



DISTRICT OF CHETWYND

DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION PLAN

2021

Acknowledgments

The District of Chetwynd would like to thank all citizens and groups who participated in the Downtown Revitalization Plan process. Your input and contributions form the basis of this document.

Over the course of 2021 an estimated 200 people gave input into the Downtown Revitalization Plan through participation in online surveys and community engagement events.

Valuable technical input was received from District staff from many District departments. Contributors provided information and support and helped ensure that plans and action items were practical, implementable, and consistent with other operational plans and policies.

Finally, Mayor and Council are thanked for supporting this work and committing to ongoing investment in Chetwynd.

Contents

1.0 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Importance of a Downtown.....	1
1.2 Study Area	2
1.3 Community Context.....	3
1.4 Project Process.....	3
2.0 Area Review	5
2.1 Existing Services.....	5
2.2 Existing Conditions Gallery	5
2.3 Parking & Transportation Analysis	6
2.4 Road & Utilities Assessment	8
2.5 Active Transportation	8
2.6 Current Design Direction.....	9
3.0 Community Engagement.....	10
3.1 In-person Engagement and Outcomes.....	11
3.2 Online Survey and Results	13
4.0 Downtown Concept Plan & Design	14
4.1 Design Directions	14
4.2 Visualization Gallery.....	16
4.3 Landscaping.....	18
5.0 Implementation	20
5.1 Primary Recommendations	20
5.2 Secondary Recommendations	21
5.3 Conclusion.....	23

Introduction

1.1 Importance of a Downtown

This document is the product of a Downtown Revitalization initiative prepared by the District of Chetwynd. The recommendations contained within this report build upon goals and policies from existing documents such as the 2017 and 2021 Official Community Plans (OCP) and the 2021 Strategic Plan. The Downtown Revitalization Plan (DRP) provides directions and goals necessary to achieve the community's vision for beautification and enhancement in its downtown core. The focus of this report is revitalization through the creation of attractive, convenient, and pedestrian-friendly spaces.

A thriving downtown adds a tremendous amount of value to our communities. The downtown is the economic, social, and cultural heart of Chetwynd and an important part of the community's overall identity. The importance of *Downtown* was reinforced by the District of Chetwynd through the adoption of the 2017 OCP which includes an objective to maintain and strengthen the role of the downtown within the District. This document sets out a range of recommendations to:

- Create an attractive, convenient, and pedestrian-friendly downtown.
- Enhance the existing 'sense of place' through design for the Chetwynd Downtown, that reinforces its presence as a community center.
- Identify appropriate pedestrian and active transportation connections in the downtown.

1.2 Study Area

Chetwynd's Downtown expands upon the Town Centre commercial zoning. For this Revitalization Plan, the downtown includes the commercial, residential, and institutional zoning highlighted in the graphic below.

Figure 1 – Study Area



Key streets in the downtown include:

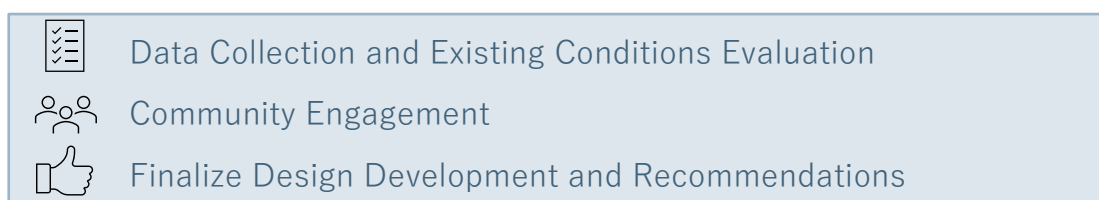
- 51st Street NW (the main street)
- 50th Avenue NW
- 52nd Street NW
- 49th Avenue NW
- 53rd Street NW
- North Access Road

1.3 Community Context

The District of Chetwynd was originally known as “Little Prairie” by its first settlers who came to the current townsite in the early 1900s. It is British Columbia’s entrance to, and exit from, the energetic Peace River country. Chetwynd remained a relatively quiet rural community until the construction of the John Hart Highway in the early 1950s and the Pacific Great Eastern (P.G.E.) railroad. It was incorporated as a village in 1962 and its population has been rising ever since. Chetwynd’s primary industries have remained largely the same over time, with some value-added and diversification. Forestry, ranching, mining, and oil and gas extraction and processing are the main sources of employment and economic development in the area. In addition to its industries, Chetwynd’s tourism industry has grown considerably over the past decades and has become a significant contributor to the District’s local economy.

