

Section 3

Downtown Functions

Downtown Functions Overview

This section describes the functions of a downtown that allows its role within the community to be enhanced. These downtown functions work in concert with the development form to create an **urban experience** that supports the vision and objective of the plan.

The policy areas in this section speak to the services and functions that are located, or best located, in the downtown to meet the needs of the community, including Affordable Housing, Events and Programming. This section describes Transportation Methods that support downtown's activity and built form, and Development Supports that allow for a mix of diverse and vibrant land uses. Policies and actions in this section also describe desired elements that would support downtown revitalization, and summarizes the intentions for Removing Regulatory Barriers and to Create and Enhance Social Declarations.

This section relates all the aspects inherent to the role of a downtown, and as supporting elements for development, with the built form to ensure that we create a unique **urban experience**. Removing the regulatory barriers makes that experience possible, and the declarations speak to the approach and intended gains for, and from, that experience.

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3.01 Temporary Land Uses and Activities

Preamble:

Council's statement of success for the downtown plan speaks to a desired level of activity and vibrancy through the area; a place for people to invest in and where there are businesses and activities and people frequenting and experiencing the downtown. In support of these outcomes, this plan aims to accelerate the pace of redevelopment in the downtown, and that should also consider support for new businesses that may be looking for a place to start out, do not have a permanent location or the ability to commit to a long-term lease, and those that don't fit under typical business models of operating every day throughout the year.

Temporary land uses and activities can cover a range of businesses and endeavors, including street vendors, food trucks, retail spaces, recreational and fitness facilities, shared studio spaces, markets, and events. Supporting these kinds of uses would open doors for a range of businesses and can animate areas within the downtown with different and unique activities. In addition to supporting new businesses in the area, this approach gives a space where it supports unique and interesting uses which can significantly add to the overall character and vitality of the downtown.

There are success stories from other cities that we can learn from to guide our approach, and some clear opportunities for this kind of initiative to have a positive impact here. Food carts are a celebrated and widely recognized part of Portland's downtown and community identity, and similar uses could be supported on many undeveloped sites, in parking lots, and on vacant sites within Airdrie's downtown to support existing businesses, or even act as activity generators on their own. Calgary has also implemented more robust allowances for pop-up and interim uses which would help to inform our own approach.

In addition to stand-alone uses that can occupy parking lots and undeveloped sites, this initiative can also support flexible uses within established buildings. 'Flex spaces' or 'Innovation spaces' were a common element through charrettes on this plan and have been an emerging component of commercial development proposals discussed with the City across new policy plans and development concepts.

Objective:

Support temporary land uses and activities that will add to the vibrancy of downtown.

Principles:

Temporary land uses and activities add colour and character to the downtown and contribute to making it [The Place to Be](#). Being flexible in allowing these uses to operate is a case of setting up [The Right Rules and Processes](#), and this can create an environment to let more businesses and investments thrive in the downtown, making it a part of [Everyone's Success](#).

Policies:

1. The Downtown shall be considered the primary location in Airdrie for pop-up and interim uses.
2. Temporary land uses and activities within the downtown shall be supported and encouraged. The Development Authority shall generally consider interim and pop-up uses appropriate within the downtown and, if there are no impacts on surrounding uses, may support applications for such uses to occupy:
 - a. Existing buildings on a site.
 - b. Portions of a site (e.g. part of an established parking lot) and/or.
 - c. Undeveloped or underdeveloped sites

3. Where a temporary land use or activity is proposed within an established building, the Development Authority may consider the remaining anticipated lifecycle of that building in support of a temporary use in that location to bridge the gap to a more comprehensive redevelopment plan or proposal.
4. New commercial buildings and sites in the downtown should consider how temporary land uses and activities can be accommodated within the context of each proposal, and may:
 - a. Provide flex spaces to allow for pop-up and interim uses, and/or.
 - b. Be designed to facilitate a range of uses and occupancies.

Municipal Actions:

1. Council shall direct Administration to prepare Land Use Bylaw amendments within 12 months of the adoption of this plan, to formalize the City's approach, establish permitted pop-up or interim uses, clarify how the Development Authority will review potential impacts, and what kind of permits are required.
2. Council shall direct Administration to work with property owners to prepare, within 36 months of the adoption of this plan:
 - a. Prospective site plans and logistics for how pop-up and interim uses can be accommodated on sites within the downtown, and
 - b. Marketing opportunities for pop-up and interim uses on individual sites and in the downtown overall.

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3.02 Affordable Housing

Preamble:

Airdrie has a very high need for a variety of affordable housing options. The Housing Needs Assessment (2016) identified that only 2.2% of the community's total housing stock is oriented to households with greater housing support needs. In particular, there are critical shortages in below-market rental and rental supplement products, which are two key components in the complete housing spectrum.

The challenges identified in the Housing Needs Assessment persist nearly five years later. A limited number of units can be gained from a municipal land asset on Edmonton Trail; however, the land economics from that site for below-market and subsidized housing products have not yet proven to be viable.

Downtown Airdrie provides a preferable option for the location of affordable housing products; below-market and supplemented products, in particular. Several key civic institutions and amenities are located in the Downtown, which is also well serviced by transit. Redevelopment within the Downtown provides the opportunity to accommodate all parts of the housing spectrum; from supportive housing to niche market ownership. The density required in many cases to make the economics work for many land uses on vacant or underdeveloped parcels in the downtown may actually serve as an opportunity to initiate, or incorporate, these types of residential land uses. Creating this type of **social inclusion** and mix of housing product, incomes, and demographics can create benefits for both the downtown, and the community as a whole.

