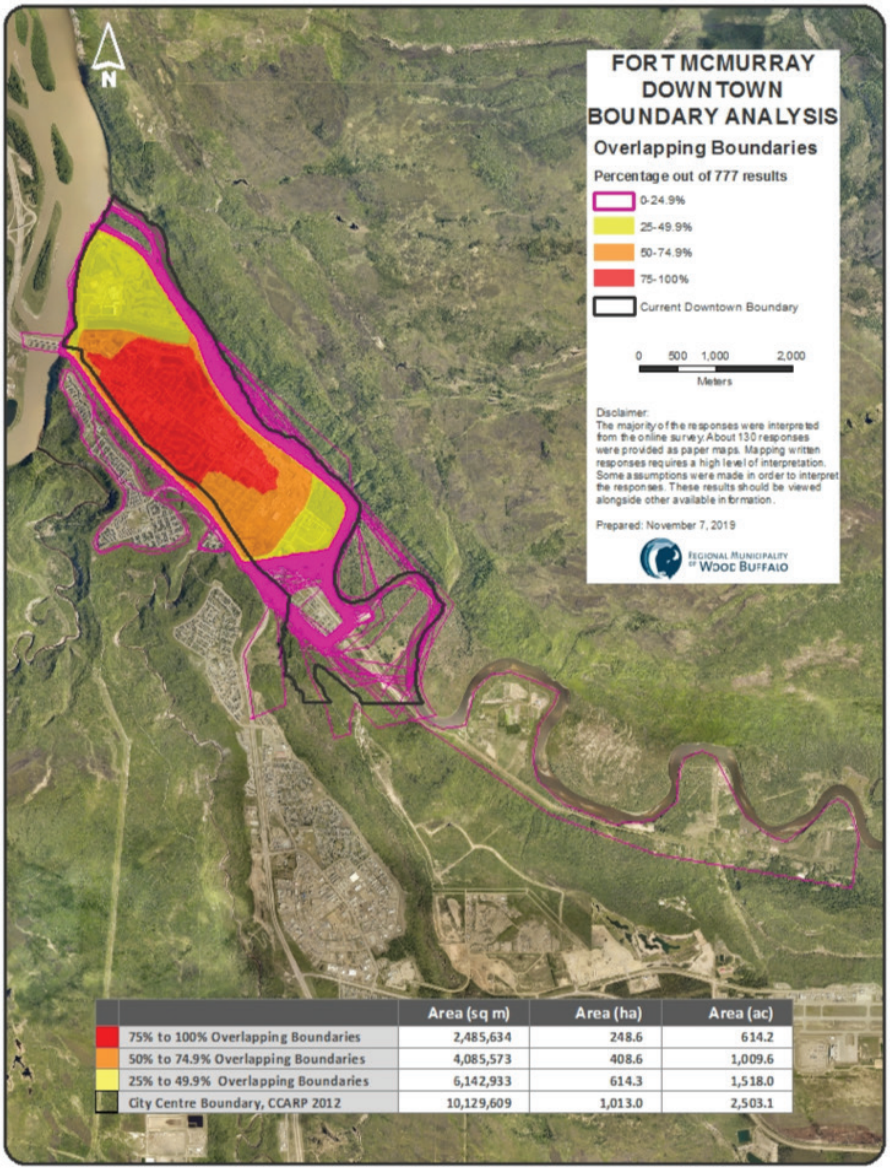
- Create a strong sense of place that feels welcoming, safe and attracts people downtown.
- Enhance beautification and community cleanliness.
- Establish the waterfront as a focal point.
- Increase the amount of cultural and recreation festivals, events and programs.
- Maintain public and private buildings, landscapes and open spaces in ways that reflect pride of ownership.
- Address homelessness (poverty) and panhandling in public areas.
- Attract new businesses and identify strategies to retain existing ones.
- Identify strategies to address vacant buildings and vacant storefronts.
- Update the look, feel and character of downtown buildings on main streets.
- Identify a uniform design theme for streetscape works, wayfinding signage, banners, seasonal decorations and public art on main streets.
- Create an attractive, and well-connected pedestrian friendly downtown supported by convenient parking and access to an increased density of new businesses in a single area.
- Stimulate development of facilities that offer a range of unique attractions in densified areas and maximize the use of underutilized public and private lands.

It is recommended that this report be read fully to understand the connections between each of the recurring themes and the comments reflected in each of the categories.

Response Summary by Survey Question

Question 1

Please indicate by major street names (or general areas) that you consider to be the physical boundary of Fort McMurray's downtown? Where does downtown begin for you and where does it end?



	Area (sq m)	Area (ha)	Area (ac)
75% to 100% Overlapping Boundaries	2,485,634	248.6	614.2
50% to 74.9% Overlapping Boundaries	4,085,573	408.6	1,009.6
25% to 49.9% Overlapping Boundaries	6,142,933	614.3	1,518.0
City Centre Boundary, CCARP 2012	10,129,609	1,013.0	2,503.1

The majority (>74%) of respondents confirmed that "downtown" includes the area(s) around Morrison Street (to the north) and King Street (to the south), with Highway 63 forming the western boundary and the Clearwater River providing the eastern boundary.

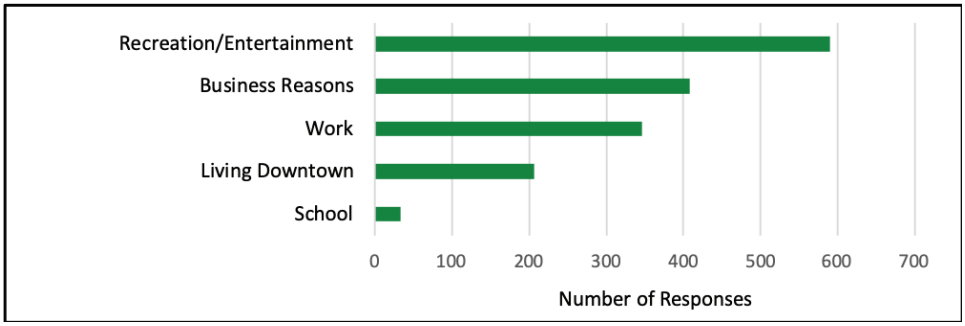
Respondents primarily associated downtown with Franklin Avenue and highlighted the waterfront as a unique focal point within the boundary. In terms of specific streets that define downtown; the beginning and end of downtown along Franklin Avenue varied between Morrison Street and King Street but one commonality was that the general area around the Jubilee Building was always included.

Fewer than half considered MacDonald Island Park to be part of "downtown" and even fewer consider Waterways to be part of "downtown".

Question 2

Why do you go downtown right now?

Respondents were asked to select "all that apply" from a list of options to indicate reasons they currently go downtown. Below are the responses:

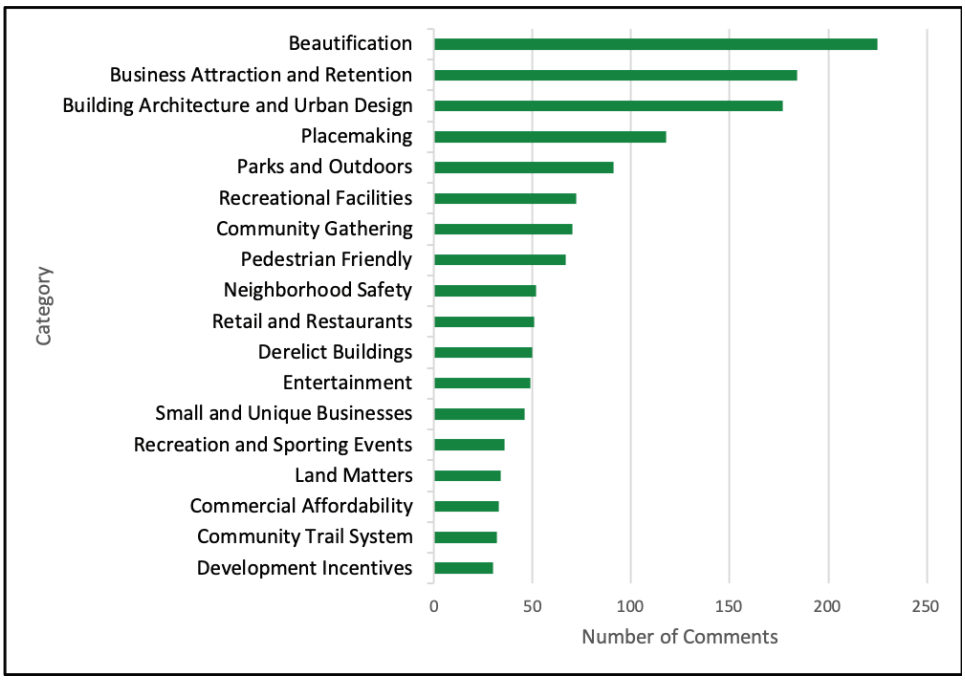


Additionally, survey respondents were also given an opportunity to state other reasons they currently visit downtown. Most commonly, shopping was indicated as a major reason. Healthcare was also noted as a strong reason.