1.4 Project Process

In late May 2021, the District of Chetwynd developed a project process based on stakeholder and community consultation, that resulted in the development of this plan. The process consisted of three phases:

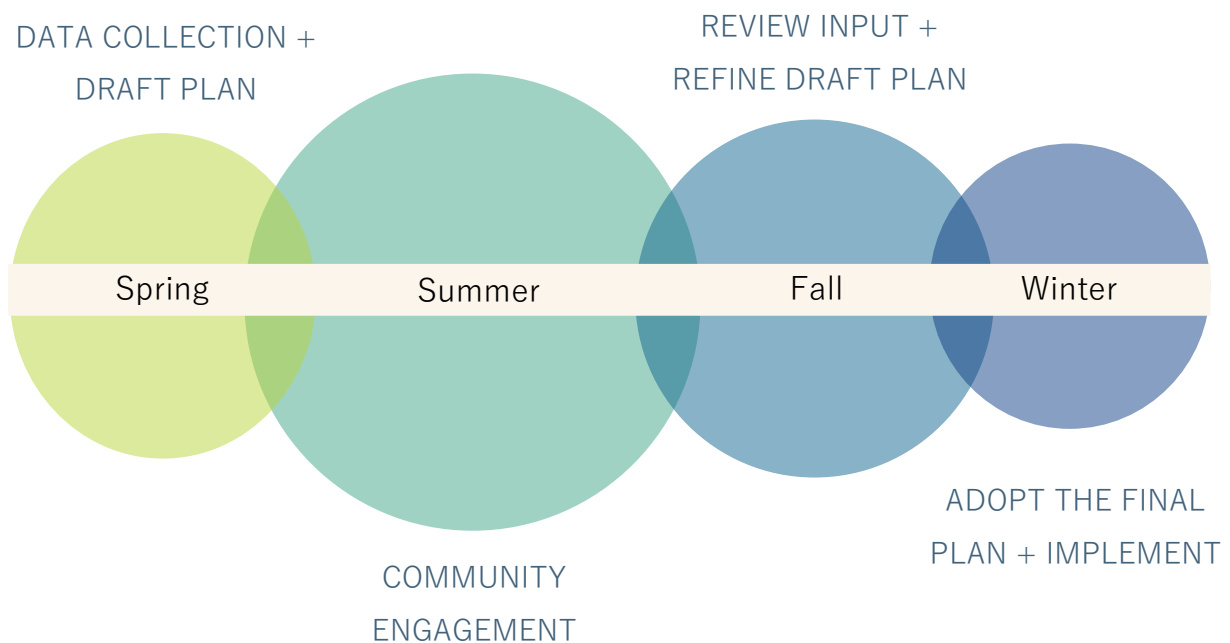


The last Downtown Revitalization Plan for Chetwynd was created in 1992. This left a great opportunity to start the project with an inventory of existing infrastructure and services in the downtown. It was recognized that the project could capitalize on guiding principles from past OCPs and strategic plans. Multiple plans and assessments have been completed in the past years that have contributed to the initial data collection and evaluation portion of this process. This approach combined: transportation and parking assessments, infrastructure planning, and landscaping and beautification plans.

Community engagement began in early July and tested early ideas to develop key directions for the plan. These directions were further enhanced and tested in greater detail throughout the summer. As well as in-person participation, online surveys were created and distributed through social media and to key stakeholder groups.

As community engagement wound down in September, it was important that the key takeaways from this process be developed into designs and recommendations. The resulting plan is thus based on a collaborative team approach between District of Chetwynd Council, staff, and the people of Chetwynd.

Project Timeline



Area Review

2.1 Existing Services

The downtown area currently offers a wide range of services to residents. Within a five to ten-minute walk (400-800m), individuals have access to two grocery stores, many retailers and restaurants, pharmacies and health care providers, hotels and motels, institutional services, and two parks. Development of a new gas station and food retailers is underway as well.