Objective:

The objective is to place affordable housing units in appropriate forms and strategic locations within the downtown.

Principles:

Enhancing socio-economic diversity is emblematic of **Putting People First** and municipal involvement to achieve the objective illustrates the principle of **Leading by Example**.

Policies:

1. The Downtown shall be a location that possesses a wide range of housing choices in support of increased **social well-being**.
2. Downtown shall be considered the primary location for **affordable housing** offerings (below-market and supplemented) in Airdrie.
3. **Affordable housing** offerings shall be located in the Downtown with adequate proximity to social and civic amenities, in the opinion of the Development Authority.
4. Mixed-income housing projects shall be the encouraged development form to provide affordable housing options, wherever possible. Preference shall be given by the Development Authority for mixing commercial and residential land uses as part of such developments, wherever possible.
5. Capital improvements to civic infrastructure (such as roads, sidewalks, etc.) shall make appropriate accommodations for all age demographics and mobility constraints in order to best support the provision of affordable housing units.
6. Developers shall be encouraged to design any projects containing **affordable housing** units (below-market and supplemented) to have low energy demand to reduce long-term operating costs for housing need tenants/owners.

Municipal Actions:

1. Council shall adopt, in conjunction with the Downtown Plan, [Resolution No. XX/2020](#) to refund the application fee for mixed-income and mixed-use projects at the time that the Development Completion Certificate is issued by the Development Authority.
2. Council shall direct Administration to prepare options to incentivize building designs with a proven return on investment from reduced utility/operating costs, within 12 months of the adoption of this plan.
3. Council shall direct Administration to prepare, within 12 months of the adoption of the plan, options to convert available land and/or financial assets, so as:
 - a. To make strategic investments in property for affordable housing development(s) in the downtown; and/or,
 - b. To match housing needs with proposals from downtown land developers, focusing particularly on potential mixed-income and mixed-use developments; and/or,
 - c. To enter into leases/partnerships with downtown land developers so as to simultaneously facilitate guaranteed unit payments and provide below-market or subsidized units for populations at need, and to this end:
 - i. Council shall direct Administration to pursue landowners poised to initiate developments in the downtown to find matches for potential affordable housing integrations and subsidized units leases in conjunction with the adoption of this plan.

3.03 Events and Programming

Preamble:

Events and programming are vital parts of the social connections cherished by a community. They act as a means for a community to express itself and its culture, and there is no limit on the variety of ways that a community can express itself through events and programming; be they public or private, formal or informal.

Such event and programming offerings represent a gauge on the amount of social connection and social sustainability being generated in a community. A failure to come together would often mean failing to enhance the values of the community, as well as the levels of social and economic capital.

Airdrie takes a **community development approach** that relies on community members coming together to take collective action for organizing events and programming. The approach is premised on the assumption that people have the desire to make positive change or improve the state of their community. It recognizes the right of people for self-determination and empowers them to make decisions about how and where they live, and what their quality of life will be (or involve). Using this approach, Airdrie has experienced some successes with AirdrieFEST and the Canada Day Parade, in particular. Several thousand people attend these events each year, with many walking from adjacent neighbourhoods to participate.

Future direction set by Council in the policies of the AirdrieONE Sustainability Plan and the Airdrie City Plan direct the City to work with community groups on the design and delivery of events and programming. Specific language exists in those policies to accommodate both innovative projects, programming, and events in the Downtown.

Ultimately, Council requires good information in order to make an informed choice on the costs and benefits of proactive event and programming delivery. But studies like the *Demand and Distribution Report* released by Jones Lasalle Lang in 2019 note that cities must transition to include four new economies if they hope to stay competitive: the Innovation Economy, the Experience Economy, the Sharing Economy and the Circular Economy. In particular, the Experience Economy requires a mix of activities to ensure continuous experience opportunities for its visitors. Increasing competition in this economic sector may make financial outlay now essential for reach, for investment attraction, and to sustain the high quality of life enjoyed here.

Objective:

To make the downtown the primary location for the events and programming that generate additional activity and energy in the downtown.

Principles:

Pointing events and programming to the downtown is essential in living up to the principle that downtown is the **Heart of the City**. The activity, energy and social connection created by such events serve to make downtown the **Place to Be**. Improving pedestrian access to these social connection opportunities aligns with the principle of **Putting People First**, not only in the physical form(s), but also in the destinations for people.

Policies:

1. The Downtown shall be the primary location for events and programming in Airdrie and shall be supported in accordance with the actions and incentives referenced in this plan.
2. Events shall form part of the comprehensive strategy to allow the Downtown to compete with other nodes in Airdrie and destinations within the region.
3. The events and programs offered in Downtown Airdrie shall be marketed to external audiences, wherever possible and applicable.

4. Events shall be designed to enhance civic pride in the Downtown.
5. There shall be a culture of creating enhanced social connection through the event and programming offerings in the Downtown.
6. All publicly organized events shall be designed to accommodate all age demographics, social demographics, and accessibility needs.
7. Events shall mitigate their potential nuisance impacts to the satisfaction of the Community Development Department.