The next three questions (3, 4, 5) on the survey resulted in very similar responses. The number of comments associated with each question are highlighted separately on the charts below from most comments received to the least.

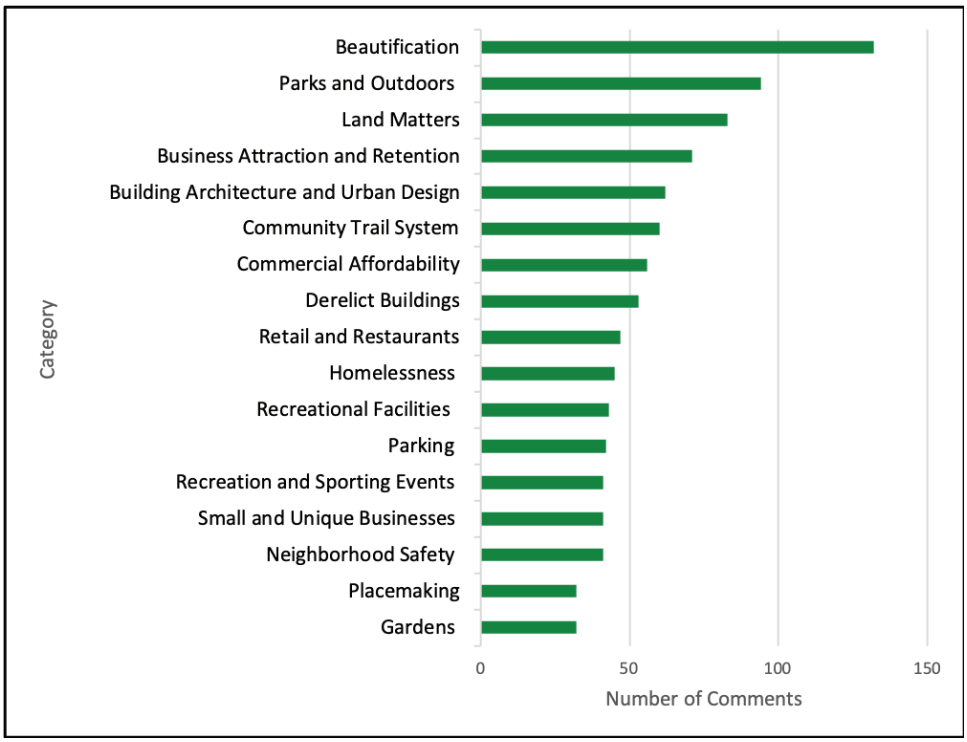
Question 3

When you think about the phrase, 'downtown revitalization', what does that mean to you? Basically, how do you think we should define revitalization?



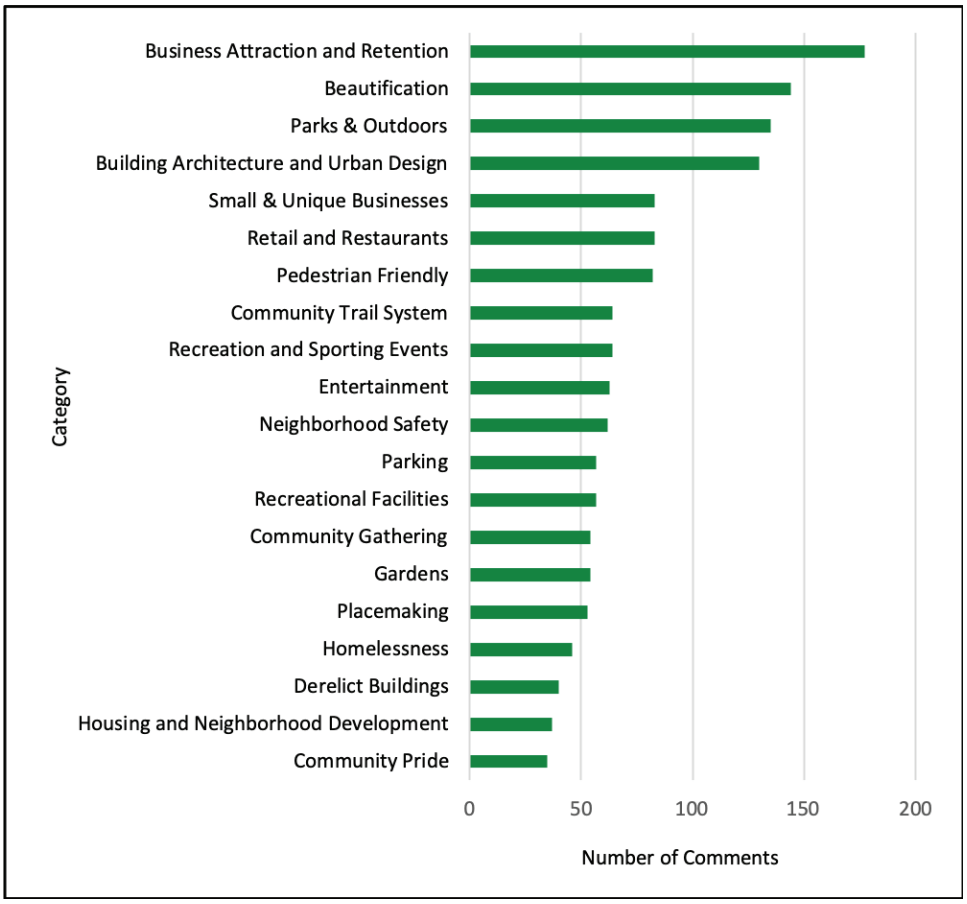
Question 4

When you think of downtown, are there specific areas within downtown where we should focus revitalization efforts to make the biggest impact? What are some changes that you think could be made in the short-term to strengthen existing downtown assets or realize potential in the downtown?

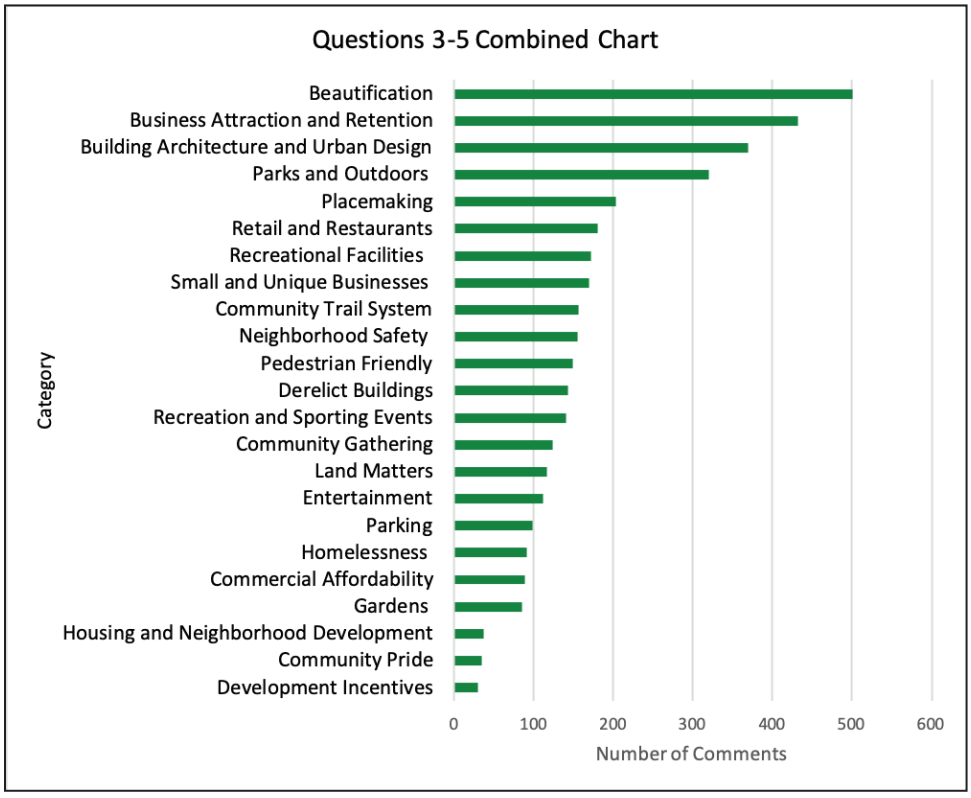


Question 5

What would your vision for the downtown be in the next five years?



