City of Fort Saskatchewan

Downtown Profile & Analysis

July 2019

RETAIL
Downtown Profile & Analysis

City of Fort Saskatchewan
Alberta

Member of International Council of Shopping Centers

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GRINDERS
UNIQUE PIPES
T-SHIRTS
BONGS

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1 downtown demographic context

1.1 INTRODUCTION

As part of the overall Downtown Retail Profile and Analysis as well as the overall citywide Retail and Market Gap Analysis, the Downtown was examined in greater detail to specifically hone in on the issues and opportunities that could enable retail to not only survive against competition, but thrive into the future.

The challenge will always exist for downtowns given the diversity of ownership and business operations combined with the economics of establishing and catering to local businesses.

Downtowns thrive when they have champions in the local business community along with a common goal and vision and a road map that is supported by and driven by the businesses as opposed to government. This is not to say that the role of local government is not necessary, but rather the City should respond to proven needs and wants of the businesses who come together as a collective unit to implement these changes.

The City's role is to ensure the environment and framework is in place upon which businesses can succeed. This is the balance of achieving true public and private collaboration where the public sector understands the private sector's needs and responsibilities and the private sector understands the public sector's needs and responsibilities as well.

Since 2009, and even before that, the City has attempted to ensure that the Downtown continues to be a viable entity. In 2009, a Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan was prepared, which did lead ultimately to some traction in the form of the redevelopment of the former Fort Mall into the Fort Station, which continues to this day.

In 2018 and into 2019, the City through the Economic Development Department recommenced the planning for retooling the Downtown, through Business Consultation and Local Community Engagement.

Downtown District

Fort Saskatchewan's downtown is an approximate 20 hectare (50 acre) commercial district comprised of smaller-format retail, office and residential uses set in an urban core. One- and two-storey street fronted buildings contribute to a traditional retail environment conducive to window shopping and pedestrian activity. General policy direction for the downtown is to promote local neighbourhood servicing retail and office commercial uses.

An ongoing revitalization effort began in 2008 with City Council's direction to complete a Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan (DARP). Projects are championed by the Downtown Redevelopment Advisory Committee (DRAC) and the Downtown Business Council, who both guide business improvement efforts in the Downtown.

One example is the Downtown Storefront Program that incentivized businesses to improve their street-facing facades. A $10 million streetscaping and infrastructure improvement project was also completed in 2010.

The Downtown, as with many others across the region, province, and country are susceptible to external competitive pressures for retail growth. Therefore, it will be important as the city grows to ensure the Downtown vibrancy and vitality that the City and its businesses have worked so diligently to maintain is not adversely impacted by unnecessary retail developments on the periphery of the City, except where clearly not compatible with the Downtown.

1.2

DOWNTOWN WALKABILITY

Downtowns are most successful when they first and foremost provide the shops and services for the local consumers often found within a 10-minute walking distance of the intersection of 99th Ave and 101st St, which is shown in **Figure 1.0**. This is why many evolving Downtown strategies look to increased density as a way of supporting local businesses.

From interviews with Downtown Business Owners, most identify that the majority of their customers (~75%) come from residents from across the City and this segment is largely documented as part of a wider Primary Trade Area.

For the purposes of this Downtown Profile though, the 10-minute walkable trade area is highlighted to specifically illustrate the current local market, but also illustrate the need for future potential growth that could or should occur in the proximity of the Downtown and how this could benefit businesses in the Downtown.

Accordingly, **Table 1.0** and **Figure 1.1** provides an overall demographic summary of the Downtown's 10-minute walking trade area as benchmarked against the City (it is noted that the population figure (27,603) varies from the recently completed municipal census (26,942), but for the purposes of the benchmarking the differences are negligible).

In summary, the Downtown population within a comfortable 10-minute walking distance is approximately 4,296 residents and comprises the City's census neighbourhoods "Downtown" and "Sherridon" which tallied 4,288 in the June 2019 Municipal Census release.

Fort Sask works toward three-year plan for downtown

Category: Local News
Published: Monday, 04 March 2019 12:03
Written by Zach Mueller

Fort Sask recently hosted workshops to gather feedback from residents on potential ways to improve downtown.

Fort Sask recently hosted workshops to gather feedback from residents on potential ways to improve downtown.

The city is looking for ways to revitalize its urban centre.

They hosted workshops on Friday (Mar.1) and Saturday (Mar.2) to gather feedback from residents on potential ways to improve the area in the near future.

"The goal for this workshop is figuring out what downtown strategies could be done in the next three years," said Shree Shinde, manager of current and long range planning with the city.

"Instead of focusing on the long-term, think what could be the quick fixes or solutions to get people here more often and make them stay here for longer."

Those who attended the workshops were split into groups to generate ideas and build them into tangible examples of how they could look, feel and operate.

The city now plans to summarize those ideas and publish their findings from the two days.

"We're hoping that once we have the summary of these two days, we can come up with some kind of action plan or see which ideas we could work on in the next three years — and just how we can make some changes," Shree added.

The workshops were part of the 'My Fort, My City, My Say' initiative.

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DOWNTOWN - 10-MINUTE WALKING TRADE AREA