Municipal Actions:

1. Council shall provide fiscal support for a Downtown Business Improvement Association (BIA) or Events Committee to organize and operate private events in the downtown in accordance with [Resolution No. XX/2020](#).
2. Council shall direct Administration to prepare, within 12 months of the adoption of this plan, options for fiscal support of downtown events not organized by a Downtown BIA or Events Committee, and which are anticipated to take place in 2022 or later.
3. Council shall make available a grant program to pay for insurance expenses associated with organizing private events in accordance with [Resolution No. XX/2020](#), and shall direct Administration:
 - a. To make available a list of insurance brokers that can provide effective and affordable insurance to private event organizers.
4. Council shall direct Administration to, within 18 months of the adoption of this plan, make public spaces within the Downtown Plan boundary available for both public and privately organized events with minimal, or no charge, and:
 - a. To post such a fee and availability schedule publicly; and,
 - b. To provide a transparent and predictable process for prioritizing or determining the ability to use such spaces.
5. Council shall direct Administration to prepare options for a capital project, or capital project improvement, to provide all-year public washrooms within the downtown, within 12 months of the adoption of this plan.
6. Council shall direct Administration to prepare options for capital projects, or improvements, to enhance physical access to downtown event locations, and increase walkability to events for residents in adjacent neighbourhoods, within 12 months of the adoption of this plan.
7. Within 12 months of the adoption of this plan, the City of Airdrie shall make parking facilities on municipally owned properties within the downtown available to support privately organized events. Such shared parking opportunities will be arranged and implemented without charge to the event organizers in all circumstances that they can be reasonably accommodated in the opinion of the Corporate Properties Department, and in addition:
 - a. Council, as the primary shareholder of the Airdrie Main Street Square (AMSQ), shall direct that corporation to take the same approach as part of its mandate.
8. Council shall select the Downtown as the location for locating new publicly-organized events, or capital projects/improvements to host events.
9. Council shall direct Administration to prepare a bylaw or resolution, within 24 months of the adoption of this plan, in alignment with the [reimagining Main Street policies](#), outlining a process to allow Main Street to be closed for either public or private events.
10. Council shall direct Administration to prepare a 3-year events plan for the downtown, within 24 months of plan adoption, which shall:

- a. Propose at least one publicly-funded and organized event in the downtown each month of the calendar year designed with the regional audience in mind;
- b. Include cost estimates and activity options;
- c. Estimate potential return on investment from event and activity expenditures; and
- d. Set out a procedure for extension or reoccurrence for Council's consideration at the expiry of the adopted events plan.

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3.04 Supporting Multimodal Transportation

Preamble:

Multimodal transportation refers to a system with more than one mode of travel. A snapshot of Airdrie's overall transportation network was provided in part of the public engagement for Airdrie's Economic Strategy conducted in September 2017, included in the *2020 Transportation Master Plan*. Currently more than 90% of all daily trips are by vehicles, and the downtown plan will need to continue to accommodate vehicle traffic while enhancing other modes of travelling to and within the downtown.

Aspirationally, a multimodal transportation network servicing downtown Airdrie would include cars, bicycles, transit and pedestrians. In keeping with the goal of attracting business and activity to Main Street and the Downtown, pedestrian traffic should be given the highest priority in the transportation hierarchy. Doing this is integral to creating complete streets and the urban experience that will give downtown Airdrie a competitive advantage. This also ties into other policy areas in the plan, including [Reimagining Main Street](#) and encouraging active transportation as a means of [Health Promotion](#) within the downtown.

There are opportunities to make some significant gains in this regard. Almost the entire city is within a 7km radius of the City Centre, which makes traveling to and from the Downtown by bike a possibility. Additionally, while data from the Economic Strategy engagement showed a dominance of vehicles as the primary mode of transportation, cycling and walking were the next most utilized and accounted for both recreational travel as well as travelling "to get somewhere." A completed multiuse path alongside the railway and Nose Creek constitutes the spine of the active transportation network and proposed cycling network within this plan.

Alternatively to or in combination with cycling and walking, transit is another way of getting to and around the Downtown. Currently the regional bus service operates along Main Street. No local bus routes circulate through the Downtown. A redesign redevelopment of Main Street and 1st Avenue should take place in accordance with the complete streets framework and incorporate any changes to the regional and local transit service.

Objective:

The objective is to achieve a multi-modal transportation system within the Downtown that favours walking as the highest priority mode.

Principles:

Designing Downtown Airdrie to accommodate a multi-modal transportation system that favours walking aligns with the principle of making Downtown [Connected and Mobile](#). This approach recognizes the continuing importance of vehicles in the Downtown but elevates the importance of other modes of transportation and prioritizes pedestrian traffic. At a smaller scale, this is also a key component of [Reimagining Main Street](#) and ensuring it functions as a multimodal corridor throughout the life of the Plan.

Policies:

1. Any new redesign of the transportation system in the Downtown ARP shall incorporate improvements to the pedestrian/pathway/cycling network as shown conceptually in [Figure XX Multimodal Transportation](#).
2. Street network improvements in the downtown shall incorporate elements of **Complete Streets**, and specifically consider the following design elements:
 - a. Design speed of vehicle lanes should be compatible with adjoining land uses and prioritize the overall safety and comfort of pedestrians and cyclists.
 - b. On-street parking should be accommodated where possible to support fronting retail businesses along the street, provide a buffer for pedestrians, and to calm traffic speeds.
 - c. Direct access onto streets within the downtown should be limited where appropriate to avoid breaks in the pedestrian network and provide space for landscaping, lighting, and utilities.
3. Transit stops shall provide adequate shelter, seating and user amenities including garbage/recycling receptacles.
4. Cycling infrastructure in the Downtown shall be designed to facilitate adequate snow clearing in winter.
5. The Downtown should feature attractive streetscapes through aesthetic building faces and landscaping.