Responses to questions 3, 4 and 5 have been consolidated and summarized by category in the combined chart below by the greatest number of comments to the least.



Comments that were provided in response to questions 3, 4 and 5 were very similar. Therefore, each category below includes a summary of responses to these three questions and is grouped by similar categories and similar comments.

Beautification

Respondents suggested we focus on improving the overall appearance and cleanliness of downtown, using materials and colours that create a sense of vibrancy and attractiveness year-round so that downtown feels welcoming. Areas of focus are Franklin Avenue, the area around the Jubilee Building and shopping areas.

- Use beautification to add life, vibrancy and character.
- Consider a range of low maintenance and high impact beautification techniques (i.e. banners, ice sculptures, historical displays, murals and public art,).
- Consider ways to use lighting to beautify public spaces year-round.
- Improve curb appeal. Use different colors that create a sense of vibrancy and attractiveness year-round.
- Reduce the amount of large construction equipment and laydown yards in prime areas (i.e. parks and waterfront areas).
- Use flowers, trees, gardens and grass to add more color and natural beauty. Consider more plants in high traffic areas (i.e. Franklin Avenue).
- Remove weeds and encourage well maintained landscapes.

Community Pride

Respondents are looking for beautiful places to spend time and welcoming spaces that they can be proud of. Words used to describe community pride included:

- A place people can be proud of and show others (i.e. improved physical appearance of properties, upgrades and well-maintained buildings and landscape).
- A nice place people feel excited to visit.
- A community that's well taken care of. (i.e. maintain grass areas and increase the standards for businesses, make signage and branding consistent).
- A place where people can gather together.
- A lively, vibrant space that shows the true beauty of our city.
- A safe place.
- A strong place that is locally supported.
- A place where pride of ownership is noticeable.

Community Gathering

Create opportunities and inviting places for people to gather, socialize and spend time during the day and at night based on their interests.

- Increase places and spaces that encourage gathering in beautiful and lively areas that people can enjoy.
- Encourage safe spaces that support fun, relaxation and socializing for all ages. Consider both indoor and outdoor spaces.
- Consider multi-purpose cooking spaces that support cultural gatherings.

Community Trail System

Respondents suggested we focus on creating, completing and maintaining an accessible, waterfront trail system that is fully connected from MacDonald Island to Waterways and from the waterfront through corridors to Hwy 63 and where possible to and from downtown from other residential areas (i.e. Abasand, Thickwood and Timberlea).

- Create year-round accessible, multi-use trails for people to spend time, exercise, get active and move from place to place.
- Create a connected and accessible (paved) path system that supports a wide range of activities (i.e. biking, walking, walking with strollers, rollerblading and wheelchair accessible).
- Complement trails with amenities (i.e. lighting, seating with nice views, bike lock locations, well-marked signage).
- Consider trail development that provides an alternative to walking on roadside sidewalks.
- Include a boardwalk along the water.

Gardens

Where possible; add more green spaces and/or greenery (i.e. grass, flowers, plants, trees, and shrubs) around major buildings, shopping areas and along main roadways in the downtown area. Other ideas are:

- Consider suitable locations for both indoor and outdoor community gardens.
- Utilize landscaping and green spaces/gardens to enhance the look and feel downtown.
- Consider accessories like fountains.
- Preserve nature.

Parks and Outdoors

Focus efforts on parks and outdoors, open spaces primarily in areas along the waterfront and capitalize on creating views of the water and surrounding nature. Maintain and maximize use of existing park areas (i.e. Jubilee Plaza and Snye Park) and create green spaces where people can entertain themselves. Consider creation of parks and/or green spaces in underutilized areas.

- Create spaces and places where people of all ages and abilities can spend time, enjoy nature and the natural surroundings.
- Connect parks and outdoor spaces to other areas in downtown.
- Encourage year-round use by providing opportunities for activities (i.e. walking, running, biking, skating, skiing and mini golf).
- Consider ways to support existing waterfront assets (i.e. Marine Park – build on heritage and history).
- Create areas that encourage and support both active and passive activities.
- Consider creating areas for dog parks.
- Build on assets located on the waterfront (i.e. boardwalk, benches, dock(s), fire pits, low level lighting along the river).
- Clean up areas that are underutilized along the waterfront (i.e. remove weeds and create greenspace)
- Consider creating a well-connected and accessible waterfront boardwalk and trail system with finished landscape and preservation of nature (i.e. trees).
- Create spaces for gathering (i.e. picnic spaces, a beach area, docks, waterpark, water activities, playgrounds and places for people to sit down) and place(s) to host events (i.e. markets, festivals, concerts) and watersports.
- Create areas that support a variety of uses (i.e. Snye – beach, trails, volleyball, playgrounds, watersports, floating on the waterways, etc.).
- Encourage limited small-scale commercial development along the waterfront (i.e. create interesting places for people to go to) such as equipment rental locations.
- Continue to connect with Indigenous people. There is an interest in areas around the waterfront to highlight and celebrate culture.

Placemaking

Placemaking can be established through the enhancement of our communities' key characteristics and making the community feel more inviting.

- Focus on establishing a visually and physically coherent/consistent and welcoming downtown.
- Have a connected plan for streetscape plans and wayfinding.
- Create a sense of belonging and place.
- Enhance wayfinding and visual cues that contribute to clearly identified key locations downtown (i.e. Franklin Avenue, districts and waterfront).
- Use a network of street signs, community entrance features (i.e. murals, public art, flags, landscape and monuments) as place makers.

Recreational Facilities

Recreation facilities should include places that provide a wide range of year-round events and activities that makes downtown a unique destination and provides people of all ages and abilities with a range of things to do. Consider other types of attractions within the same area as recreation facilities (i.e. businesses) that will contribute to lively places and spaces where people can spend longer periods of time.

Some facility suggestions included building an arena or a multi-use facility. Other comments suggest a convention centre or indicate no arena and further development of a recreation centre on Abrahams Land in Dickinsfield. Other suggestions included:

- Amusement park
- Baseball batting cage
- Cricket pitch
- Entertainment complex (movie theatre)
- Facilities that rent recreation equipment
- Fitness facility
- Green gyms
- Ice skating rink
- Indoor park
- Indoor skate, scooter and bike park
- Mixed business and recreation opportunities
- Museum (celebrate history)
- Places to host year-round events and activities for all ages (i.e. concerts)
- Roller derby area
- Sports centre (a place for ball hockey)
- Waterpark/wave pool
- Yoga facility
- Rec room business
- Pool hall
- Petting zoo

Outdoor recreation facility ideas were mostly about the waterfront and suggested that a wide range of activities be considered (i.e. boating, jet skiing, kayaking, knee boarding, mini golf, an outdoor pool, outdoor skating area(s), playgrounds, snowmobiling, trails for biking, walking, skiing, volleyball and a splash pad).

Recreation and Sporting Events

Respondents suggested we focus on creating a hub for activities and events that support liveliness and enhance the visitor experience.

- Increase the number of indoor and outdoor recreational activities and programs, arts activities, block parties, concerts, events, markets, multi-cultural activities and festivals that attract people from across the region into the heart of downtown.
- Enhance opportunities for families, friends and children of all ages to gather and have fun.

Business Attraction and Retention

Respondents mainly suggested that we focus on addressing vacant land, vacant and run-down buildings and storefronts. Vacant land, buildings, empty storefronts and business closures on a regular basis contribute to a negative perception of downtown and is seen as unattractive. Businesses have an important role to play in revitalization.

- Create a vision for the long term that ensures consistent and ongoing investment in downtown.
- Retain, improve, grow and sustain existing businesses.
- Address underutilized buildings that remain vacant for long periods of time.
- Consider using space in malls where small businesses could potentially thrive.
- Support new business startups and retention of existing businesses(i.e. private sector to review tenant lease options).
- Relocate offices of large business operators to the downtown core.
- Encourage a range of new, diverse businesses (small, medium and large size) to operate downtown.
- Offer a wide range of services unique to downtown which are available and accessible to the public. (i.e. coffee shops, generally more shopping, restaurants and pop up shops/street vendors).
- Ensure people living or operating businesses downtown have access to the programs and services they need to attract new people downtown on both a permanent and temporary basis.
- Make government processes quicker to help address development needs and encourage investment.
- Explore a range of business attraction strategies that increase the number of businesses operating downtown and attract people at all hours of the daytime and nighttime.
- Review the impact that ongoing approval of commercial development on the northside of Fort McMurray impacts downtown revitalization.
- Encourage business startups in designated areas or areas where they previously existed (i.e. Franklin Avenue and Main Street and waterfront) and employ strategies that support existing business retention.
- Consider temporary or short-term year-round marketplace business opportunities, boutique shops along the waterfront and creating unique business areas downtown that are not duplicated on the northside of Fort McMurray.
- Have a retail hub or focal point for the community with increased amenities and a balance of business and recreation.
- Attract small businesses by adding a touch of history or create a theme (i.e. old town) and style that has something for everyone.
- Enhance employment opportunities for residents.
- Consider ways that businesses can continue to unique offerings exclusive to downtown (i.e. art shops, bakeries, bistros, boutiques, cafes, craft and market sales, gift shops and ice cream shops).