2.2 Existing Conditions Gallery



Windrem Creek



Garbage Can



Lamp Post



Planter Box



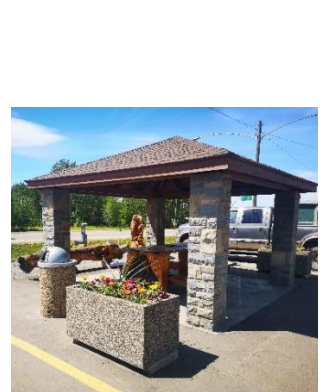
Mural



Hanging Baskets



Maple Tree



Carver's Row Gazebo



Crosswalk



Bike Rack



Carver's Row Planter



Garden



Bench



Town Center Carved Sign



Landscaped Garden



Landscaped Bulbout

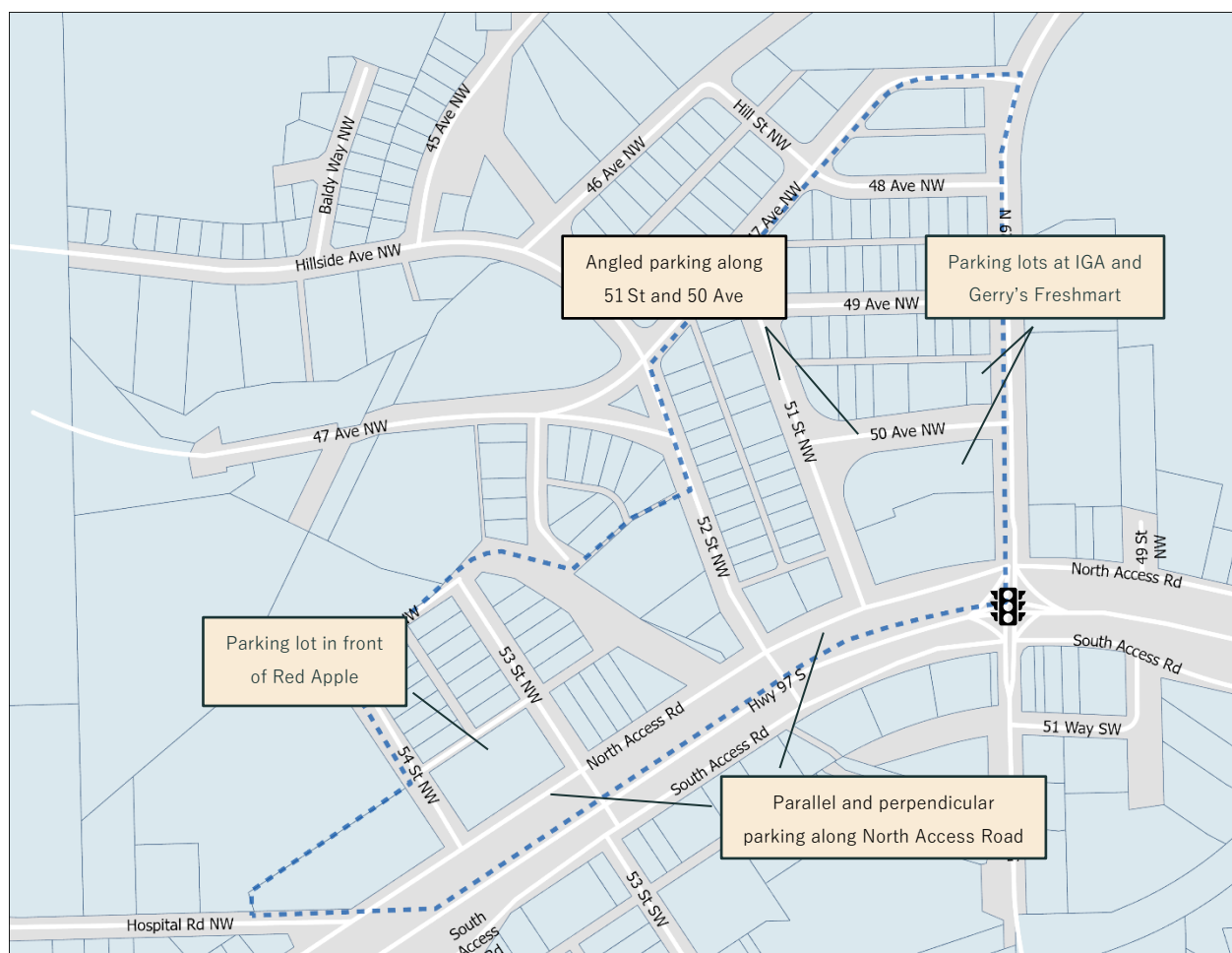
2.3 Parking & Transportation Analysis

The vehicular gateways to the District's downtown are Highway 97 and Highway 29. Both highways are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure. As such, these major routes into the downtown area are maintained and operated by the Ministry. There are multiple entrances into the downtown core that stem off the highways. The first is at 53rd Street NW, then 52nd Street NW, followed by South Access Road, 50th Avenue NW, 49th Avenue NW, 48th Avenue NW, and lastly 47th Avenue NW.

Overall, traffic congestion in Chetwynd is low. A 2015 Transportation Study along Highway 97 and Highway 29 indicates that traffic flows well into and out of the downtown. There is slight congestion at highway access intersections on 53rd Street NW and 52nd Street NW; however, the backups are generally no more than four cars, and this level of congestion does not pose a problem to the overall traffic flow in the downtown.

Parking availability is adequate for the traffic needs in the downtown. All streets have some form of parking (angled or parallel) and there are larger parking zones along North Access Road. As well, there are large parking lots on 50th Avenue NW and 53rd Avenue NW. The 2015 Traffic Study highlighted that large trucks often park along North Access Road which can block site lines for other road users. Other than that, the study mentioned no other parking issues in the downtown.