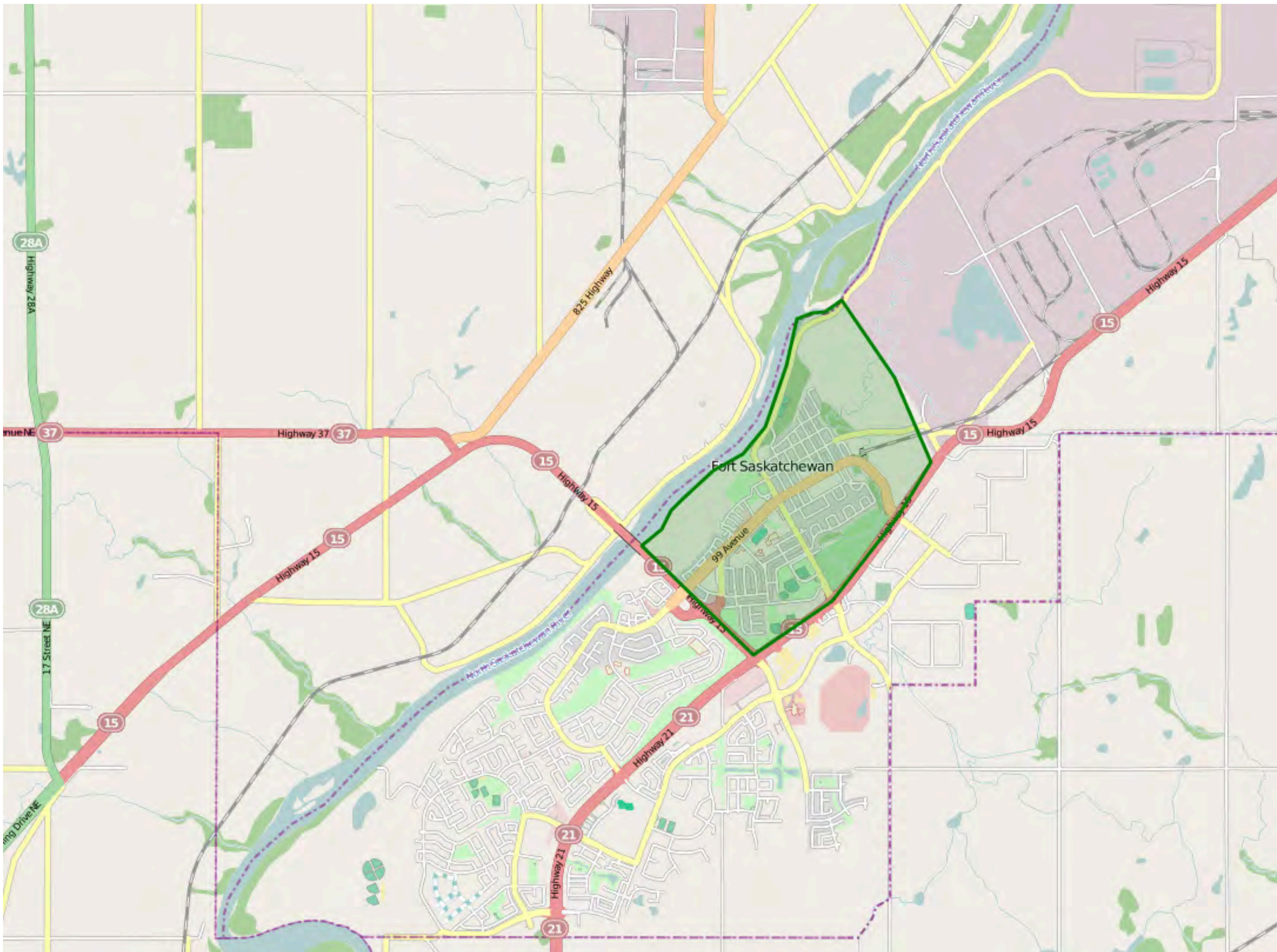

Figure 1.1

DOWNTOWN - 10-MINUTE WALKING TRADE AREA DEMOGRAPHIC TAPESTRY

Population

Total Population	4,296
Population with age 0-14	12.99%
Population with age 15-24	8.83%
Population with age 25-34	16.29%
Population with age 35-44	12.46%
Population with age 45-54	11.90%
Population with age 55-64	13.70%
Population with age 65+	23.83%

Household

Total number of households	1,854
Household size	2.24

Dwelling

Percent: owners	60.90%
Percent: tenants	39.10%

Top Lifestyles

Cluster G - UP THE LADDER **25.92%**

- Young Families
- New Suburbanites
- Kids, Dogs & Station Wagons
- Dynamic Careers

Middle class households in busy life-stage. Income ($94,097) and home value ($502,163) are slightly below the Canadian average. Household size is 2.51. 25% have a home language of French and many of them work in the trades, transport, and as operators. More suburban dwellers with children age under 14. They spend more on mortgage and life insurance premiums, healthcare supplies, and childcare. In their precious leisure time they read more about relationships, interior decorating, organic gardening, and woodworking. Occasionally they ski. They think an important part of their life and activities is dressing smartly. They enjoy being extravagant, but think no-name products are as good as nationally advertised brands. They like to both go out with friends and have fun at home. They consider career as their first priority.

Cluster D - NEST BUILDERS **25.47%**

- Renovators
- White Collar Families
- Little Luxuries
- Home & Garden

Typical middle, urban Canadians who prefer to invest in and renovate (1.4X average) their homes. Average income: $119,079; house value $623,660, and household size 2.74. They are slightly above average in education and work in natural and applied sciences, management, business, finance and administration, social science, education, government service, and religion. They are 20% more likely to be of British, Polish, and Ukrainian heritage and live in Edmonton, Calgary, Toronto, and Ottawa. Besides home renovation, they read about business, mystery, sports, and gardening. They are Golf 24% more active in Golf than Canadian average. They enjoy entertainment and career is not their first priority. They shop more often than average at Costco.

Cluster F - EMPTY NESTERS **12.72%**

- Retirement Age
- Golf & Grandkids
- Slowing Pace of Life
- Travel & Recreation

Data Source: Manifold Data Mining Inc. 2018

This report is based on consumer demographic and behavior data products at the 6-digit postal code level. No confidential information about an individual, household, organization or business has been obtained from Statistics Canada or Numeris.

INDEX	DESCRIPTION
>= 180	Extremely High
>= 110 and > 180	High
>= 90 and < 110	Similar
>= 50 and < 90	Lower
< 50	Extremely Low

Data Source: Manifold Data Mining Inc. 2019
This report is based on consumer demographic and behavior data products at the 6-digit postal code level. No confidential information about an individual, household, organization or business has been obtained from Statistics Canada or Numeris.

Table 1.0

DOWNTOWN - 10-MINUTE WALKING TRADE AREA DEMOGRAPHIC SUMMARY

Attribute	Benchmark Fort Saskatchewan (CSD,AB)		Downtown Fort Saskatchewan 10-min walk		
	value	percent	value	percent	index
SUMMARY					
Total population	27,603		4,296		
Total population age 15 and over	21,969		3,738		
Total number of private households	10,504		1,854		
Average number of persons in private households	2.59		2.24		86
Total population in private households	27,176		3,999		
Total number of census families in private households	7,789		1,069		
Average number of persons per census family	3.02		2.73		90
Total population in families	27,603		3,012		
Total number of labour force age 15 and over	16,409		2,607		
POPULATION AGE					
Population age 0-14	5,633	20.41%	558	12.99%	64
Population age 15-24	3,223	11.68%	379	8.83%	76
Population age 25-34	4,856	17.59%	700	16.29%	93
Population age 35-44	4,253	15.41%	535	12.46%	81
Population age 45-54	3,467	12.56%	511	11.90%	95
Population age 55-64	3,152	11.42%	589	13.70%	120
Population age 65+	3,018	10.94%	1,024	23.83%	218
DWELLING					
Total number of occupied private dwellings	10,504		1,854		
Average dwelling value $	$509,526		$396,089		78
Home owners	7,947	75.66%	1,129	60.90%	80
Home tenants	2,557	24.34%	725	39.10%	161
Band housing	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	
HOUSEHOLDS					
One-family households	7,566	72.03%	1,099	59.28%	82
Multiple-family households	136	1.29%	34	1.82%	141
Non-family households	2,802	26.68%	721	38.90%	146
EDUCATION					
Total population aged 15 years and over by highest certificate, diploma or degree	21,969		3,738		
No certificate, diploma or degree	2,989	13.61%	689	18.44%	135
High school diploma or equivalent	6,718	30.58%	1,242	33.23%	109
Postsecondary certificate, diploma or degree	12,262	55.82%	1,806	48.33%	87
Apprenticeship or trades certificate or diploma	3,288	14.97%	512	13.70%	92
College, CEGEP or other non-university certificate or diploma	5,355	24.38%	787	21.06%	86
University certificate or diploma below bachelor level	643	2.93%	127	3.39%	116
University certificate, diploma or degree at bachelor level or above	2,976	13.55%	381	10.18%	75
Bachelor degree	2,313	10.53%	270	7.23%	69
INCOME					
Average family income $	$161,255		$142,706		88
Average household income $	$140,283		$106,930		76
Average income population age 15 and over ($)	$74,101		$62,244		84
Population with income Under $10,000 (including loss)	2,144	10.15%	357	9.93%	98
Population with income $10,000 to $19,999	2,099	9.93%	448	12.45%	125
Population with income $20,000 to $29,999	2,159	10.22%	505	14.03%	137
Population with income $30,000 to $39,999	1,857	8.79%	421	11.68%	133
Population with income $40,000 to $49,999	1,695	8.02%	369	10.25%	128
Population with income $50,000 to $59,999	1,628	7.71%	291	8.10%	105
Population with income $60,000 to $69,999	1,417	6.71%	252	7.00%	104
Population with income $70,000 to $79,999	1,353	6.40%	223	6.20%	97
Population with income $80,000 to $89,999	1,114	5.27%	149	4.15%	79
Population with income $90,000 to $99,999	1,062	5.03%	142	3.95%	79
Population with income $100,000 and over	4,533	21.46%	435	12.08%	56
Population with income $100,000 to $149,999	2,525	11.95%	246	6.83%	57
Population with income $150,000 and over	2,076	9.83%	195	5.43%	55

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INDEX	DESCRIPTION
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Data Source: Manifold Data Mining Inc. 2019
This report is based on consumer demographic and behavior data products at the 6-digit postal code level. No confidential information about an individual, household, organization or business has been obtained from Statistics Canada or Numeris.