Building Architecture and Urban Design

Respondents suggested we focus on creating a refreshed look and improved physical feel downtown.

- There is a sense of pride among building owners and operators and an interest in investing in building upgrades.
- Consider if small and unique businesses should be in the same area(s) as big box stores or remain separate and unique.
- Respondents suggested we focus on improving existing structures and updating storefronts and business exteriors that are both occupied and vacant or in disrepair.

- Seek opportunities to encourage businesses to modernize and/or renovate the outside of their buildings and update general appearance.
- Provide architectural interest by preserving heritage buildings and streetscapes.
- Align new buildings with design guidelines that support a consistent look and feel in different areas and positively impacts curb appeal (i.e. streetscape planning, lighting as design elements and to address safety).
- Create places that are visually pleasing and buildings that act as focal points (i.e. cultural and architectural landmarks) and highlight special characteristics.
- Create safe and comfortable spaces.
- Create environments with accessible shopping and spaces where leisure and entertainment can be enjoyed.
- Make areas where people who are attracted downtown feel welcomed when they arrive.
- Design in a way that encourages walkability between stores, shops and open spaces. Create concentrated areas with multiple things for people to do.
- Ensure that sidewalks and walkways support year-round accessibility (i.e. Willow Square area and areas around the Golden Years Society).
- Include plans for trees along Franklin Avenue, bike paths and accessible public transit.
- Freshen up areas with paint and/or include art in various locations (i.e. sign posts and guardrails) and consider attractive theming in various areas.
- Consider more professional building development (i.e. office spaces) and spaces for small businesses.
- Identify what services we need in the region and share the information with land and building owners.

Commercial Affordability

There is a perception that commercial space rent remains too high; particularly for small local businesses.

- Understand why the rates are too high and explore opportunities to adjust, cap or subsidize rental rates; particularly in buildings that remain vacant for long periods of time or in areas such as malls where small businesses could potentially thrive.
- Consider affordable rental spaces for non-profit organizations too.

Note: Commercial affordability relates directly to the perception about why so many spaces are vacant downtown and why some leases are not being renewed (i.e. explore options that would support low cost spaces for small businesses to operate).

Derelict Buildings

Buildings that have been identified as being neglected contribute to creating unattractive eyesores. Respondents suggested a focus on improving the outside appearance or consider options to remove buildings that are in disrepair; are deemed uninhabitable, unsafe or have been left vacant for prolonged periods of time. Turn derelict buildings into something useful for the community.

Development Incentives

People have indicated that incentives could be used to attract new business and help improve existing businesses. People would like to see more business downtown. Consider use of incentives to attract businesses into certain areas where revitalization efforts are focused such as:

- Incentives that encourage affordable access for arts organizations.
- Building incentives to encourage removal of derelict buildings or spruce up the outside of existing buildings (i.e. storefront incentives).

- Building development incentives – encourage businesses to move out of homes and into office spaces.
- Small business grant.
- Lighting grant.
- Land incentives.
- Rebates.
- Tax reductions.

Entertainment

Make downtown a centre attraction (i.e. a hub) that offers fun for all ages at different times of the day.

- Increase the character and liveliness of downtown by creating a wide variety of things for people to do (i.e. be active, eat, drink, shop, see performances and have fun).
- Give people reasons to gather, do business and stay downtown for pleasure.
- Include creative spaces (i.e. theatre, arts gallery and makerspaces) that celebrate our culture, history and improve quality of life.
- Consider both affordable and diverse upscale entertainment options.
- Explore options for designated entertainment district(s) that attract people from around the entire region (i.e. arts and heritage district).

Housing and Neighborhood Development

Consider mixed use areas (i.e. business, commercial, culture and entertainment areas) that reflect clustered living (i.e. residential access to a wide range of services).

- Plan for all ages and design modern spaces where people want to live and can access a range of services by walking from place to place.
- Increase the amount of new condominiums or newer/modern apartments (i.e. high density residential).
- Consider designated areas for retired living.
- Consider housing buildings with bottom floor retail opportunities and multi-use spaces.
- Consider opportunities to plan for high rise buildings (i.e. 5 story buildings).
- Reconsider location(s) of industrial zones mixed with residential properties as part of future planning.
- Consider infill housing as an option.

Homelessness (Poverty)

There is a sense that the presence of vagrant individuals in high traffic areas negatively impact the downtown particularly around Franklin Avenue (i.e. park spaces, some shopping and retail store areas) and in some areas of the waterfront (i.e. nearby Fraser Avenue) by creating a decreased sense of personal safety and security for people.

- Seek out opportunities to provide support (i.e. facilities and social services) for individuals in need. Review current location(s) of homeless serving agencies located on Franklin Avenue and explore alternate locations that support improved services for those in need.
- Address the negative impacts on individuals that are homeless as well as residents, visitors, business owners and operators that are impacted.

Land Matters

There is currently a sense that there is too much vacant land downtown.

- Explore opportunities to fill vacant spaces (i.e. develop the land or sell the land) and bring more businesses into downtown.
- Maximize development and/or consider alternative use of Municipally owned vacant lands (i.e. Franklin Avenue and Main Street).

- Explore options including paved parking (parkade), multi-use hard and soft scape park space for people to hang out, facility development (examples: arena, bus transfer station, casino, conference and entertainment facilities, retail spaces and office spaces).
- Think about selling available land (private/ Municipally owned) to stimulate business development or create opportunities for more affordable development.
- Consider how releasing more land in other areas outside of downtown will impact revitalization.
- Consider ways that vacant private land and buildings could potentially be utilized for future development and/or to support short term activities and businesses (i.e. indoor farmers market and short-term leases).
- Make land available for small businesses along the waterfront.

Neighborhood Safety

Respondents expressed the importance of feeling safe while they move around downtown during the daytime and nighttime and have indicated that a perceived lack of safety impacts their interest in visiting or spending more time downtown. Respondent suggested that we:

- Increase police presence and patrols (i.e. foot and /or bike) downtown.
- Improve security in some areas (i.e. areas around Shopping Centre(s), area(s) at the corner of Franklin Avenue and Main Street).
- Continue to address public intoxication, drug use, sleeping in public spaces and vagrancy.
- Reduce the amount of petty crime.
- Be aware that large open and inactive places make people feel unsafe. Fill spaces with activity where possible.

Parking

Respondents suggested that convenient parking is important. Main thoughts were:

- Review opportunities to enhance ease of access and increase the amount of parking areas.
- Review options for parkade or sheltered parking that can accommodate a variety of vehicles including trucks.
- Angled parking has been noted as a safety concern for some people.
- Angled parking on Franklin Avenue has been identified as important for quick and easy access to shops.
- Suggestions to address or remove on-street parking include back of building parking or parkade development and widening Franklin Avenue to four lanes.
- There are several areas downtown where vacant lots are currently being utilized exclusively for parking. Consider alternative options for parking in these areas.
- Consider ease of parking in areas that could also offer quick walkable access to businesses and busing for special events.
- Maximize the back of buildings on main streets for parking.

Pedestrian Friendly

Revitalization includes an increased number of people walking around downtown. A well designed downtown includes areas that support safe walkability and connects people to a range of activities that stimulates interest and encourages exploration. Respondents suggested we focus on creating well connected, accessible and more walkable downtown areas that look beautiful, feel comfortable, encourage stopping and door-to-door shopping in some areas. Other ideas included:

- Widen sidewalks and make then nicer.
- Clean sidewalks year-round.
- Upgrade sidewalks as required and streamline light poles and other amenities as needed.
- Make the surrounding amenities visually appealing.
- Make areas feel safe during the daytime and nighttime and possibly have access to some trails through neighborhoods to main streets rather than just walking on roadside sidewalks.
- Create safe (i.e. consider crosswalk safety) walkable connections between primary shopping areas along Franklin Avenue to parks and outdoor spaces like the waterfront.

