

Executive Summary

Phase I of the Downtown Development Plan was rooted in close collaboration with the City of Woodstock, Oxford County, stakeholders and local residents.

Engagement began with two days of stakeholder interviews, focusing on participants with a vested interest in the Downtown. The findings of the stakeholder interviews, combined with our background research and analysis, were used to create a draft SWOT Analysis of the Downtown. The draft SWOT Analysis was presented at a subsequent open house/workshop where members of the community were invited to review, comment and add their own ideas. The comments and suggestions collected have been analyzed and used to refine and enhance the SWOT presented in this report, and to draft a vision statement and a series of objectives that will guide the ongoing renewal of the Downtown.

Stakeholder Interviews - 80 participants
Workshop/Open House - 60 participants
Survey - 120 participants

**260 participants
total!**

Survey Findings

An online survey provided a series of questions to elicit input on the Downtown. In total, 120 responses were collected as part of the online survey. The two most common responses are outlined below, and the full response can be found in the Summary Report.

Question 1 What is most important to you in a renewed Downtown?

67% A mix of businesses and servicing

55% Safety and Inclusivity for all

Question 3 What are your favourite places to visit Downtown?

78% Restaurants, bars, cafes

45% Shops and services

Question 5 How can Downtown be more welcoming and accessible to everyone?

56% More convenient parking

51% Increased police presence

Question 2 Why do you come to Downtown Woodstock?

78% Services

45% Banking and bill payments

Question 4 What types of new businesses/activities would you like to see in the Downtown?

72% Specialty shops

72% A vibrant and bustling nightlife

SWOT Analysis

A draft SWOT Analysis was developed based on the stakeholder interviews, in-situ analysis, and a thorough review of existing policies and reports. It was presented to the public for review and comment on June 18th, 2019. Where new and additional feedback was received, it has been incorporated into the refined SWOT Analysis below.

Strengths

- / Oxford County population increasing
- / Historic buildings and attractive streets
- / People working in the Downtown
- / Downtown is a focal point in Woodstock
- / Cultural presence in the Downtown (i.e. library, art gallery, museum)
- / Festivals and events draw people Downtown
- / Existing plans and policies prioritize Downtown development and renewal
- / City-owned buildings and parking lots provide opportunities to 'lead by example'
- / Funding and incentives available for new development
- / Innovative developers and business owners investing Downtown
- / New residential development

Weaknesses

- / No unified plan for renewal
- / A lack of housing options in the Downtown
- / Limited City employees to focus on Downtown renewal
- / The Downtown is too long
- / Conflicts between cars and bicycles
- / Vacancies and a lack of diverse retail
- / City incentives inadvertently discourage redevelopment
- / Limited places for programming for youth
- / Downtown is perceived as unsafe
- / Streets are unattractive (i.e. garbage, needles, etc.)
- / Streets and programming not accessible
- / Limited street signs and directional signage

Opportunities

- / Create a unique look and feel
- / Develop a safe and inclusive Downtown
- / Promote elements that define Woodstock
- / Celebrate culture and heritage
- / Create a focused and compact Downtown
- / Direct additional staff resources toward Downtown renewal
- / Create an active and diverse Downtown
- / Identify simple projects with a large impact
- / Increase residents through new housing
- / Capitalize on existing momentum
- / Vacancies offer space for targeted uses
- / Innovative approaches to attract businesses
- / Provide more free events
- / A 'catalytic' project on City-owned property
- / Museum Square as the heart of Downtown

Threats

- / Construction is more challenging Downtown
- / Limited resources for Downtown renewal
- / Revitalization projects may not be funded
- / Ad-hoc Downtown projects
- / Competition from other nearby Downtowns
- / Competition from big box stores
- / Some businesses may prefer to locate outside the Downtown
- / Retail trends are impacting the viability of traditional Downtowns
- / Overcoming the stigma that Downtown is unsafe
- / Significant uptake on funding incentives may provide a financial burden
- / Lack of funding for successful pilot projects