Municipal Actions:

1. Council shall direct Administration to update design standards and operational practices, within 36 months of the adoption of this plan, to ensure that active transportation modes are supported year-round (e.g. through snow clearing in winter).
2. Council shall direct Administration to prepare a transit strategy for moving people to and within the downtown using transit, within a timeline determined by Council.
3. Upon finalization of the '[Reimagining Main Street](#)' design, Administration shall review and reconcile all multimodal transportation systems and connectivity to and within the Downtown.
4. Council shall direct Administration to collaborate with landowners and developers, when redevelopment occurs on private sites, to make infrastructure improvements or connections that are identified through this plan and subsequent actions.

3.05 Pedestrian Mobility

Preamble:

Downtown currently has a well-connected pedestrian grid that is supported by Main Street and 1st Avenue as main corridors within that network. However, there are opportunities for improvements and specific areas where there are clear needs that should be addressed.

The network can be enhanced through additional east-west and north-south connections shown on [Figure XX \(Pathways and Sidewalks\)](#). Pathway connections are drawn to represent desire lines that were identified by participants during public engagement. These connections are envisioned to have a more natural landscape aesthetic and provide access and enjoyment of natural areas within the downtown, especially Nose Creek, while providing multiple non-vehicular connections to the west and east of the downtown outside of the plan area and into the adjacent communities. Where a pathways connection is shown along a road right of way, sidewalks may be incorporated.

Although a necessity, the presence of the railway serves as a barrier between the Creekside Village, Iron Horse Condominiums, Midtown and the Downtown. These developments, if connected, have the potential to bring more pedestrian activity and vitality to Main Street. To create permeability between these neighbourhoods, crossings would have to be considered at certain points along the tracks. Potential locations for elevated pedestrian crossings are identified on [Figure XX \(Open Space Concept\)](#). Connecting Midtown and Iron Horse Park to the Downtown would provide the opportunity to link to Airdrie's railway history. An alternative to explore would be an at-grade crossing.

However, many factors need to be reviewed and considered prior to finalizing the location of these crossings. Therefore, the potential for these locations should be reviewed periodically with relevant stakeholders.

Objective:

The objective is to enhance connectivity of the pedestrian network through thoughtful design, strategic investments, and the integration of all pedestrians' needs in the Downtown.

Principles:

Enhancing the pedestrian realm is a key part of creating a Connected and Mobile downtown, and the design of these areas operates under the principle of [Putting People First](#). Designing the Downtown with attractive storefronts, interesting spaces, comfortable sidewalks and pathways and a safe environment encourages pedestrian activity. Pedestrian activity in turn, increases interest in the Downtown and helps make it [The Place To Be](#).

Policies:

1. All pedestrian connections shall be constructed generally as illustrated on [Figure XX \(Pathways and Sidewalks\)](#). These connections shall be expanded where appropriate and linked to on-street pedestrian routes.
2. All pathways, sidewalks, and crosswalks should be designed as part of a cohesive pedestrian network and with appropriate transitions between different elements.

3. Regional pathway connections and pedestrian trails should:
 - a. be routed along the edges of environmentally significant areas or into locations with less sensitivity to the natural ecology to minimize the impact on the natural environment.
 - b. be designed for all non-vehicle transportation modes, including walkers, runners, cyclists, inline skaters, skateboarders and persons with reduced mobility. Designs should consider access, safety and adequate signage, and
4. The design of sidewalks in the downtown:
 - a. shall ensure an unobstructed path for pedestrians.
 - b. should be separated from roadways by street furniture, trees and landscaping.
 - c. should be built with hard, durable, level, and slip-resistant materials that can be easily cleared of snow and ice, and
 - d. shall be adequately illuminated with appropriately scaled lighting to increase pedestrian comfort and safety.
5. Crosswalks should be included at every intersection within the downtown on all sides and should achieve the following in their location and design:
 - a. be a natural and convenient extension of the overall pedestrian network.
 - b. be as close as possible to the pedestrians' desired travel paths and at right angles across the road.
6. Where on-street parking is allowed, curb extensions should replace the parking lane at crosswalks. Curb extensions should be the same width as the parking lane where possible.
7. Mid-block crosswalks should be considered where:
 - a. the spacing between intersections is too large,
 - b. there is a need to connect uses on either side of a street,
 - c. there is an existing pedestrian route perpendicular to the street
 - d. there is a provable desire line or high pedestrian volumes that a crosswalk can address.
8. Pedestrian street crossing distances should be minimized and designed to be visible to vehicles, through the use of signage, "zebra striping" or differentiated paving materials.

Municipal Actions:

1. Council shall direct Administration to prepare, within 12 months of the adoption of this plan, a prospective summary and associated costs for Capital Projects to address new pedestrian connections and improvements to the existing pedestrian network.
2. Council shall direct Administration to provide an annual report, to be presented in coordination with the annual budget, on potential improvements to the pedestrian network and associated costs for review and prioritization.
3. Council shall direct Administration to review, every two years following the adoption of this plan, the potential for the key pedestrian rail crossing locations as shown on [Figure XX](#) with the relevant stakeholders.
4. Council shall direct Administration to coordinate pedestrian network improvements with approved developments, in order to complement development projects and achieve an economy of scale with those development in the downtown.