Retail and Restaurants

Respondents suggested we focus on retaining existing businesses, upgrading existing retail stores and attracting more restaurant related businesses (i.e. chain restaurants, anchor tenants and well-known companies plus small businesses like cafes and bakeries) primarily to areas where existing space is already available or could potentially be expanded (i.e. mall space or creation of temporary or permanent patio spaces). Addressing retails needs may not stop people from shopping online or outside of Fort McMurray, but it would reduce the need for it.

A secondary area of focus for small business development (i.e. pop up cafés, ice cream shop(s), food trucks and small rental equipment shops) has been suggested along the waterfront where people can sit and enjoy nature while enjoying retail and food related offerings.

Small and Unique Businesses

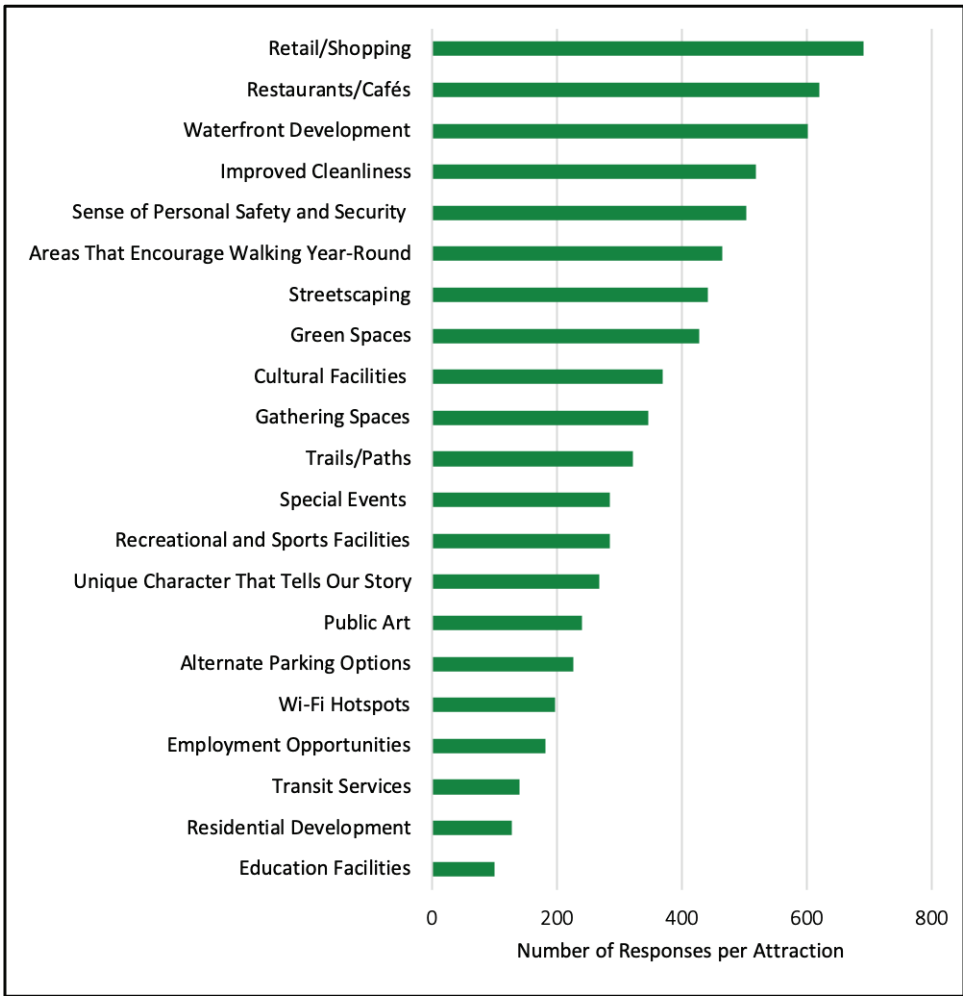
Respondents suggested we focus on creating atmospheres where small and unique businesses (i.e. local offerings) are attracted into the downtown and people of all ages can move around easily from place to place (examples: Whyte Avenue in Edmonton, Stephen Avenue in Calgary) like a small village style or temporary shopping areas. Other comments suggested:

- Additional shops (i.e. big box and small businesses) along Franklin Avenue may contribute to drawing people downtown (i.e. mom and pop shops and name brand box stores like Winners or Home Sense).
- Small waterfront shops (i.e. food trucks, kiosks, mobile and pop up summer shops, seasonal vendors and small restaurants.
- Host markets – indoor and outdoor (i.e. Byward Market; Ottawa)

Question 6

What are the top three to five things listed below that would encourage you to spend more time in Fort McMurray's downtown?

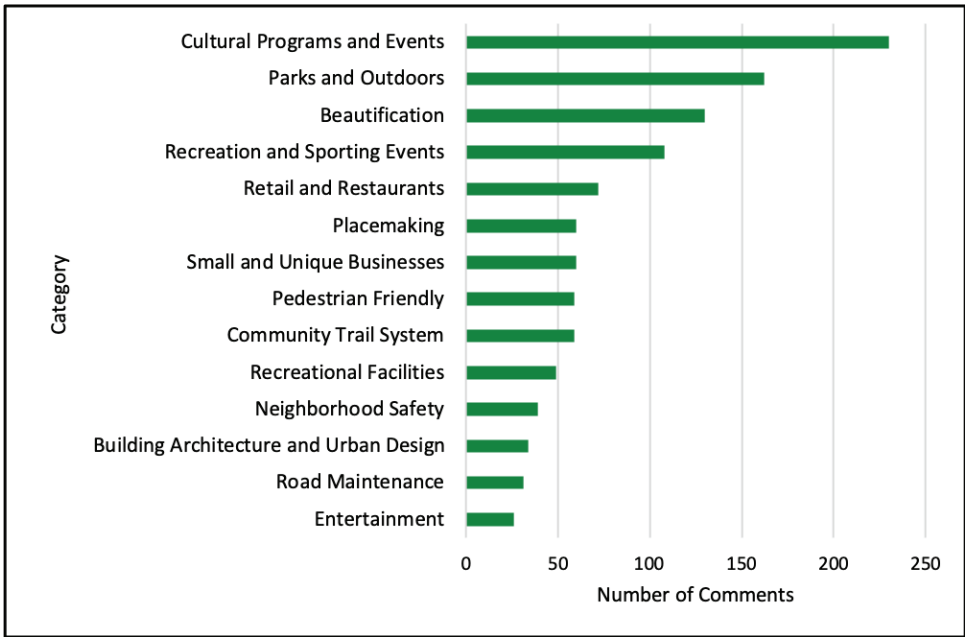
Respondents selected their top choices from a list of options. Below are the responses with the most popular noted at the top.



Question 7

What are the top things you feel could be done to revitalize the downtown during the SUMMER months?

Respondents provided ideas and the number of comments in each category are highlighted in the chart below.



Many comments that were provided in response to this question were the same as those provided in previous sections of the report and therefore only categories with new ideas are further explained and summarized below in order of the greatest number of comments to the least.

Cultural Programs and Events

Most responses indicate that people have a keen interest in more events and festivals being hosted downtown on a regular basis. Events have been identified to infuse energy and add vibrancy to the community. They also provide opportunities for people to gather and create a sense of community and contribute to quality of life. Examples of the most suggested ideas include the following with an emphasis on outdoor activities.

- Markets in a variety of sizes and types (farmers and flea).
- Festivals (cultural festivals, fairs and art related attractions).
- Live entertainment (concerts and street performers).

Parks and Outdoors

Focus efforts on multi-use (i.e. programmable areas) public parks and outdoors open green spaces primarily in areas along the waterfront. Also keep in mind the importance of green spaces within the overall downtown boundary.

- Capitalize on creating and maintaining views of the water.
- Create access and egress points to and from the water that encourages a range of uses (boating, walking and biking).
- Keeping the surrounding natural waterfront areas clean.
- Highlight history through interpretive waterfront signage and art.
- Review opportunities to support passive and active recreation.
    - o A beach area
    - o Biking
    - o Docks
    - o Fishing
    - o Outdoor fires
    - o Mini golf
    - o Picnic spaces
    - o Playgrounds
    - o Places for people to sit down
    - o Running
    - o Walking
    - o Waterpark(s)
    - o Water activities
- Consider creating a well-connected and accessible waterfront boardwalk and multi-use trail system that includes a range of amenities (i.e. benches, bike racks, washrooms).
- Complete landscape along the entire waterfront.
- Focus on preservation, restoration and maintenance of nature (i.e. trees and grass).
- Consider creating areas for dog parks and consider inclusion of poop bags and watering stations.