Table 1.0 (continued)

DOWNTOWN - 10-MINUTE WALKING TRADE AREA DEMOGRAPHIC PROJECTIONS

Attribute	Benchmark Fort Saskatchewan (CSD,AB)		Downtown Fort Saskatchewan 10-min walk		
	value	percent	value	percent	index
PROJECTIONS					
Annual population growth in the period: 2018 to 2023		4.64%		3.73%	80
Annual household growth in the period: 2018 to 2023		4.28%		3.53%	82
Annual family growth in the period: 2018 to 2023		3.64%		2.89%	79
Annual population growth in the period: 2023 to 2028		4.50%		3.57%	79
Annual household growth in the period: 2023 to 2028		4.16%		3.39%	81
Annual family growth in the period: 2023 to 2028		3.36%		2.77%	82
POPULATION GROWTH					
2018 Total population	27,603		4,296		
2023 Total population	34,722		5,159		
2028 Total population	43,358		6,149		
HOUSEHOLD GROWTH					
2018 Total number of households	10,504		1,854		
2023 Total number of households	12,980		2,206		
2028 Total number of households	15,945		2,606		
FAMILY GROWTH					
2018 Total number of census families	7,789		1,069		
2023 Total number of census families	9,330		1,233		
2028 Total number of census families	11,023		1,415		
HOUSEHOLD INCOME GROWTH					
2018 Average household income	$140,283		$106,930		76
2023 Average household income	$157,361		$131,021		83
2028 Average household income	$178,276		$166,386		93

Forecasts suggest that the population within this 10-minute walk could reach almost 6,150 over the next decade, but this can vary depending upon development, infill and intensification in the Downtown brought on through the ongoing Downtown Area Redevelopment process.

This population is comprised of smaller household sizes than the City (2.24 vs 2.59) and many of these households have an older age profile whereby the population aged 65 and above represents 4% of the 4,296 residents compared to only 11% of the total City's population.

This older segment though is well-educated and walkability is considered a very important element to their lifestyles in that they have a greater propensity to shop local and also do not wish to drive distances to goods and services, especially professional, medical and conveniences.

While they generally spend less on most retail categories they do nonetheless spend on cafe, personal services and conveniences where the social interaction is more robust.

The average household income of the 10-minute walking area still averages above $100,000 ($106,930) and those higher income segments likely have a more disposable income.

A population of almost 4,300 on its own could support anywhere from 90,000 sq. ft. to 130,000 sq. ft. at an approximate range of 20 to 30 sq. ft. per capita.

As will be seen in the more detailed inventory, the Downtown inventory is much more than this, but that only speaks to and validates the importance of the citywide and even regional attraction that is necessary to ensure long-term business viability and vitality in the Downtown.

2 city & downtown retail context

2.1
INTRODUCTION

Key Planning and Colliers International Consulting conducted a comprehensive inventory of Downtown Fort Saskatchewan's retail supply in the Spring of 2019 as part of the City's Economic Development Strategy.

In any community, the success can most be observed by the fabric of the Downtown core. Downtown is the one neighbourhood that is shared by the community. Cafés, restaurants, shops, activities, events and festivals, make downtown a destination for celebrating and socializing outside of a home or workplace.

Retail is often referred to as the "face of the place" and a successful downtown can often become the true identity of a community.

In 2009, the City undertook Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan in 2009 and most recently the City's Economic Development Department began developing an Economic Development Strategy specifically for the City's downtown. The intent of the original ARP was stated as follows:

To provide direction to ensure that Downtown Fort Saskatchewan is the vibrant heart of the community - the location of choice for business and people, that provides a unique range of residential, commercial, entertainment, cultural, and recreational opportunities, a place where people choose to live, work, and play.

This intent remains true today, although as the City has continued to grow and provide the services and shops that local and regional residents have sought, the Downtown's fragility as a core shopping, working or leisure destination has been challenged.

This profile analysis therefore provides a detailed inventory snapshot as well as a supplemental consumer survey to identify where the strengths of the Downtown lie, but also where the weaknesses and limitations exist.

2.2
BUSINESS & PROPERTY OWNER CONSULTATION (2017)

In 2017, the City engaged Downey Norris & Associates to conduct a Downtown Business & Property Owner Consultation to identify issues and actions for creating a vibrant downtown.

The study noted that almost 40 percent of respondents indicated they own a business and property, while nearly 60 percent indicated they own a business only. One respondent was a property owner only. Nearly 40 percent of respondents have owned a business/property in downtown for more than 10 years. Some key findings included the following:

1. The majority of respondents (60%) have owned/operated a business in downtown for less than 10 years.
2. The availability of space and convenience of location are top reasons for choosing downtown.
3. If making the decision again today, almost half (19) indicated they would not or were unsure they would choose to locate downtown.
4. Twenty-five percent of respondents feel lease rates for property downtown are generally lower than for business property in other locations in Fort Saskatchewan.
5. 48% of respondents indicated it is important that downtown be open for business evenings and weekends.

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6. 21% of respondents with retail business who are not open evenings and weekends indicate there is not enough foot traffic to justify the cost of having extended hours.
7. 51% of respondents do not agree that City has a clear, compelling vision for the future of downtown (28% agree, 21% don't know).
8. Majority of respondents (70%) are supportive of the City's efforts to develop downtown.

As a result of the survey, the following actions were identified by the respondents as being important to the success or reinvigoration of the Downtown:

1. Attract more retail & shopping – 72%
2. Attract unique boutique retail outlets – 62%
3. Recognize and differentiate the needs of small family owned business versus large businesses and corporations – 56%
4. Increase the number of people living downtown – 54%
5. Add more parking – 52%

2.3
RETAIL CONTEXT

The City of Fort Saskatchewan has an estimated retail floorspace of approximately 1.30 million sq. ft. (an increase from 1.19 million in 2016).

In this inventory, those businesses that may be more office related (e.g. Professional Services such as lawyers, medical clinics, chiropractors, dentists etc), but nonetheless occupy ground level traditional retail frontage are noted, however the retail inventory does not account for these Professional Services, since they do not have typical "retail sales productivity" applicable to their business.

The inventory does however distinguish and therefore take into account Personal Services (e.g. Salons etc.) that do occupy traditional streetfront retail spaces.

2.4
RETAIL INVENTORY BY NODE

Based on fieldwork and inventory, Fort Saskatchewan's Retail environment was allocated into four nodes as shown in **Figure 5.3**. Each node was determined based on geographic and spatial factors such as road networks, patterns of residential development or types of inventory. The result were the following nodes totaling 1.30 million sq. ft of traditional retail including vacancy:

• CENTRAL	709,944 sf
• **DOWNTOWN**	**304,011 sf**
• SOUTH	254,502 sf
• WEST	36,664 sf

The Central and South nodes comprise the majority of the comparison or destination types of shops and services, while the Downtown node has a large number of local and independent Specialty Retail and Limited Service Food & Beverage (F&B) businesses. The West node is comprised of neighbourhood-serving shops and services.