3.06 Private Vehicle Parking

Preamble:

Downtown Airdrie has a considerable amount of private vehicle parking overall. The Downtown Parking Study (2019) counted over 2,700 stalls in a boundary similar to that of this plan. Approximately 2,450 of those stalls are located on private properties. However, despite this apparent abundance, the Downtown Parking Study also found several areas, mostly in the **downtown core**, with virtually no peak hour availability. This has the corresponding effect of constraining development aspirations in those areas, and also creating an impression that there is a lack of parking in the downtown.

This is a challenging issue to address. Private vehicle parking stalls are sought by the public and dutifully supplied by landowners, but they are also land consumptive, expensive, and unable to be redistributed or reallocated easily. In many vehicular-oriented developments in the downtown, they represent the dominant land form and require special attention for placement and design. While private vehicle parking is certainly needed to support the redevelopment targets and aspirations for the downtown, constructing more parking stalls in an environment with an apparent excess has a counterintuitive flavour.

The City of Airdrie reached out to landowners and redevelopment experts in the preparation of this plan to discuss this and other key issues. These stakeholders highlighted parking as one of the most important issues facing the downtown and the impact that it can have on the economics for redevelopment. They urged the municipality to consider incentives for private vehicle parking that would reduce anticipated redevelopment costs and serve to maximize yield; generating a future return on such civic investment in the form of an increased tax base.

The approach outlined in [Section 1.05](#) of this plan is to take proactive steps to achieve the objective of accelerated redevelopment. As such, simultaneous actions to remove parking regulation barriers, gain efficiency from the existing supply, and incentivize parking areas to match the desired amount of redevelopment are in line with that approach and would appear to have stakeholder support. But any such approach, and/or complementary set of actions, needs to consider the costs and benefits of parking carefully when being presented to Council.

Objective:

To harmonize the amount, and placement, of parking with the redevelopment aspirations of this plan.

Principles:

Matching the location and amount of parking with the incremental increases in redevelopment will require the [Right Rules and Processes](#) to be in place. But if they are, then [Everyone's Success](#) is possible, since the finite resources of land, time, and money will not be wasted for landowners and not be charged back correspondingly to consumers. The right amount and location of parking allows for greater intensity, other uses, and new amenities – helping to make downtown [The Place to Be](#).

Policies:

1. Maximum use and efficiency shall be sought from every available private vehicle parking stall in the downtown.
2. The total number of parking stalls shall be reduced to the greatest extent possible, while still supporting the desired Land Use Concept ([Figure XX](#)), and to help achieve this:
 - a. Shared and joint use parking agreements shall be encouraged; and,
 - b. Shared entrance locations shall be encouraged to reduce intersection conflicts and achieve greater site development efficiency on private parcels.
3. Potential impacts from autonomous vehicle technologies shall be anticipated, embraced, and accommodated to the greatest extent possible, and:

- a. Ride stop locations shall be considered as part of public road right-of-way standards and site developments; and,
 - b. Public and/or private structured parking areas shall be designed to accommodate potential conversion to other land uses if/when structured parking stalls are made obsolete by such technologies; and,
4. The Development Authority shall require parking to be located to the side and rear of properties whenever possible, unless such parking:
 - a. Is incorporated as part of the building design in a manner deemed acceptable to the Development Authority; and/or,
 - b. Takes the form of a parking structure that adequately addresses any potential safety issues and which adequately adheres to the **active frontage** policies, in the opinion of the Development Authority.
5. Surface parking lots in the Downtown shall be carefully designed to minimize their impacts on the public realm and to permit redevelopment, and in this regard:
 - a. Vehicular access to individual sites should be from rear lanes and side streets wherever possible;
 - b. Large surface parking lots (>50 stalls) shall:
 - i. Be screened from view with landscaping on the edges and medians, and such edge and median treatments shall:
 - ii. Have a minimum width of 3.0m between parked vehicles and the sidewalk in a front yard;
 - iii. Be located within the private realm, so as to not reduce the total sidewalk width; and,
 - (a) Not obstruct the primary building façade;
 - (b) Consider the proportion of landscaping to the private vehicle parking areas;
 - (c) Provide adequate space for landscaping to ensure the long-term viability of plantings; and,
 - (d) Concentrate landscaping where it will be of benefit to long-term viability of plantings;
 - iv. Consider appropriate snow storage areas and potential groundwater recharge from these areas, where it can be accommodated appropriately; and,
 - v. May include permeable paving (unit pavers, porous concrete or asphalt, etc.), bioswales, and/or infiltration measures, where deemed appropriate by the Development Authority;
6. All surface, structured and underground parking facilities shall adhere to the minimum requirements of the Alberta Building Code and the City of Airdrie Land Use Bylaw, and beyond that:
 - a. Shall provide stalls for priority purposes within a proximity of the principle entrances deemed appropriate by the Development Authority and where deemed necessary by the Development Authority, in keeping with the following hierarchy of needs and objectives:
 - i. Parking stalls for disabled persons;
 - ii. Parking stalls for persons with mobility challenges;
 - iii. Stalls or designated areas for non-vehicular transportation modes (i.e. bicycles, motorized personal transportation devices)
 - iv. Parking stalls for car share formats; and,
 - v. Parking stalls for energy efficient vehicles

Municipal Actions:

1. Council shall adopt the preferred version of [Bylaw XX/2020](#) concurrent with the adoption of this plan to amend the on-site parking regulations of the Land Use Bylaw to the extent deemed most appropriate.
2. Council shall direct Administration to prepare a Bylaw, within 3 months of plan adoption, to amend the parking regulations in the Land Use Bylaw to incorporate the degree of changes to the landscaping, paving material, and surface parking stormwater regulations deemed appropriate to Council.
3. Council shall direct Administration to prepare, within 9 months of plan adoption, a resolution for private parking subsidy in accordance with the balance of social and economic incentives adopted by Council for concurrent with this plan for the **aspirational design for Main Street**.
4. Council shall direct Administration to prepare, within 36 months of plan adoption, a detailed study on enhanced on-street parking options within the **downtown core** other than Main Street that includes:
 - a. Cost estimates for ultimate on-street parking designs; and,
 - b. Potential interim measures for such designs, as well as associated cost estimates
5. Council shall direct Administration to identify opportunities for shared or joint use parking agreements within the plan area within 18 months of the adoption of this plan, and in this regard:
 - a. Shall direct Administration to contact landowners within the downtown to facilitate and register such parking agreements; and,
 - b. Shall direct the Council Budget Committee to provide an annual budget amount deemed appropriate to cover the costs of such registrations at the Land Titles Office.
6. Council shall direct Administration to provide estimates of the approximate cost of a surface, structured, and underground parking stall within the **downtown core** at a frequency desired by Council.
7. Council shall direct Administration to provide, at a frequency to be determined by Council, an update on:
 - a. the state of autonomous vehicle technologies;
 - b. the state of any other technologies relevant to transportation and vehicle parking; and,
 - c. the best practices available to address such technologies in urban environments

3.07 Health Promotion

Preamble:

Health service delivery is a provincial responsibility in Canada. However, health promotion and wellness is a universal responsibility. In this way, it is much like the development of the built environment that we all share. Each of us reaps the rewards and/or consequences of the choices that we make in building our urban environment, but each of us also has a share in the responsibility of making the choices that create that environment.

Studies have shown that there is a clear relationship between the built environment and the health of its citizens. Good choices lead to a healthy built environment that provides social, economic, and environmental benefits. A well-executed built environment provides direct benefits to those who experience it, and indirect benefits for the community as a result of its resilient social network, and its economic and environmental efficiencies.

Airdrie has an opportunity to create a healthy built environment in its downtown and participants in the visioning exercise and design charrettes noted that the health of the downtown is a symbol of the health of the community. They wanted the health of the downtown and the health of the community to improve, and pointed to a number of aspects that can promote health as part of the physical built environment, including:

- Walkability and alternate modes of transportation;
- Connection to environmental areas;
- More efficient use of land; and,
- Augmented landscaping and greenspaces

Further, they recognized that a successful built environment can nurture and develop desirable social elements. A well-designed built environment opens up the options to increase all aspects of social well-being, and its physical form and development choices may facilitate:

- Event and programming options; and,
- Affordable housing supports

In short, the design of downtown provides the opportunity to make it the key place of community health promotion.

Objective:

To develop a built environment in the downtown that facilitates increased health and wellness.

Principles:

Promoting health wellness allows the municipality to **Lead By Example** and placing a priority on wellness is the ultimate expression of **Putting People First**. Promoting our actions for the health of citizens and visitors shows that we **Think Big** about the downtown and its purpose within Airdrie – and beyond.

Policies:

1. Downtown shall be recognized as the most important built environment in the community for health promotion, and:
 - a. Choices in the design of the downtown built environment shall be made with that recognition in mind, and adhering to other applicable policy areas of this document, such as, but not limited to:
 - i. the [Urban Experience](#) elements;
 - ii. the [Reimagining Main Street](#) policies;
 - iii. the [Civic Development Catalyst](#) policies;
 - iv. the [Strengthening Social Well-Being](#) policies;
 - v. the [Affordable Housing](#) policies;
 - vi. the [Events and Programming](#) policies; and,
 - vii. the [Pedestrian Mobility and Accessibility](#) policies
 - b. Choices in the design of the downtown shall consider opportunities to increase quality of life to the greatest extent possible for all; and,
 - c. Choices in the design of the downtown shall consider human health needs to the greatest extent possible.
2. Developing a healthy built environment shall be considered the responsibility of all citizens and stakeholders, and:
 - a. Citizens and stakeholders are encouraged to present opportunities to the City of Airdrie, or other applicable civic institutions or levels of government, that would assist in creating a healthy built environment or otherwise promoting healthier living in the downtown
3. Recognizing the higher order of government responsible for health service delivery, downtown shall be considered the primary option for locating health facilities in Airdrie where possible, and shall adhere to the [civic development catalyst policies](#) to the extent that they can be applied.

Municipal Actions:

1. Council shall direct Administration to identify areas where the design and construction of civic development projects can contribute to health promotion and support better public quality-of-life outcomes in the downtown.
2. Council shall direct Administration to keep an open line of communication with built environment and health promotion experts, and may require Administration to review recommendations to Council on civic development projects, or any other matter that Council deems appropriate, with such subject matter experts.
3. Council shall direct the Development Authority to consider best practices for healthy built environment design on review of development applications where such authority is granted discretion under the Land Use Bylaw.

3.08 Experiencing Small Town Feel

One summer day, a resident pulled out of her parking stall at the grocery store and started on her way home. Her burgundy purse had blended with the paint on her car and it remained camouflaged on the top of her trunk as she started on her way. Alertly, two separate residents had spotted the issue and followed the resident all the way back to her house to ensure that the purse did not fall onto the road, caring more about whether or not her day would be impacted than their own immediate needs.