Beautification

Respondents suggested we focus on improving the overall appearance and general cleanliness of downtown. Ideas suggested were:

- Focus on dirt removal (i.e. roads, sidewalks, pathways) in early spring and summer.
- Remove garbage and graffiti regularly.
- Reduce the amount of large construction equipment and laydown yards in prime areas (i.e. parks and waterfront areas).
- Use flowers, trees, gardens and grass to add more color and natural beauty. Consider more plants in high traffic areas (i.e. Franklin Avenue).
- Remove weeds and encourage well maintained landscapes.
- Consider ways to use lighting to beautify public spaces year-round.

Recreation and Sporting Events

Respondents suggested we focus on increasing the number of indoor and outdoor recreational activities, programs and events that attract people from across the region into the heart of downtown and enhance opportunities for families, friends and children of all ages to gather and have fun. Consider both one-time and regular occurring year-round activities in different locations (i.e. parks, streets) that are unique and create opportunities for residents to participate in different ways.

- Encourage enhanced use of the Snye for water and ice related sport events and recreation activities (i.e. bon fires).
- Encourage sport equipment rentals around the waterfront.
- Create opportunities for a variety of recreational opportunities (paid/free).

Pedestrian Friendly

Sometimes referred to as walkability; people have indicated that there is an interest in having access to accessible, safe and welcoming walkways and being able to walk on sidewalks and trails to access shops, food services and the waterfront. Creating attractive (i.e. beautiful) areas that are well connected and encourage people to slow down and if they choose to walk from place to place to see different things. Consider areas that could be designated for foot traffic only (i.e. certain streets for events or shopping areas).

Recreational Facilities

In terms of summer based recreational buildings or places that provide a service, the following were noted most often:

- Equipment rental facility (i.e. boat, canoe, kayak and paddle board) and water-based recreation equipment rentals.
- Outdoor pool and wading pool.
- Waterpark and splash pad.
- Consider amenities that support recreation facilities (i.e. washrooms and food services).

Building Architecture and Urban Design

- Freshen up areas and buildings with paint and new facades.
- Review SMART city design ideas.

Road Maintenance

Road maintenance contributes to improved community cleanliness and safe transportation.

- Street cleaning in early spring.
- Ongoing road maintenance (i.e. address potholes and repaving as required) in public and private sector (i.e. parking lots) areas.

Entertainment

Create centralized places and spaces for activities that support entertainment. Entertainment ideas include things for people to do:

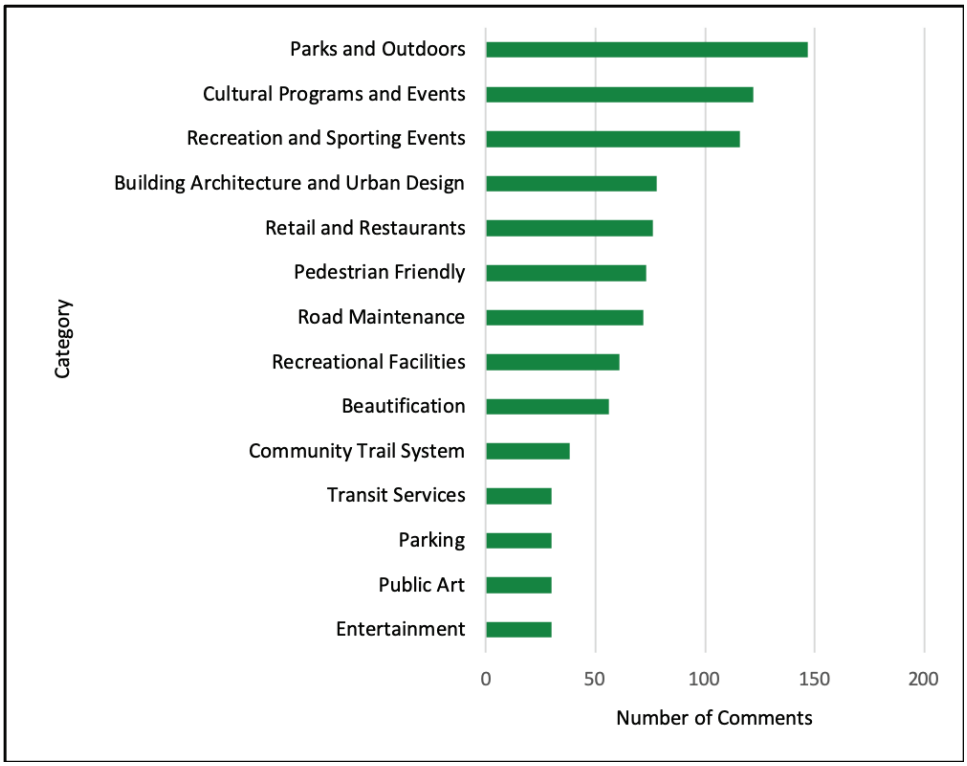
- Art walks
- Cultural entertainment (live music, dance recitals, markets, winter ice sculptures)
- Events Centre (draw people into the downtown core)
- Go karts
- Laser tag
- Mini golf
- Movies
- Nightlife (bars, dance clubs, outdoor parties, patios)
- Paintball
- Sporting activities (river activities and volleyball)

Question 8

What are top things you feel could be done to revitalize the downtown during the during the WINTER months?

Respondents provided ideas and the number of comments in each category are highlighted in the chart below.

Many comments that were provided in response to this question were the same as those provided in previous sections of the report and therefore only categories with new ideas are further explained and summarized.



Parks and Outdoors

Utilize parks and outdoor spaces to create unique winter opportunities that support regular community gathering and a range of consistent outdoor winter activities.

- Consider holiday lighting and decorations.
- Ice skating (skating on the Snye with amenities like warm up areas, holiday lighting, music and access to food and warm drinks) was suggested most often. Examples to reference included: Hawrelak Park; Edmonton, Nathan Phillips Square; Toronto, Robson Square; Vancouver, Rideau Canal; Ottawa. Other locations as secondary considerations include: Borealis Park, Jubilee Plaza and Lions Park.

The following outdoor activities were noted periodically throughout the responses.

- Consider warm up areas in locations where multiple outdoor activities can be enjoyed.
- Bon fires.
- Cross country ski trail around MacDonald Island or on the Snye.
- Dog sledding.
- Equipment rental (i.e. skates, skies, snowshoes, snowmobiles).
- Bike trails.
- Horse pulled sled rides.
- Ice fishing.
- Ice sculptures (consider ice sculptures in summertime planters downtown).
- Ice maze for kids, winter playground or igloo building.
- Northern lights viewing and tours.
- Outdoor curling sheets (i.e. Winnipeg).
- Snowboarding park.
- Snowmobiling.
- Tobogganing and tubing.
- Winter Festivities (lights festival, fireworks during the holidays, winter golf).

Cultural Programs and Events

Winter events can positively contribute to supporting a lively outdoor active community culture and engage people during the long cold winter months. They also provide opportunities for people to gather and create a sense of community and contribute to quality of life. Examples of the most suggested winter ideas include the following:

- Markets in a variety of sizes and types (i.e. holiday themed - small-town Europe, holiday villages and winter sidewalk sales).
- Festivals that celebrate winter (i.e. IgNIGHT, WinterPLAY, winter light festivals, winter food festival and other outdoor events and unique activities such as large snow slide and ice castles).
- Consider ways to include northern winter traditions into planning (i.e. cultural storytelling).
- Consider lighting and decorations that enhance beauty and create a sense of warmth (i.e. winter wonderland with streamlined look and feel in different downtown districts).
- Consider ways to maximize the use of existing facilities like the Heritage Village, Jubilee Plaza, Keyano College and the Marine Park.
- Consider options to host events in underutilized empty spaces and vacant land downtown.

Recreation and Sporting Events

Encourage enhanced use of urban outdoor park space, indoor venues and the waterfront area for sport events (i.e. Nordic sport and recreation activities).

Building Architecture and Urban Design

Respondents suggested we focus on creating a warm look and safe feel downtown.

- Highlight architecture with warm lighting and winter décor in storefronts. Improved lighting is also connected to contributing to an improved sense of safety.
- Create or use design guidelines to support improved winter urban design (i.e. walkable sidewalks and natural light in indoor spaces).
- Outdoor patios for mild winter days.

Pedestrian Friendly

Sometimes referred to as walkability; people have indicated that there is an interest in having access to accessible, safe and welcoming walkways.