Figure 2 – Parking Overview



2.4 Road & Utilities Assessment

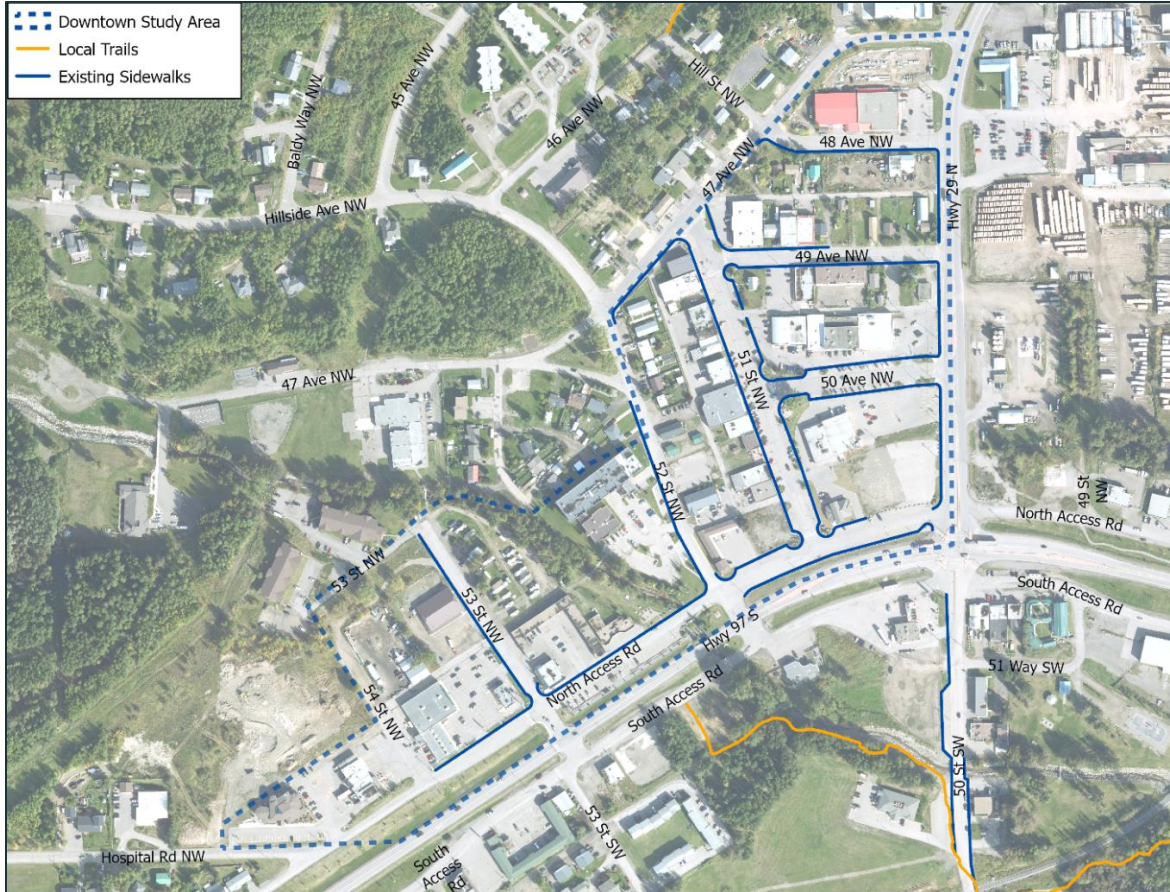
Many of the roads and sidewalks within the downtown are in good condition. According to a 2021 Roads Assessment, only a few roads within the downtown have been identified to be in fair or poor condition. 51st Street NW, 50th Avenue NW, 49th Avenue NW, and 53rd Street NW are important access routes in the downtown that have all been identified to be in fair condition. A small section of the South Access Road, between 52nd Street NW and 50th Street NW, has been identified to be in poor condition. This section of road will need to be resurfaced as it is a critical connection along the highway. 47th Avenue NW was reconstructed, and repaved and buried utilities were replaced in 2019. 51st Street NW, 50th Avenue NW, and 49th Avenue NW are due for a watermain replacement in the next 2 years. As the surfacing of these three streets has been identified to be in poor condition, the ideal approach would be to address both issues at the same time.

Most of the sidewalks and pedestrian paths within the downtown are all in good condition. A small section of sidewalk along 49th Avenue NW is in poor condition and will need to be replaced. As well, the paving stones along 51st Avenue NW have begun to separate. Currently, certain sections of the paved sidewalks and curb let-downs throughout the downtown are uneven and have created a bumpy surface. These sections of uneven paving can prevent people with mobility difficulties from accessing key areas of the downtown, especially when it comes to using crosswalks to cross the street safely.

2.5 Active Transportation

Active transportation within the downtown is currently limited to pedestrian connections. A multi-use path constructed parallel to Highway 97 connects to a large portion of downtown Chetwynd. There are also multiple walking trails bordering the town. These are close enough to the downtown that stronger connections could be made to increase tourism and act as an alternative means of travel to driving. The Windrem Creek Trail is the closest trail to the Downtown. The Windrem Creek Trail travels through multiple residential neighborhoods as well as the following key locations: Spirit Park, the Primary Care Clinic, the Post Office, and the Royal Canadian Legion.

Figure 3 – Active Transportation Overview



2.6 Current Design Direction

The current design direction in Downtown Chetwynd reflects the natural environment surrounding the town. Blue, green, orange, and white are promoted as the primary colours that should be used in building facades. Roofing should be peaked/sloped to resemble the mountains. Rock and wood accents are also encouraged; especially carved wood as it ties in the many chainsaw carvings around town that Chetwynd is famous for.



Examples of carved wood in building design



Community Engagement

Over the years, many engagement sessions have taken place to ask residents about their ideas and goals for Chetwynd. While none have been solely dedicated to the downtown, many of the goals envisioned overlap into the area. Community engagement done in 2020 for the new OCP lists “increasing the attractiveness of Chetwynd through the expansion and improvement of services offered” and “diversifying the local economic base and generating new employment opportunities” as the two most important OCP goals. Participants also identified a desire for an increase in local shopping and food options, as well as more community-wide activities that promote diversity and community pride.

Community engagement for the Downtown Revitalization Plan began in early July. Booths were set up bi-weekly at the local Farmer’s Market and multiple community events, such as the Recreation Center fall/winter sign-up day and Harvest Fest. Along with in-person engagement, multiple online surveys were created and distributed to stakeholders and interested parties. The engagement began with testing early ideas to gain a better sense of direction for the plan.

Residents were asked various questions about the Downtown, their responses are summarized below:

What do you like about Downtown Chetwynd?

- Beautiful natural environment with well-maintained landscaping and green areas.
- Ease of walkability.
- The carvings and art around town create a strong design character.