Table 2.1 and Figure 2.1 provide a breakdown of the retail inventory by category and by node with a focus on the Downtown, which is further allocated into sub-nodes as shown in F**igure 2.5**.

The **Downtown** node's largest retail category is Personal Services which currently accounts for 23% of the total Downtown floorspace. This high ratio is driven by the fact that the Downtown features smaller format, neighbourhood-serving retail with nearby residential.

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Table 2.1

RETAIL INVENTORY BY CATEGORY & NODE

(Source: City of Fort Saskatchewan, Key Planning Strategies)

Merchandise Category	Existing Inventory (SF)	Existing Inventory (%)	DOWNTOWN
Grocery & Specialty Foods	206,967	13.7%	40,480
Convenience Store	23,255	1.5%	6,647
Alcohol & Tobacco	39,722	2.6%	6,004
Pharmacy	61,159	4.1%	7,233
Personal Services	50,802	3.4%	27,253
Clothing & Apparel	79,891	5.3%	18,339
Footwear	2,500	0.2%	0
Jewelry & Accessories	6,019	0.4%	4,019
Health & Beauty	11,199	0.7%	1,500
Home Electronics & Appliances	20,744	1.4%	4,289
Home Furnishings & Accessories	33,507	2.2%	4,750
Home Improvement & Gardening	131,567	8.7%	3,872
Books & Multi-Media	1,000	0.1%	0
Sporting Goods & Outdoor Recreation	21,976	1.5%	0
Toys & Hobbies	12,698	0.8%	698
Specialty Retail	88,472	5.9%	34,030
Full Service F&B	65,878	4.4%	18,385
Limited Service F&B	68,610	4.5%	8,384
Drinking Establishment	15,691	1.0%	6,925
Arts & Entertainment	23,210	1.5%	18,592
Fitness & Leisure	46,300	3.1%	10,500
Auto Parts & Accessories	60,243	4.0%	10,274
Auto/RV/Motorsports Dealership	60,764	4.0%	0
Auto Service	9,833	0.7%	6,947
Professional Services	158,876	10.5%	100,871
Child Care Services	34,142	2.3%	21,307
Public Service	4,250	0.3%	4,250
Institutional	6,500	0.4%	3,500
VACANT NEW	61,487	4.1%	0
VACANT	101,627	6.7%	64,890
TOTAL ALL STREET LEVEL	**1,508,889**	**100.0%**	**433,940**
TOTAL RETAIL ONLY	**1,305,121**		**304,011**
			28.8%

Table 2.2

RETAIL INVENTORY SUMMARY BY NODE & VACANCY

(Source: Key Planning Strategies)

Node/Neighbourhood	Existing Inventory (SF)	Existing Inventory (%)	Existing Vacancy (SF)	Existing Vacancy (%)
CENTRAL	754,792	50%	27,876	3.7%
DOWNTOWN	433,940	29%	64,890	15.0%
SOUTH	273,637	18%	68,901	25.2%
WEST	46,520	3%	1,446	3.1%
TOTAL	**1,508,889**	**100%**	**163,114**	**10.8%**

Figure 2.1
RETAIL NODES
(Source: Key Planning Strategies)

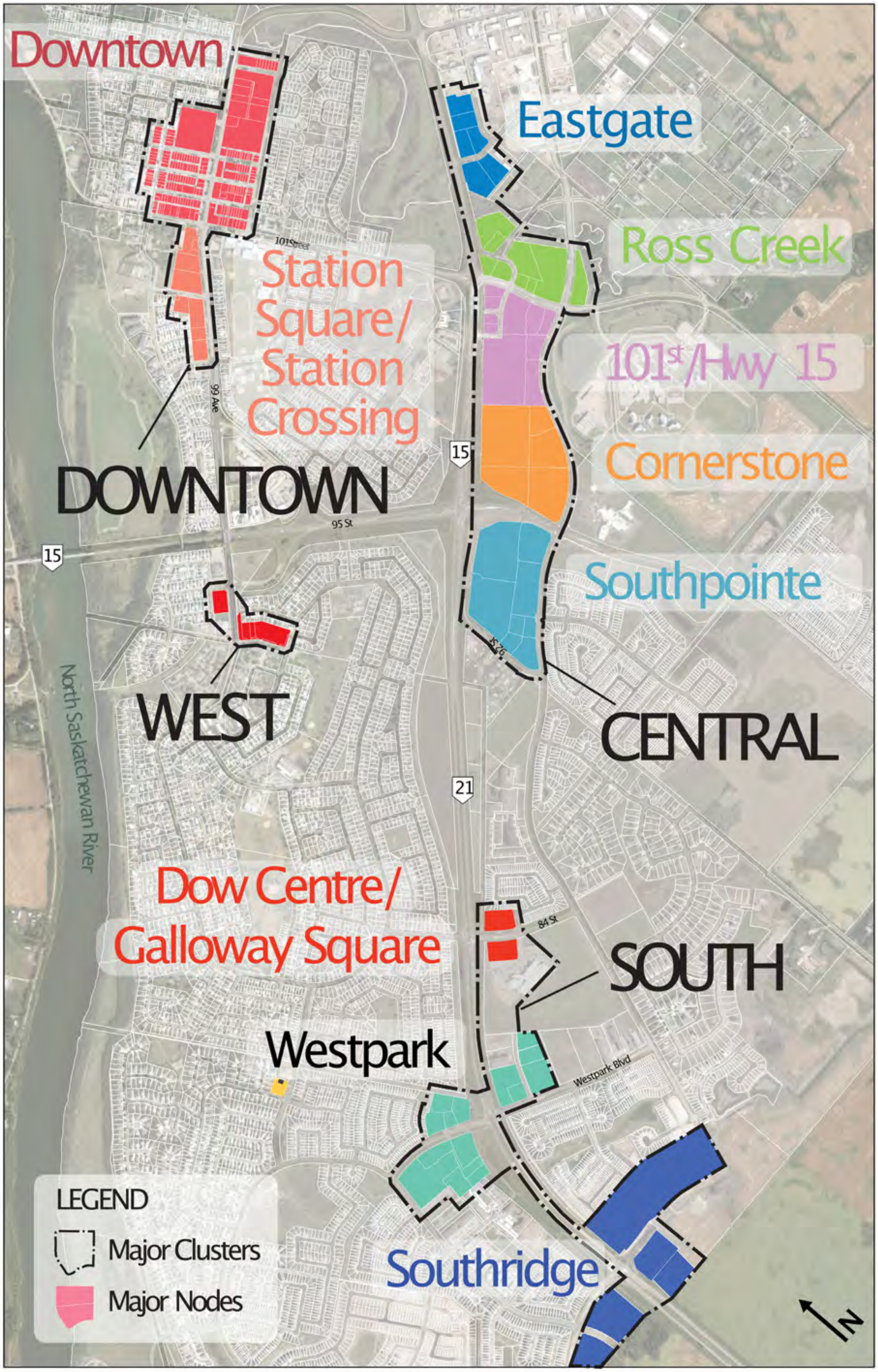

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Figure 2.2

RETAIL NODES - INVENTORY “BUBBLE” SUMMARY

(Source: Key Planning Strategies)