- Street cleaning and sidewalk clearing are connected. Nobody wants to walk over ice or snow. Explore ways to enhance consistency of private and public sector sidewalk snow and ice clearing in all areas of downtown.
- Maintain and clear trails to encourage use and support walkability and winter recreation (i.e. skiing).
- Consider designing shopping areas that are close together with both indoor and outdoor walking options.
- Consider warm up locations in walkable outdoor areas.

Road Maintenance

Respondents suggested we focus on ways to improve snow clearing and removal on primary roadways consistently.

- Be thoughtful about locations of snow piles off main roads and where possible limit dirt and sand use (i.e. keep spring and summer look, feel and cleanliness in mind).

Recreational Facilities

It is suggested that facilities should include spaces and places that make downtown a unique destination and provide residents and visitors with multiple fun things to do for short durations or extended periods of time all in one area.

- Cultural centre - a place to host a gallery and musical events.
- Walking facility for pets or indoor pet park.
- Community centre - gathering place(s). A place close to the waterfront.
- Recreation and sports facility - athletic centre, wave pool and places to burn off energy.
- Safe places for youth to keep active and engaged.
- Facilities that rent winter recreation and sport equipment.

Beautification

Be creative during the winter and find ways to make downtown look nice.

- Use themed lighting and unique displays/ decorations for people to enjoy.
- Consider ways to use lighting to beautify public spaces (i.e. consider a winter Communities in Bloom Program).
- Add decorations.
- Include winter street banners.
- Highlight ice sculptures.

Community Trail System

Maintain trails year-round and clear snow during the winter months. Enhance opportunities for people to enjoy the outdoors.

- Skate (i.e. on the waterfront).
- Ski.
- Snowshoe.
- Walk (i.e. along the waterfront and around MacIsland) on clearly marked trails.

Transit Services

Public transit provides options for people to travel to and from downtown. Some ideas that could potentially to help improve services include:

- Create a main bus terminal (covered) that can provide onsite information, bus pass sales, washrooms and areas for both staff and transit users to access.
- Bus shelters that are well-maintained clean and warm shelters located in a wide range of areas (i.e. re-evaluate the need for a shelter on Hospital Street and Franklin Avenue). Find ways to reduce inappropriate use of shelters.
- Review rural transportation options (i.e. Janvier).
- Consider ways to use technology to improve ease of access for finding route information and possibly better understanding user needs (i.e. an app that can inform about the needs in certain communities (i.e. Waterways) and help improve the overall transit service.

Parking

Review opportunities to improve parking options overall.

- Consider underground parking.
- Maintain parking areas well with regular snow removal in the winter.

Public Art

Enhance downtown through public art installations. Respondents suggested we focus on interactive ice sculpture installations that remain in place for longer periods of time downtown. Consider ways to incorporate public art into holiday displays and consider having a stronger reflection of indigenous artwork.

Entertainment

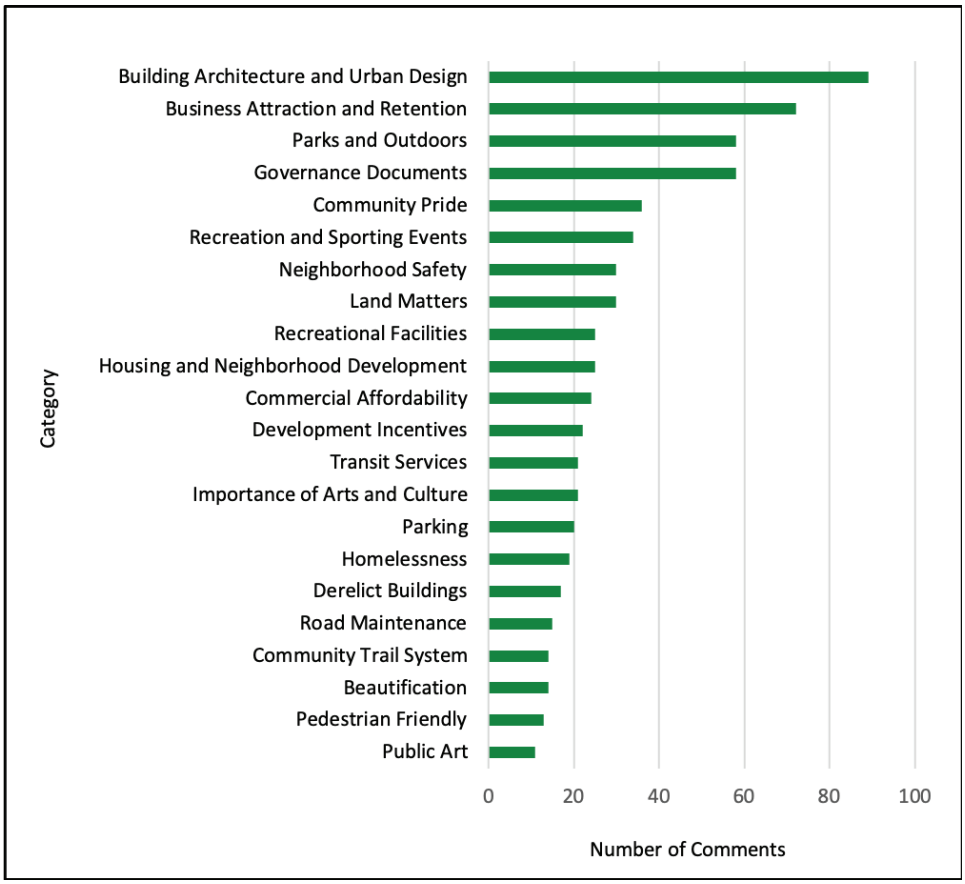
The primary focus is about providing a variety of fun things for people to do indoors and outdoors. Create places for people of all ages to be entertained during the day and into the evening.

- Arboretum
- Bars/clubs/lounges
- Business entertainment venues (i.e. The Banquet/Rec Room)
- Recreation activities (i.e. bingo, gaming venues, go carts, indoor cricket lawns, laser tag, mini golf, pool hall)

Question 9

Please provide any additional feedback you may have about downtown revitalization.

Respondents provided feedback and the number of comments are summarized within the chart below.



Many comments that were provided in response to this question were the same as those provided in previous sections of the report and therefore only categories with new ideas are further explained and summarized.

Business Attraction and Retention

Respondents suggested we focus on unique business attraction (i.e. Costco, Factories, Sunterra Market), business retention strategies including:

- Review Incentive options.
- Use technology to further support business attraction.
- Approve temporary (i.e. short term) business licenses for seasonal businesses.
- Regulate the types of stores that can operate in certain areas of the region (i.e. Banff).
- Make the process for setting up new businesses easier and quick (i.e. permit processes and reduce red tape).
- Create a webpage that highlights all of the things that do currently take place downtown.

Consider additional and or improved (i.e. inside shopping experience) retail opportunities in the following areas:

- Jubilee Building and surrounding area (i.e. Peter Pond Mall).
- Franklin Avenue (i.e. including areas just beyond Franklin Avenue like the former Landmark Cinema area).
- Long Boat Landing (i.e. Town Hall Area).
- Waterfront and surrounding areas (i.e. River Point Shops including Walmart).

Governance

There is a desire for ongoing short-term collective action lead by Council and long-term vision that adds value along with plan creation and action implementation consistently over longer periods of time. Respondents also suggested:

- We learn from other communities successes and failures and find innovative ways to limit the impact of boom and bust cycles.
- Establish and enforce bylaws and policies as needed to support downtown revitalization.
- Establish community committees made up of community representatives.
- Where possible, use previous community feedback to support move forward plans rather than surveying people too much.
- Establish synergies with other levels of government to drive interest in investment (i.e. some governments aim for decentralized services. Consider healthcare as an example and leverage new government preferences).
- Limit where possible the burden on taxpayers.

Development Incentives

Respondents suggested that incentives could help to attract new businesses or support existing businesses.

- Tenant incentives (interior building improvements).

Public Transit

Provide affordable, efficient and safe public transit that is available from all areas to downtown with some flexible options (i.e. Métis Office, Fort McKay and the Fort McMurray Airport). Consider ways to improve service (i.e. longer operating hours, more frequent times, direct transportation along Franklin Avenue and use of technology apps to improve service).

- Alternative transportation options (i.e. taxis) are cost prohibitive for many people and a deterrent to spending a night out if travelling from other areas.