What do you dislike about Downtown Chetwynd?

- Uneven and worn sidewalks and curbs.
- Lack of lighting.
- Lack of seating and protection from the elements.
- Poor road conditions.

- Lack of accessibility features, such as smooth surfacing, shorter crossings, curb letdowns, and convenient seating.
- No public washroom that is open 24/7 and accessible.

General comments to inform the plan

- There is a need for more opportunities for community events to strengthen tourism and community pride.
- The pocket park on 51st Street NW could be further improved.
- Create stronger active transportations connections to existing sidewalks and trails in the community by investing in bike lanes, wider walking paths, and more crosswalks.

3.1 In-person Engagement and Outcomes

After the key directions for the plan were established through early engagement sessions, more detailed questions were asked to the public. Two primary discussions took place at in person sessions. These discussions surrounded the topics of Healthy Street Indicators and obstacles in the downtown.

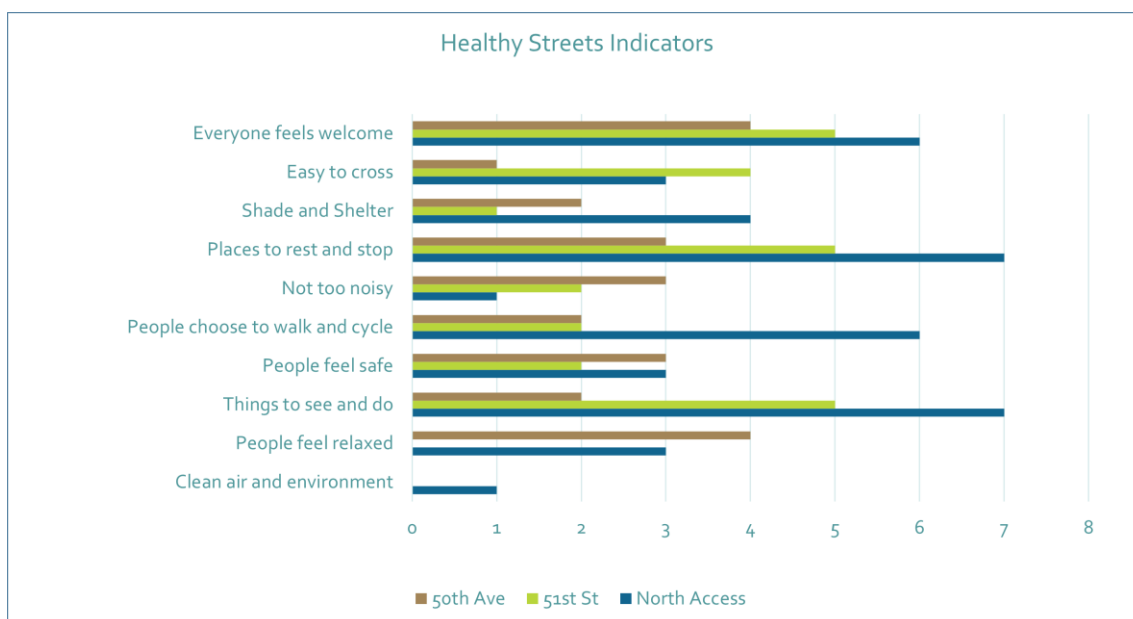
Healthy Streets Indicators

Healthy Streets Indicators is a human-centred framework created and developed in London that assesses streets based on 10 public health indicators:

- | | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • Everyone feels welcome | • Not too noisy |
| • Easy to cross | • People choose to walk and cycle |
| • Shade and shelter | • People feel safe |
| • Places to stop and rest | • People feel relaxed |
| • Things to see and do | • Clean Air and Environment |

The goal of this framework is to help understand how streets are currently impacting human health and to help improve streetscapes by including public health in transportation, the public realm, and planning.

At one of the engagement sessions, participants were asked to assess 51st Street NW, 50th Avenue NW, and the downtown portion of North Access Road based on the Healthy Streets Indicators. Most participants agreed that both North Access Road and 51st Street NW had “things to see and do”, “places to stop and rest”, and “everyone feels welcome”. 50th Avenue NW had low results in most of the categories compared to the other two streets and all three streets ranked very low in “not too noisy” and “clean air and environment”. The latter can be attributed to the proximity of the heavy industrial area next to the downtown. Overall, Downtown Chetwynd’s businesses successfully bring in local traffic, but there is little that keeps visitors from staying after their shopping is done.



Obstacles in Downtown Chetwynd

Another question the public was asked to address at one of the Farmer’s Market sessions was whether they found any obstacles that made getting around less accessible, safe, and convenient. Many observed that existing curb letdowns needed repair and made crossing the street unsafe and inaccessible. As well, a lack of crosswalk and sidewalk connections to the rest of Chetwynd makes getting around town as a pedestrian or cyclist inconvenient. Lastly, improved lighting would help people feel safer downtown.

3.2 Online Survey and Results

The online survey was created to better understand how the public currently felt about Downtown Chetwynd and their vision for its future. The survey was posted on the District's website, emailed to key stakeholders in the local business sector, and advertised at in-person sessions. Overall, the survey highlighted what previous engagement sessions had shown, that Downtown Chetwynd has good bones and that most people enjoy the downtown. The survey also highlighted that there is great potential for a safer, more pedestrian-friendly environment.