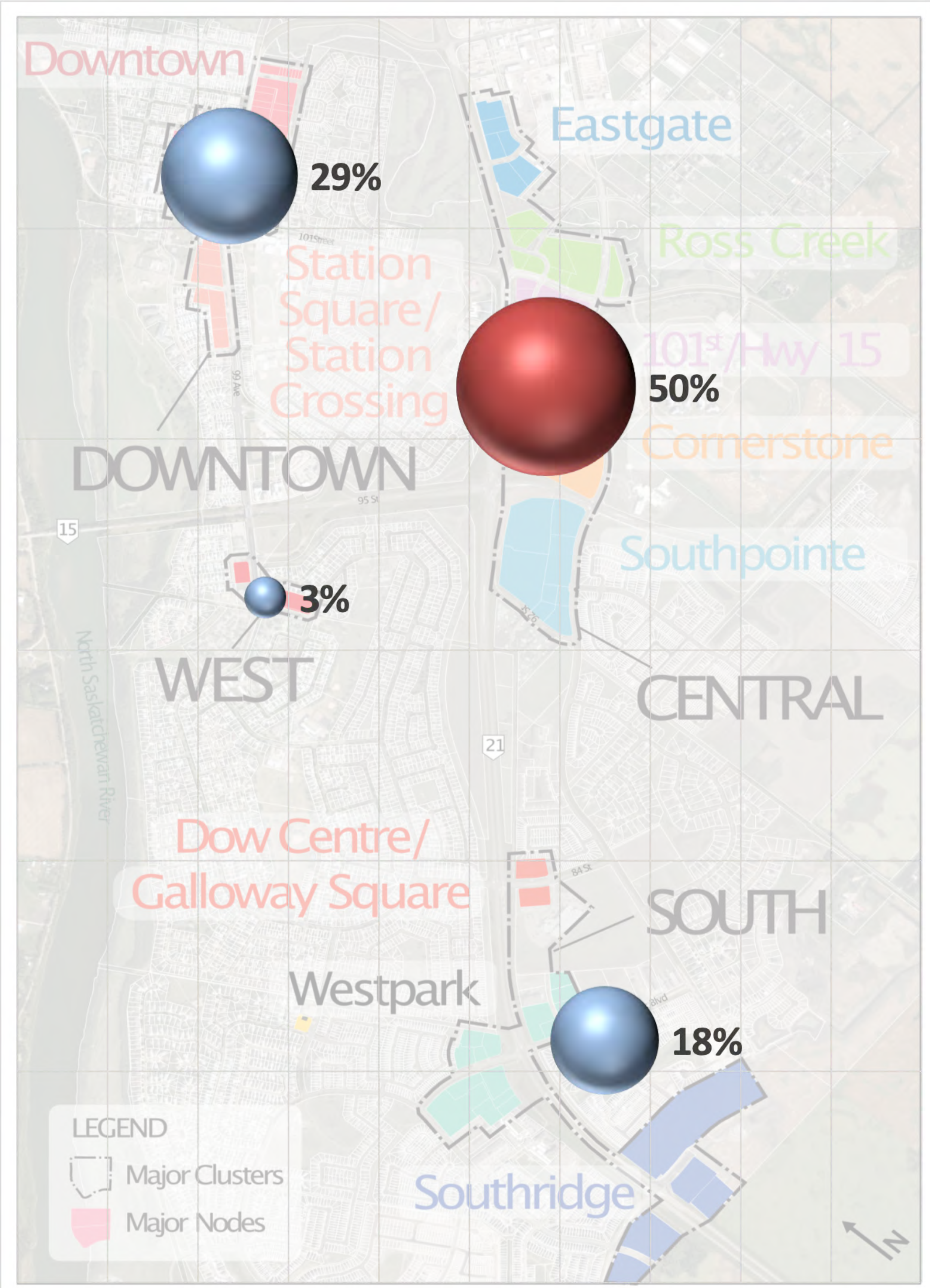

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Figure 2.3

REPRESENTATIVE DOWNTOWN RETAIL IMAGERY

(Source: Key Planning Strategies)

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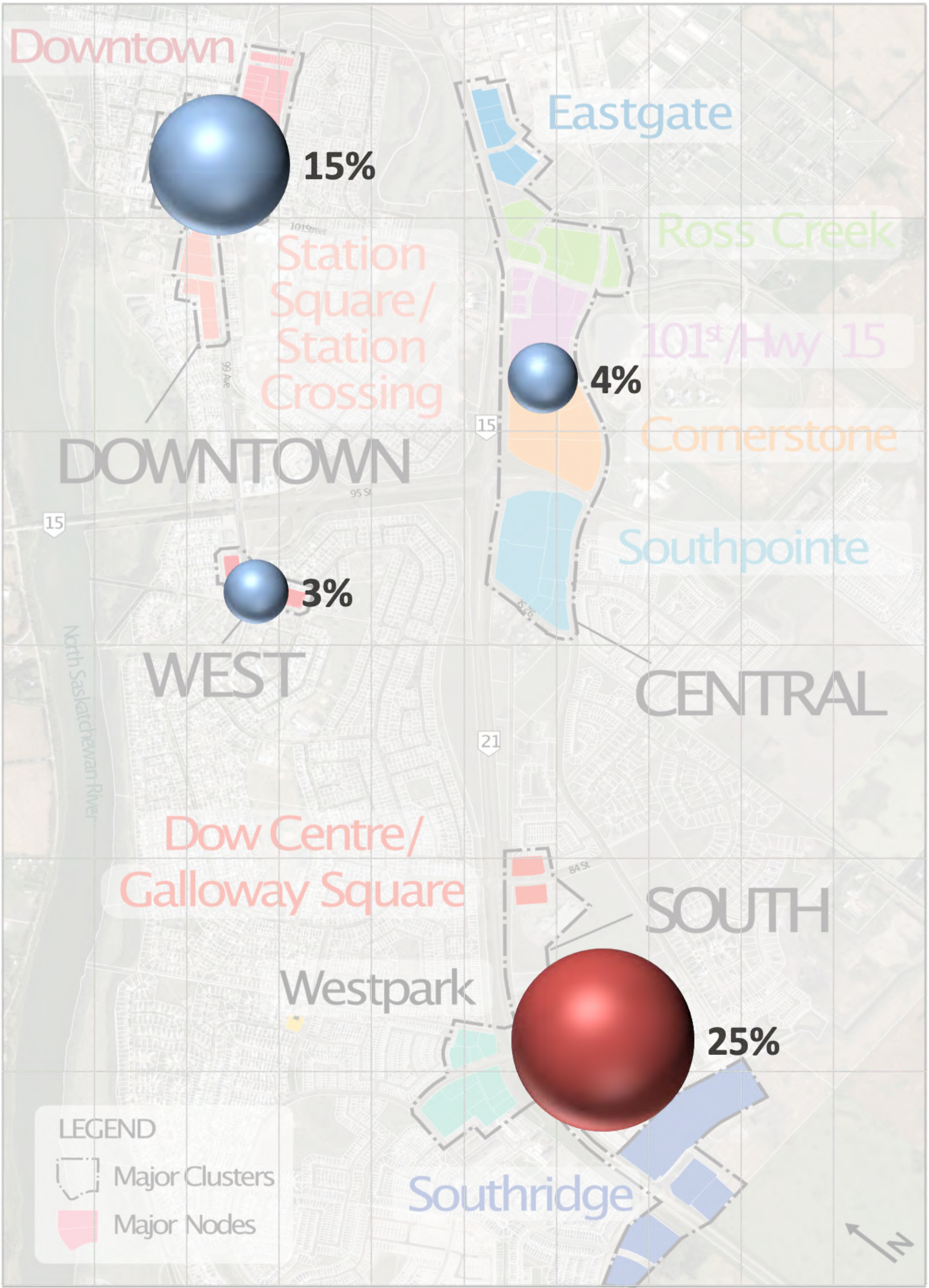
Figure 2.4