Preamble:

It would be an understatement to say that Airdrie residents value the “small town feel” present in this community. Time after time it is mentioned as a top reason for locating oneself or one’s business in Airdrie. Citizens have stated clearly that “small town feel” is part of what differentiates us in the region.

The City of Airdrie commissioned the consulting firm of Intelligent Futures Inc. to assist in defining this term, which can mean something a little different to everyone. Intelligent Futures established the following to represent the community’s thoughts, based on review of community satisfaction surveys, downtown visioning responses, and primary experience interviews:

Small Town Feel happens when we are connected to one another, and to the spaces, people and events that make our city unique. It creates the combination of several related feelings: trust, safety, belonging, comfort, support, engagement and pride from our collective and shared experiences.

While residents are clear that they do not want to lose the “small town feel” that Airdrie possesses, this is not an exclusionary definition. It applies equally for a long-standing resident as it does for a visitor looking to experience our **small town feel** for the first time. However, Airdrie is not necessarily a small town anymore – at least not physically. If we want to continue to have a small town feel, we need to support and expand the unique offerings that connect residents to each other, and to the places where they work, relax and meet to create that special and intangible combination of feelings. We need to tie our perception of **small town feel** with our aspirations for strengthening **social well-being**.

Placemaking is one method to support such connections in the community and to retain or enhance “small town feel”. Placemaking is a people-first approach to city building. It connects citizens to their built environment by reflecting the community ideals in all aspects of place development, as well as programming and service offerings. Effective placemaking results in spaces where people want to live, work and play and heightens the feeling of civic pride – influencing how people feel about each other, their neighbourhoods, and their city overall.

The municipality can apply this people first approach to its core functions of civic project design, social service delivery, policy development, and regulatory reviews to have a positive impact on our sense of **small town feel**. Guided by principles that lean on the development of community relationships and effective processes, the municipality can show leadership in a variety of ways to create unique offerings and make connections that retain and enhance our “small town feel” as redevelopment occurs downtown. Redevelopment, in turn, can also embrace placemaking principles in the design elements of the buildings, quasi-public spaces and the nature of any programming or event offerings.

Objective:

The objective is to retain and enhance the small town feel cherished by the community as redevelopment occurs downtown.

Principles:

Retaining and enhancing small town feel is part of making Downtown Airdrie [The Place to Be](#). It provides this area with a distinct advantage in quality of life through unique offerings and sense of connection. Here the municipality can [Lead by Example](#) and apply the people first approach of placemaking to its core functions of civic project design, service delivery, policy development and regulatory reviews.

Policies:

1. Where required by the policies of this plan to create an **active frontage**, private developments shall consider placemaking principles and best practices to facilitate a sense of place and opportunities for social connection. Specifically:
 - a. Informal gathering spaces shall be encouraged as part of private development.
 - b. Building designs that reflect the eclectic character of Airdrie are encouraged.
2. Placemaking principles and best practices shall be incorporated into the design of public spaces and any civic improvements or initiatives within those spaces.

Municipal Actions:

1. Council shall direct Administration to develop an internal structure or process to provide placemaking expertise for the civic project, service delivery, policy development and regulatory review functions of the municipality within 12 months of the adoption of this plan.
2. Council shall direct Administration to prepare a list of potential programming and event options, as well as their anticipated social and economic returns, within 24 months of plan adoption that will best enhance the unique sense of place and connectedness within the downtown.
3. Council shall direct Administration to develop a grant program to encourage a business improvement association or similar entity to assist with programming and events in the downtown within 24 months of plan adoption.

Placemaking Principles

Collectively, the Placemaking Principles establish a philosophical approach, or paradigm, to come back to when applying placemaking as a decision-making filter for projects, policies, services and regulatory reviews. They provide expert guidance on how placemaking practices can go from good to great:

(1) Begin With A Collective Vision

Identify a collective vision for a space at the beginning of the process that focuses on evoking small town feel emotions, building strong local character, a community identity, and a sense of place. Establishing a project vision early on, identifying a community or site identity, or supporting pre-existing heritage traits can support this endeavour. A successful project vision helps community members understand, connect, and relate to each another, while having a clear understanding of what they are trying to accomplish with the Placemaking Action.

(2) See The Community As An Expert

Empower community members as experts in their own lived experiences, to help them create spaces in which they see themselves and their values reflected. Placemaking Actions with this trait empower communities to create and maintain their own spaces, and/or ensure there is a substantial amount of community input in deciding a project's strategic direction.

(3) Build Collaborative Partnerships

Identify and work with the right partners to help bring more resources, ideas and sources of energy to placemaking methods. Partners can include: local community organizations, informal neighbourhood groups, business owners and developers. While collaborating, it is essential to clarify who is responsible and accountable to ensure the continued success of a project.

(4) Function, Safety, Access

Create public spaces that feel safe for all members of the community, whether day or night, summer or winter. This includes safe access and accommodations for active transportation, to enhance user experience and make safe public spaces. High-quality spaces increase people's desire to use the space. Actions that support this principle must be sure to be inviting to multiple demographics, including those demographics which are not often considered.

(5) Fun and Active Spaces Don't Have To Be Costly

Use small, inexpensive actions to create big changes, or pilot future large projects. Quick and inexpensive solutions like implementing temporary and flexible pilot spaces are sometimes the most effective solutions to improve public spaces and gauge public response. These actions can be implemented quickly for impact, then refined and improved upon over time.