Key results from the online survey are summarized below:

What is your favorite space downtown?

- Greenspaces and parks.
- Carver's Row.
- Windrem Creek.

Are there specific areas within the downtown where we should focus our efforts to make the biggest impact?

- Beautification.
- Building fronts and design.
- Parks and greenspaces.
- Community pride.

What would encourage you to spend more time downtown?

- Beautification.
- Cultural spaces and events.
- Parks and greenspaces.
- Community pride.
- Greater diversity in art forms.

Downtown Concept Plan & Design

4.1 Design Directions

Based on the outcomes of preliminary assessments and community consultation, consensus about several key needs and opportunities emerged. These form the planning directions that, in turn, informed the development of the concept plan.

- **Improve and increase the number of key streetscape and sidewalk elements.** Street trees, seating/benches, trash bins, planters and in-ground landscaping, and other elements should be chosen as part of a cohesive design and the development of a distinct local character.
- **Transition to low-maintenance landscaping.** While much of the landscaping is ornamental and the district has already begun planting native plant species, continuing to plant native species and perennial plant types specific to the local hardiness zone will [a] reduce water consumption and cost, [b] reduce maintenance time and costs, [c] better reflect the local environment, [d] offer more year-round beautification, and [e] increase stormwater management and filtration possibilities.
- **Use corner bulb-outs to serve multiple functions.** The existing bulb-outs on 51st Street NW serve to break up traffic and create safer crosswalks for pedestrians. Additional landscaping and services on the bulb-outs can increase beautification, stormwater management, and run-off filtration.
- **Enhance gateway elements into the downtown.** Mirroring existing landscaping and clustering of carvings at key gateway entrances into the downtown can help distinguish the area from the rest of Chetwynd and invite tourists and visitors in.
- **Provide improved measures for accessibility and ease of movement.** Adding sidewalks and crosswalks to key roads and intersections will help pedestrians move safely through the downtown and connect to the rest of the community. The deteriorating paved

sidewalks, roads, and curbs should be repaired. Alternative permeable surfaces to the existing paved sidewalks should be explored to better align with universal design principles and accessibility.

- **Enhance community pride and engagement through seasonal decorations and events.** Adding infrastructure to support seasonal decorations such as lights, banners, and art can help engage the public to stay in the downtown longer during the cold seasonal months. Increasing community and cultural events, whether large or small, can also help enhance community pride and draw in tourism.
- **Support a comfortable cycle network.** Adding bike lanes to key roads will help cyclists move safely through the downtown and will keep them off the highway.
- **Provide adequate lighting.** To promote a sense of security for people downtown during evening and nighttime hours, appropriate levels of lighting should be provided on the building facades, on the underside of overhead weather protection, on and around street furniture, and in landscaped areas.

“I really enjoy our downtown area and would like to see fresh storefronts and updated signs.”

“Chetwynd is already a beautiful place, by adding some of the sculptures to the downtown core along with seating and creating a park like environment more people would spend time enjoying the downtown core.”

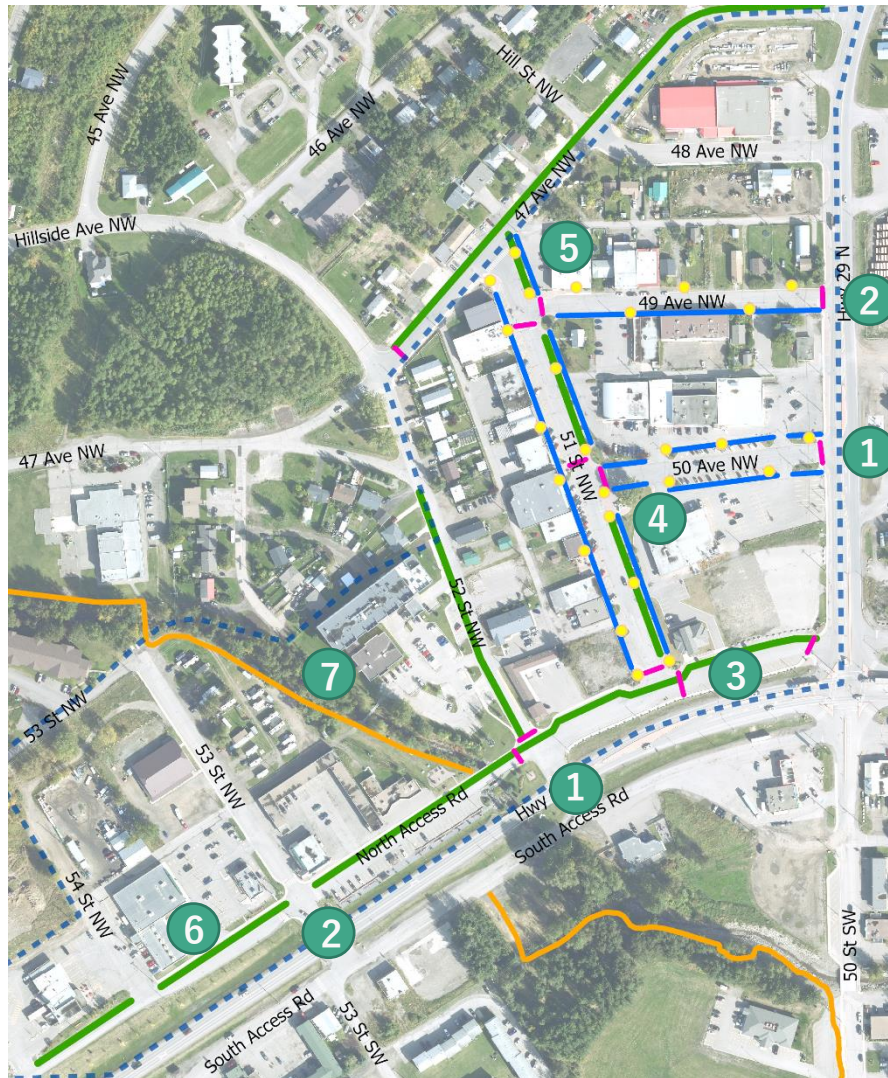
“More garbage bins, a couple more benches for people to sit and relax, decorative street lighting... soft lighting, parking where there is room to park.”