RETAIL NODES - VACANCY "BUBBLE" SUMMARY

(Source: Key Planning Strategies)



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2.5

RETAIL INVENTORY BY CATEGORY

The Top 5 retail categories in terms of overall retail floorspace and excluding Professional Services and Child Care Services in Downtown Fort Saskatchewan include:

1.	*Grocery & Specialty Foods*	*40,480 sq. ft.*
2.	*Specialty Retail*	*35,530 sq. ft.*
3.	*Fitness & Leisure*	*32,500 sq. ft.*
4.	*Personal Services*	*27,253 sq. ft.*
5.	*Arts & Entertainment*	*18,592 sq. ft.*
5.	*Full Service Restaurants*	*18,385, sq. ft.*

Many downtowns struggle to attract Grocery and this is one of the most significant assets that Fort Saskatchewan's Downtown has to offer and build around combine with its strong Specialty Retail and Services. The missing component is an offering of quality or well-placed integration of cafes and unique specialty foods.

2.6

DOWNTOWN INVENTORY

As documented in the following bar charts as well as **Figure 2.5** and based on in depth analysis and fieldwork, we have broken up the downtown area into four sub-areas; Downtown Core, Downtown West, Midtown, and Uptown. Each of these areas differ in terms of their retail mix and performance metrics. Within Downtown West, the true focal point of retail and centre piece of the Downtown was identified at the corner of 100 Avenue and 103 Street.

DOWNTOWN CORE

Total GLA: 167,246 sf

Vacancy: 12.0%

Local Stores: 85%

Branded Stores: 15%

Although the Downtown Core is envisioned as the heart of the City, it currently suffers from the highest vacancy rate at 12.1% with a high amount of tenant turnover and troublesome vacancies near the focal point intersection and along both 100 Avenue and 103 Street.

The majority of tenants within downtown offer Professional Services (35.6%), followed by Specialty Retail (8.1%), Personal Services (7.1%), and Full-Service Restaurants (6.7%). There is a notable lack of Limited Service Restaurants (0.8%) which are crucial for facilitating social gathering spots and an active downtown environment.

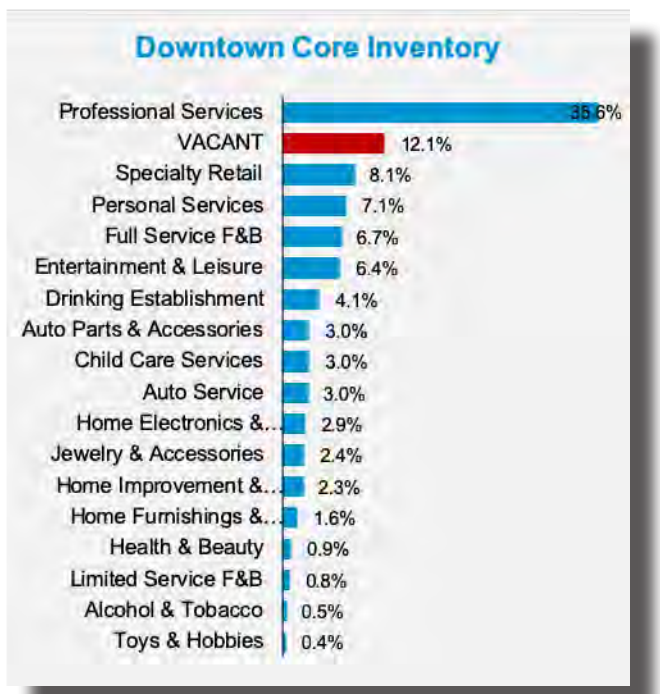
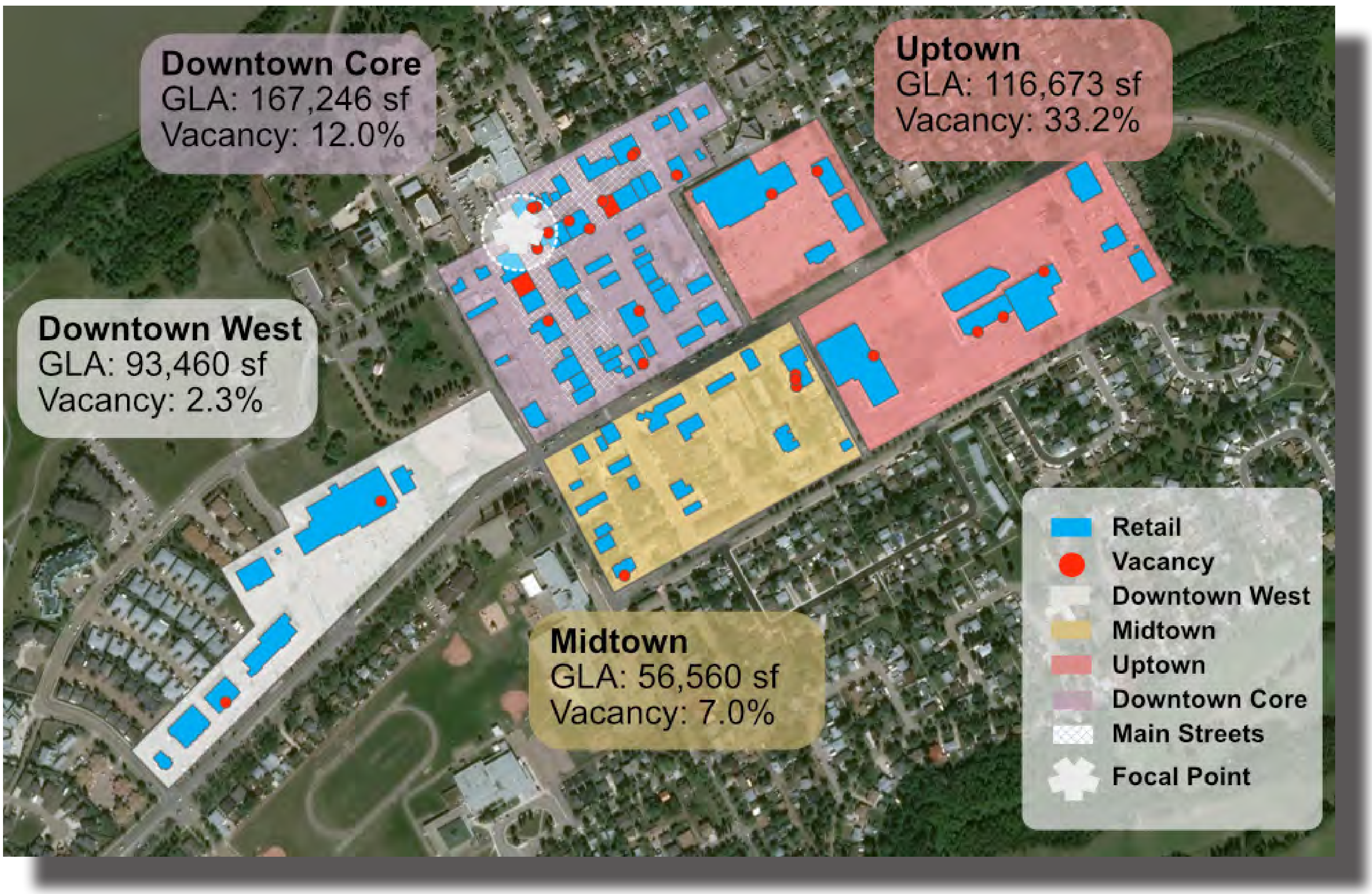


FIGURE 2.5

FORT SASKATCHEWAN DOWNTOWN RETAIL NODES SUMMARY



DOWNTOWN WEST

Total GLA: 93,460 sf

Vacancy: 2.3%

Local Stores: 50%

Branded Stores: 50%

Downtown West is perhaps the healthiest sub-area, with a vacancy rate of only 2.3%. This is the lowest among all Downtown sub-areas.