(6) Create Spaces that Bring People Together

Community members should be brought together through comfortable and accessible placemaking. A great place offers many activities, which helps reduce social barriers and allows individuals to connect to one another. By leveraging shared interests, interactions in placemaking methods can move beyond surface-level interactions and toward personal connections. Placemaking Actions that use this principle should result in bringing general members of the public together to build relationships.

(7) Experiment, Observe, Repeat

It is important to make Placemaking Actions adaptable to new uses and behaviours, and to design them to meet the evolving needs of the community they serve. One of the best ways to transform an Action is simple: observe it. Get a closer look at what goes on in an area and take note of what is working and what is not. Adjust accordingly, and iterate. Actions which abide by this principle are flexible in their processes and can adapt to change when necessary. The best Actions are often those that have testing, reporting and modifying built into their framework from the very beginning.

(8) Create Visually Attractive Spaces

It is important to use design to showcase and enhance the strengths of an area. Thoughtful design is used to highlight community character, promote healthier lifestyles and support the economic vitality of an area. People are drawn to comfortable spaces that are visually attractive and inviting. This also adds excitement and vibrancy to spaces. Actions reflecting this principle focus on the creation of vibrant spaces and atmospheres that people want to spend time in.

(9) Focus on Process

Relationships among community members can be built throughout placemaking development, making the process fun, easy, inclusive and rewarding. Efforts to reduce the red tape community organizations face when implementing their own Placemaking Actions can be supported by City Administration, so successful placemaking is achievable by many different community actors.

(10) Resilient Process

It is important to continue managing placemaking efforts to monitor, change and adapt Actions after their completion. This helps to create transformable and relatable spaces that people want to visit again and again. Although any particular placemaking effort may be evolving continuously, the memories that people create in these spaces can last a lifetime. A resilient Placemaking Action is one that can continue to grow and change as Airdrie continues to change.

3.09 Strengthening Social Well-Being

Preamble:

The City of Airdrie believes that the strength of a community rests, in part, on the **social well-being** of its residents. **Social well-being** depends on a diverse, inclusive, connected, equitable, and proactive community. City Council adopted the Social Policy for Airdrie in April 2020 with this in mind, and defined **social well-being** as “a state of positive relationships in the community”, characterized by:

- social acceptance (a willingness to respect the difference in others);
- social contribution (a desire to give back to society);
- social inclusion (a sense of belonging);
- social support (close relationships with others); and,
- social capital (the means, knowledge, and relationships required to access resources)

Urban downtown centres frequently possess a critical mass of uses and activities that support these aspects of **social well-being**. Downtown Airdrie is no exception, as it is home to volunteer organizations, social assistance organizations, civic institutions, and public events that support these aspects of **social well-being**.

This plan further recognizes that **social well-being** can be influenced by change, either positively or negatively. Accelerated redevelopment is the objective of this plan, and as a type of change, it is important that the potential social impacts are considered, monitored, and mitigated. The overarching premise is “to do no harm”. But beyond that, it is desirable to accommodate redevelopment and change in such a way as to strengthen **social well-being** in the downtown to the greatest extent possible.

Objective:

To ensure that the **social well-being** of residents is enhanced as part of downtown redevelopment and revitalization.

Principles:

Enhancing the social well-being of residents is the ultimate articulation of **Putting People First**, ensuring that their needs are prioritized within this defined geographic area. It makes downtown the **Place to Be**, and the municipality can play an active role – **Leading by Example** with its projects, policies, and service deliveries.

Policies:

1. A diversity of people and activities shall be encouraged in the downtown.
2. A culture of support for the residents, businesses and visitors engaging in the downtown shall be encouraged through the actions, activities and developments undertaken in the downtown.
3. The Development Authority shall consider how the physical form, design, and character of private redevelopment augments the aspects of **social well-being** as part the approval process for Discretionary Uses, and in particular:
 - a. Private development is encouraged to be constructed without physical or symbolic barriers to general public access to the greatest extent possible; and,
 - b. Private development is encouraged to promote and include:
 - i. Social inclusion and acceptance as part of its form and function; and,
 - ii. Opportunities to increase social connection and improve social support for owners, tenants, and members of the general public equally

Municipal Actions:

1. Council shall direct Administration to reduce barriers to public services by providing extended or alternate means to access such services located in the downtown, within 60 months of the adoption of this plan, and:
 - a. Where applicable, the City of Airdrie shall work with other civic and quasi-civic agencies and institutions to coordinate alternate or extended access methods to the greatest extent possible.
2. In determining the capital projects to complete in the downtown, and in evaluating the design, execution, and function of such projects, the City of Airdrie shall consider the components of **social well-being**, per the adopted Council policy.
3. Council shall provide Administration with funds to prepare an inclusionary zoning bylaw, applicable to part or all of the downtown, within 36 months of the adoption of this plan.
4. Council shall direct Administration to make a conscious effort to attract land uses and services that promote the five components of **social well-being** in the downtown, and in particular:
 - a. Attraction efforts shall seek a balance of land uses that serve to reduce inequalities, and allow for all citizens to engage with the uses, each other, and the built form(s) which contain the uses or activities.
5. Council shall direct Administration to take **social well-being** into account in the same manner that would be required for a board or commission of Council, per the Social Policy where Administration is designated to act as the Development Authority in lieu of Municipal Planning Commission or Council for Discretionary Uses in the downtown,.