“I feel that our downtown, overall, is a wonderful space and I would like to see more events held downtown.”

Responses when online survey respondents were asked what they would like to see in a vibrant, accessible, and environmentally friendly downtown.

4.2 Visualization Gallery

This gallery provides images of the types of improvements envisioned for the Downtown Revitalization Plan. Some of these elements are realized in the detailed design section; others in the future recommendations section.



- | | |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 Primary Gateway Entrances | 5 Additional Lighting |
| 2 Secondary Gateway Entrances | 6 Bike Lanes |
| 3 Enhanced Crosswalks | 7 Windrem Creek Expansion |
| 4 Enhanced Sidewalks | |



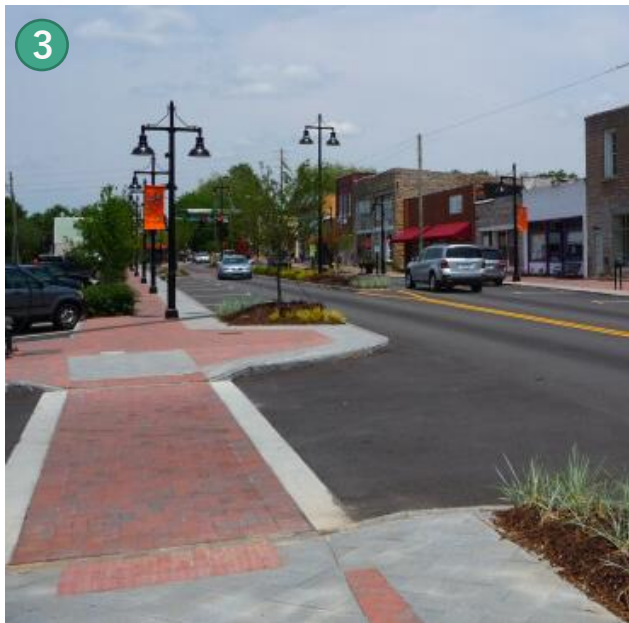
Primary & Secondary Gateway Entrances

Street entrance that calms traffic, increases pedestrian comfort and safety, and provides space for landscaping, seating, and other streetscape elements.



Enhanced Sidewalks

Improved sidewalk with a mix of decorative light fixtures, low-maintenance landscaping, and street furniture.



Enhanced Crosswalks

Enhanced crosswalk applications can help to calm traffic and create a stronger sense of place.



Additional Lighting

Decorative light fixtures can enhance street appeal and the design characteristic of the downtown.



Bikelanes

Well-designed bike lanes can improve cyclist safety and increase active transportation connections.



Windrem Creek Expansion

Well-designed bike lanes can improve cyclist safety and increase active transportation connections.

4.3 Landscaping

The landscape planting approach to Chetwynd should use primarily native species in conjunction with plant types that are suitable and well adapted to the project site in terms of context and climate. Chetwynd falls within a hardiness zone of 2b-3b, and plant species should be chosen with this in mind. Wildlife attracting species should be avoided. The use of both native and appropriate non-native species will increase biodiversity and provide year-round beautification. Some native and non-native species that fit these characteristics have been noted below:

Annuals:



Marigolds



Lobelias



Cosmos



Zinnias

Perennials:



Arctic Lupines



Black-eyed Susan



Heliopsis



Yarrow



Butterfly Weed



Purple Coneflower



Whorled Tickseed



Goats Beard

Shrubs:



Hosta



Red Osier Dogwood



Bearberry



Soopolallie



Bog Labrador Tea

Implementation

The Downtown Revitalization Plan represents both a tremendous opportunity and a distinct challenge for the District of Chetwynd. Successful implementation of the plan will not only require the acquisition of funding and continued community support, but also commitment from District of Chetwynd departments, District Council, and other decision-makers to support the improvements with broader planning initiatives. As well, to fully achieve the objectives of the DRP, a strategic approach to implementation is necessary. Existing regulatory documents are currently in place to manage specific elements needed to assist with implementing the plan (OCP, Zoning Bylaw, etc.). The existing provisions of these regulatory documents must be considered with the implementation of the recommendations of this report, and amendments may require consideration and adoption following the appropriate processes.