Due to the Co-op grocery store and theatre, the largest floorspace occupants are Grocery & Specialty Foods (43.3%) and Entertainment and Leisure (19.2%). Downtown West also has a healthy amount of Professional Services (17.4%).

Station Square

Station Square is an approximately 3.5 hectare (9 acre) retail cluster adjacent to downtown. Major tenants include a CO-OP grocery, TD Canada Trust, ATB Financial, and Dollarama.

A largely vehicle-oriented, neighbourhood-serving strip centre, Station Square benefits from adjacency to downtown and the City's residential neighbourhoods. A recently built three-storey structure provides additional service-oriented retail and office space.

MIDTOWN

Total GLA: 56,560 sf

Vacancy: 7.0%

Local Stores: 84%

Branded Stores: 16%

Midtown consists primarily of locally serving Personal and Professional Services, accounting for a total of 29.4% and 23.7% of total floorspace, respectively. Approximately 84% of the stores within Midtown are locally owned and operated, whereas 16% are national chains entirely located along 99 Avenue.

Despite a relatively healthy vacancy rate of 7.0%, the retail offering within Midtown is relatively poor quality and unlikely to attract significant regional footfall.

UPTOWN

Total GLA: 116,673 sf

Vacancy: 33.2%

Local Stores: 62%

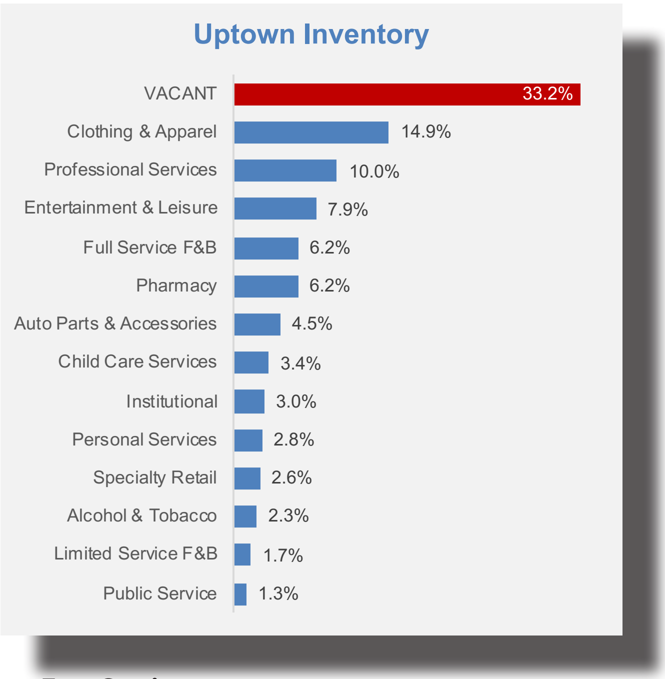
Branded Stores: 38%

CITY OF FORT SASKATCHEWAN

Uptown consists of Fort Station and Market Square, with a vacancy rate of 33.2% and the strongest concentration of national stores at 38%.

Clothing and Apparel take up the largest amount of floorspace (14.9%), followed by Professional Services (10.0%), Entertainment and Leisure (7.9%), and Full-Service Food and Beverage (6.2%).

This auto-oriented area of Downtown is the most underutilized based on its future potential for infill development and a dynamic pedestrian-oriented retail environment that could be supported by increased residential density.



Fort Station

On the site of the former Fort Mall, Fort Station is a recently re-developed/re-positioned retail node featuring a variety of local and branded tenants and franchises.

The Fort Mall was a vehicle-oriented suburban retail environment surrounded by lower density residential uses. Commencing in 2015, the redevelopment included the conversion of the formerly enclosed centre to an outward-facing externalized retail environment, with street facing retail units and improved visibility to Downtown vehicular and pedestrian traffic.

The City's Land Use Bylaw was amended to accommodate for standalone residential uses on the roughly twelve (12) acre site. The new "C5 - Fort Mall Redevelopment District" was specifically requested and prepared to accommodate the project. The site was subsequently subdivided to accommodate the mix of uses. As of 2019, there is another phase of the site, yet to be redeveloped, but the project continues to progress towards completion.

2.7 CONSUMER SURVEY RESULTS

In conjunction with the Business and Property Owner survey conducted in 2017 for the Downtown, Key Planning and Colliers in collaboration with Keyfax Market Research undertook an in-person survey of consumers in the Downtown at multiple locations over multiple days and at various times of the day. They salient findings are shown in the infographic in **Figure 2.6**.

As part of the consumer survey, respondents were asked numerous questions regarding their Downtown shopping habits. Overall, only 15% of respondents indicated that they visit Downtown daily, 29.5% visit weekly, 38.5% visit monthly,12.0% visit yearly, and 5.0% never enter Downtown. For respondents that indicated they visit yearly or less, 64.7% said it was because there was nothing that they need Downtown that they can't get elsewhere in the City.

Consumers that do venture into Downtown generally don't spend much time before leaving as 36.5% of respondents spend less than an hour and 48.5% spend between 1-2 hours. The primary reason that residents do go Downtown is for shopping (32.3%) and services (26.8%). For comparison shopping purposes, only 7% of respondents indicated that Downtown would be their primary destination, with shopping patterns depending on the desire to shop at a specific store (22.8%), a strong selection of stores (21.3%), prices (21.3%), and proximity to home (17.3%). When it comes to convenience shopping needs, only 15% of respondents travel Downtown.

Thriving downtown cores in cities with a similar trade area population to Fort Saskatchewan rely on a much stronger concentration of daily footfall and longer visits. Currently, Downtown Fort Saskatchewan suffers from a lack of variety and quality in its retail offerings to encourage consumers to visit rather than driving to the more convenient and accessible shopping nodes such as Cornerstone.

Additionally, once Downtown, there is a notable lack of retailers that encourage people to spend time and socialize such as coffee shops and quick service restaurants. When implemented correctly with high quality design, consistent store hours, and active storefronts with outdoor seating areas, these tenant types can be instrumental in generating streetfront activity and facilitating an engaging and attractive retail environment.

2.8
STAKEHOLDER SUMMARIES

As part of the Downtown analysis, the project team interviewed a collection of business stakeholders comprising retail, office, professional and personal service sector, and administrative organizations.