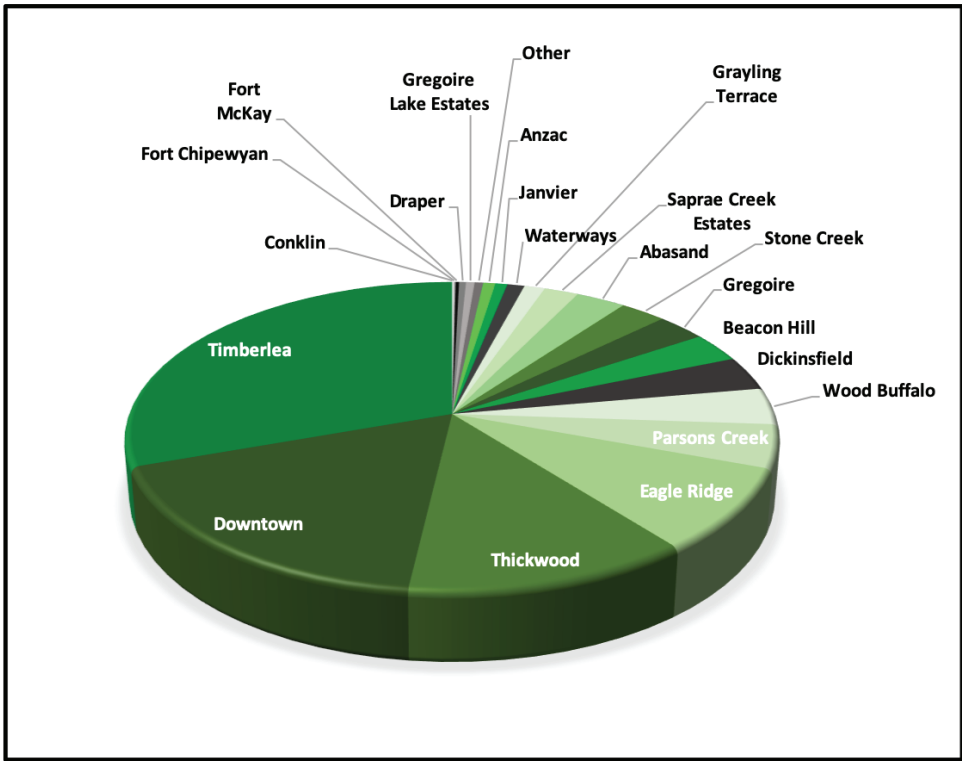
Importance of Arts and Culture

Consider ways to enhance the character of downtown by highlighting our history (i.e. Indigenous culture and heritage) and celebrating our uniqueness through public art displays, events, sale of handmade crafts, designation of spaces and places that celebrate diversity.

Questions 10 and 11: Respondent Demographics

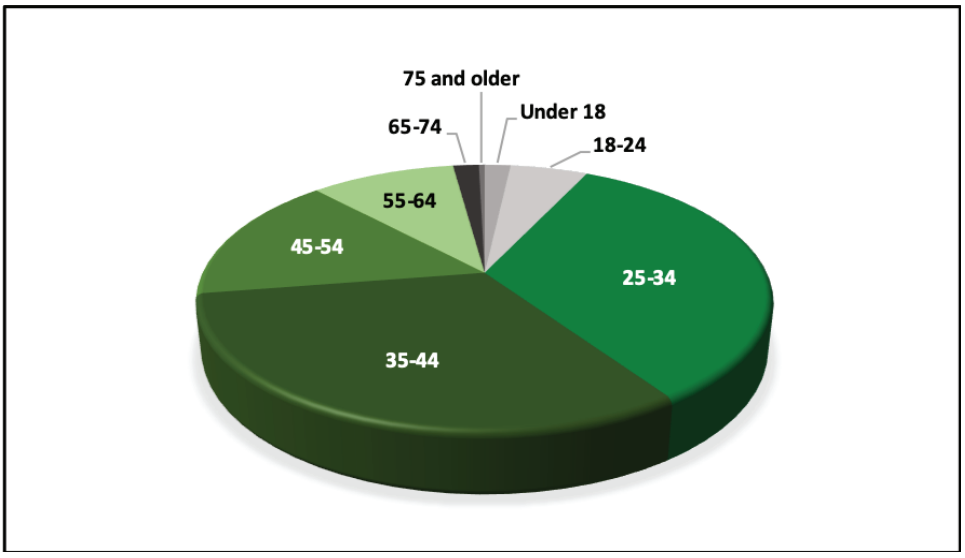
The importance of understanding a broad spectrum of residents ideas about downtown was recognized early in the planning process. It was important to gain feedback from a diverse cross section of the community and ensure feedback was being collected from across the entire region. In developing the survey and engagement plan, staff ensured that opportunities were made available to all residents to participate in the survey and engagement sessions. In rural communities, the number of face to face discussions were higher than the number of survey responses highlighted below. For example, twenty-six people in Fort Chipewyan were engaged during an open house. Each survey question was optional, and some people did not complete all survey questions. Overall rural engagement was in line with past engagement standards.

Population Distribution of Respondents by Area



Wood Buffalo Communities	Number of Responses
Conklin	1
Fort Chipewyan	1
Fort McKay	2
Draper	4
Gregoire Lake Estates	5
Other	5
Anzac	7
Janvier	7
Waterways	10
Grayling Terrace	12
Saprae Creek Estates	20
Abasand	29
Stone Creek	27
Gregoire	29
Beacon Hill	31
Dickinsfield	36
Wood Buffalo	39
Parsons Creek	46
Eagle Ridge	89
Thickwood	127
Downtown	180
Timberlea	309

Age Distribution of Respondents



Survey Respondent Age	Number of Responses
Under 18	18
18-24	54
25-34	345
35-44	329
45-54	160
55-64	101
65-74	18
75 and older	4

Appendix A:
Downtown Revitalization Survey

Please have your say on downtown revitalization in our community by completing this short survey. All questions are optional and no personal information will be collected.

The information gathered from you through this survey and at public engagement sessions and stakeholder meetings will be used to help capture your vision for downtown revitalization. Once this takes place, we plan on returning to the community in the Fall with additional engagement opportunities – to communicate what we are hearing and to further refine how you think we should move forward together.

Take a look at rmwb.ca/downtown before completing this survey.

1. **Please indicate by major street names (or general areas) that you consider to be the physical boundary of Fort McMurray's downtown? Where does downtown begin for you and where does it end?**

2. **Specifically, why do you go downtown right now? (check all that apply)**

a. Business Reasons

b. To go to Work/due to Work

c. I Live Downtown

d. Because of Recreation and/or Entertainment

e. I go to School Downtown

f. Other (please indicate): _____

3. **When you think about the phrase, 'downtown revitalization', what does that mean to you? Basically, how you think we should define revitalization?**

4. **When you think of downtown, are there specific areas within downtown where we should focus revitalization efforts to make the biggest impact? What are some changes that you think could be made in the short-term to strengthen existing downtown assets or realize potential in the downtown?**

5. **What would be your vision for the downtown be in the next five years?**

6. **This question is about understanding what attractions would encourage you to spend more time downtown. What are the top three to five things listed below that would encourage you to spend more time in Fort McMurray's downtown?**

- Areas that Encourage Walking Year-Round Within Downtown
- Alternate Parking Options
- Cultural Facilities (for example: galleries, museum etc.)
- Education Facilities
- Employment Opportunities
- Gathering Spaces
- Green Spaces
- Improved Cleanliness
- Public Art
- Restaurants/Cafés
- Retail/Shopping
- Recreational and Sporting Facilities
- Residential Development
- Special Events (for example: festivals, concerts, food markets)
- Streetscaping (for example: benches, flowers, trees, etc.)
- Sense of Personal Safety and Security (during the day and at night)
- Transit Services
- Trails/Paths
- Unique Character/Something That Tells the Story of our Region
- Waterfront Development
- Wi-Fi Hotspots Throughout Downtown
- Other (please indicate): _____

7. What are the top things you feel could be done to revitalize the downtown during the summer months?

8. What are top things you feel could be done to revitalize the downtown during the winter months?

9. Please provide any additional feedback you may have about downtown revitalization:

10. Please identify your age:

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65-74
- 75+

11. Where do you live in the region?

- Abasand
- Anzac
- Beacon Hill
- Conklin
- Dickinsfield
- Downtown
- Draper
- Eagle Ridge
- Fort Chipewyan
- Fort McKay
- Fort Fitzgerald
- Grayling Terrace
- Gregoire
- Gregoire Lake Estates
- Janvier
- Parsons Creek
- Prairie Creek
- Saprae Creek Estates
- Stone Creek
- Thickwood
- Timberlea
- Waterways