An incremental approach can be taken with this project. The availability of grant funding will impact the construction of streetscape improvements in phases. The phasing of certain elements offers an opportunity for more successful additions of these streetscape designs. Primary recommendations were chosen based on the level of impact to the community as well as the level of ease to accomplish, providing some “easy wins”. Secondary recommendations either have a lower level of impact on the community, and therefore are not immediate priorities, or they may take longer to accomplish or rely on steps to be completed before their commencement.

5.1 Primary Recommendations

The following recommendations incorporate key components of the Concept Plan, as well as additional priorities identified throughout the project process. These recommendations facilitate a vision established by the community that seeks to enhance the existing character of Chetwynd.

A. Phased and Incremental Streetscape Improvements Implementation of streetscape improvements is dependent on funding. To optimize return on value, the District should take the following approach:

1. While funding amounts are unknown or limited, the District should prioritize completing fewer blocks at a higher quality (i.e. all features and elements) rather than more blocks at a lower quality.
2. With this in mind, prioritize streetscape improvements between 51st Street NW, 50th Avenue NW, and North Access Road first, then 47th Avenue NW to 49th Avenue NW, 52nd Street NW, and 53rd Street NW. For the latter area, street improvements should be prioritized from east to west, extending out from the core downtown area (51st Street NW).

B. Downtown Gateways The concept designs provide the basis for southern and eastern gateways to the downtown via landscaped corners and strategically placed light fixtures and carvings. The District should explore these elements to strengthen the primary entries to the downtown Core (52nd Street NW, and 50th Avenue NW), as well as the secondary entries at 49th Avenue NW and 53rd Street NW.

C. Lighting and Wayfinding Provide lighting and wayfinding for the pedestrian, cyclist, and motorist. Take opportunities for attractive and innovative lighting options and signage for streets and open spaces. Consider safety and security when doing so.

5.2 Secondary Recommendations

The following recommendations incorporate key components of the Concept Plan, as well as additional priorities identified throughout the project process.

A. Pocket Parks The pocket park located on 51st Street NW is a popular feature of the downtown during the day. The District should capitalize on this popularity by exploring the feasibility of transforming the pocket park in to a seasonal “go to” location using seasonal decorations and activities.

As well, the District should consider future temporary pocket parks as tandem projects with local businesses or community groups to [1] contribute to unimproved blocks by providing additional people space, calming traffic, and offering an element of novelty to attract visitors and [2] test drive ideas that could later be brought into the community.

- B. Seasonal Vibrancy and Lighting** The District should continue with previous years' directions for seasonal lighting, decorations, and other initiatives that bring year-round vibrancy to the downtown core. Additionally, the District should encourage and work with local businesses to decorate seasonally.

Strategic landscaping can also be used as seasonal decorations. A wider selection of winter hardy plants should be added to landscaping throughout the downtown to promote all season landscaped aesthetics.

- C. Public Washrooms** Currently, open indoor washrooms are only available through local businesses and community centers during their hours of operation. The portable toilet currently located in the Don Titus Fitness Park has limited accessibility and is only available from Spring to Fall. The District should consider upgrading the portable toilet in the Fitness park to an accessible public washroom open either 24/7 or with season-dependent hours within the downtown core.

- D. Cycling Network** Based on community interest, the District should consider adding bike lanes to key roadways, mainly North Access Road, 51st Street NW, and 47th Avenue NW, to divert existing cyclist traffic off busier roads and to promote cycling downtown. Bike lanes should be added to one side of the road only until greater demand is achieved. It is crucial that the bike lanes are clearly connected to the multi-use walkways that run along North Access Road to ensure connectivity to the rest of Chetwynd.

E. Facilitate Redevelopment and Facade Improvements The District should continue to work with local businesses and landowners to [a] facilitate building facade improvements through the Northern Development Initiative Trust (NDIT) Business Facade Improvement Program, and [b] encourage consistent and complementary design throughout Chetwynd through regulatory documents (OCP, Development Permit Guidelines Bylaw, etc.). Extra measures should be taken to focus efforts on the development of 49th Avenue NW.

F. Expand the Windrem Creek Trail The District should consider extending the Windrem Creek trail to 47th Avenue NW, in between Don Titus Elementary School and Surerus Place Assisted Living Housing. This will create a complete East-West connection throughout Chetwynd and will provide an alternative active transportation route for residents to travel through the community.

5.3 Conclusion

Recent activity and interest in Chetwynd's downtown, combined with the efforts of the District, provide a unique opportunity to establish conditions that support a stable and energetic business environment. Many of the recommendations in this report arose from the growing need of a public realm and the need to establish strong connections and identity within the downtown and Chetwynd.

This report sets out a wide range of suggestions to be considered by downtown stakeholders and the District, including:

- Improve and increase the number of key streetscape and sidewalk elements
- Transition to low-maintenance landscaping
- Utilize corner bulb-outs to serve multiple functions
- Enhance gateway elements into the downtown
- Provide improved measures for accessibility and ease of movement

- Enhance community pride and engagement through seasonal decorations and events
- Create a comfortable cycle network
- Provide adequate lighting

With the leadership of the District of Chetwynd, and guided by the actions identified in this Plan, Chetwynd's downtown has great potential to be transformed into an even more lively, vibrant, and memorable commercial environment that fosters significant economic development.