The list of individuals with whom one-on-one conversations were had included:

- ***Fort Lanes Bowling: Jonathan Jacobs - Owner***
- ***Washland - Wayne Land Owner***
- ***The Blue Poppie - Tina Prins - Owner***
- ***MOD Kitchen - Ken Bergmann, Owner***
- ***Tirecraft - Darcey Cannon, Owner***
- ***Chamber of Commerce - Tamara Dabels - Executive Director***
- ***Kjenner Financial - Randy Kjenner - Owner***
- ***The Brandt Hotel - Kam Choufi - Owner***
- ***Pinder Chiropractic- Kevin Pinder - Owner***

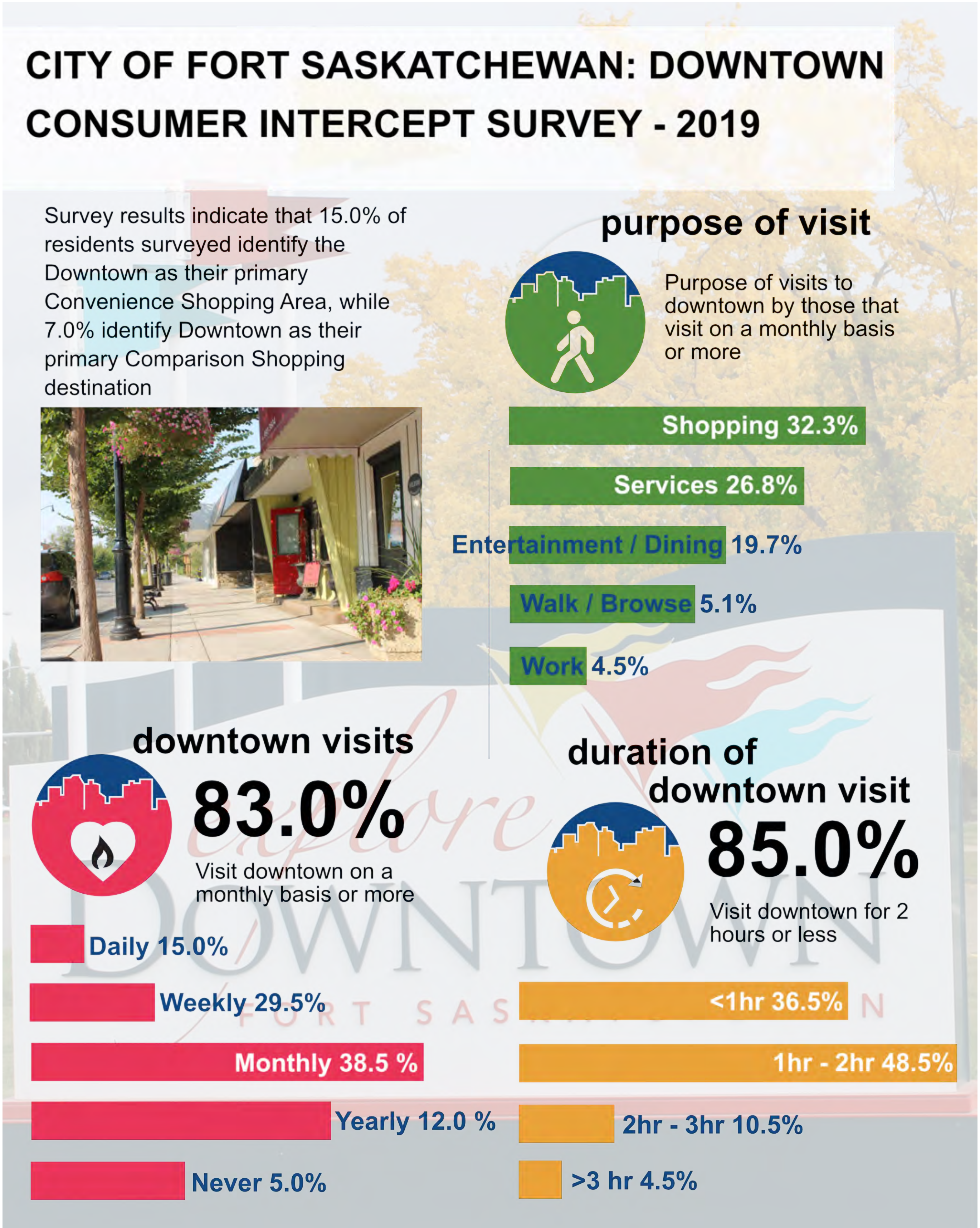
Each of these interviews is summarized in Appendix C, but the key findings and common threads coming from the respondents, in not particular order of importance comprise the following:

1. Downtown Diner closure has had an impact along with high restaurant turnover in general.
2. Vacant lots need to be dealt with either as a strategy or penalty to stimulate activation of the space.
3. Downtown needs a coffee shop/cafe.
4. Markets and events must be consistently programmed year-round, even in winter.
5. The Downtown is in need of a functional and affordable Business Improvement Association.
6. For most Downtown businesses, 75% of their customer base is from Fort Saskatchewan.
7. The Facade Program was effective, but overall store frontages and poor signage remain an issue.

CITY OF FORT SASKATCHEWAN

FIGURE 2.6

FORT SASKATCHEWAN DOWNTOWN CONSUMER SURVEY INFOGRAPHIC



8. Downtown needs a social gathering spot that is central to the core of the Downtown itself.

9. Rental rates are considered too high and need to be examined for creative or alternative structures.

10. Retail store hours are inconsistent and need to be reviewed.

While the City can play a role in many of the above issues, the key to true success will be having a strong BIA established in which the business community can and should be the champion for the implementation of programs and strategies as assisted by City where possible.

2.9 SUMMARY & IMPLICATIONS

- It is essential to encourage the introduction of a few social gathering spots within Downtown. Currently people come to downtown for one reason and then leave. The introduction of a coffee shop, pub, or both, with a large patio and pleasant décor will go a long way in enhancing the overall retail activity within downtown with spinoff benefits for nearby retailers.

- Although the street festival was a good idea, it struggled due to the weather issues and a lack of participation from local retailers. This festival should continue moving forward with retailers encouraged to participate and made aware of the significant benefits that they may receive if they remain open during the festivities. The Easter Egg Crawl, Halloween Handy, and Canada Parade are all also helpful in attracting footfall from the surrounding area. It is recommended to plan numerous additional Downtown events throughout the year such as a winter festival with an outdoor skating rink.

- Downtown currently suffers from persistent vacant units and lots. The introduction of policies such as increased tax rates or fines for units and lots remaining vacant for too long may be helpful.

- Nearly all of the storefronts throughout Downtown are dated and inactive without any patio space. Part of the reason behind this is due to the permitting process to allow outdoor seating areas, and the lack of awareness of available grants such as the building façade program.

- Active, transparent storefronts are essential in facilitating a vibrant retail experience.

- Create a marketing theme for Downtown Fort Saskatchewan such as the "Historical Fort District", along with attractive signage along the highway with a directory of unique local businesses that may help encourage potential consumers to explore what downtown has to offer.

- Encourage residential infill and multi-family development in the downtown area which could help to increase population growth within Downtown while also attracting a younger, more pedestrian-oriented demographic that would be more prone to spend money at local restaurants, cafés, retailers, and services.

The types of tenants sought by respondents combined with their spending patterns suggests that the most compatible locations capable of fulfilling retailer site location requirements will likely fall in the Central and South nodes and to a lesser degree the Downtown, although Downtown is the ideal location to house Specialty Retail, independent Full Service Restaurants and Cafes.

The Downtown area will continue to face external pressures resulting from continued growth on the fringe of the City. The Downtown is still recognized as a key node that can accommodate future tenant opportunities, particularly in the specialty retail, food & beverage categories and personal services categories.

Therefore, it is important that the City ensure that citywide growth and fulfilling of demand does not come at the expense of Downtown business vitality and viability as the success of the Downtown and wider business community are not mutually exclusive, but require each other.


explore
DOWNTOWN
FORT SASKATCHEWAN

Photo credit: Kieron Hunt

Photo credit: Kieron Hunt