



A LIVING CAPITAL

Investing in Downtown Ottawa
for a Dynamic Future

An Agenda for Aligned Action



Presented by



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The Ottawa Board of Trade is a non-partisan, non-profit, organization independent from government, which supports the private sector in the greater Ottawa area. As one of the first Board of Trade's in Canada, the OBOT has represented the interests of businesses from all sectors at all levels of government for over 150 years. By working with and listening to its members, the OBOT advocates for effective policy making with a mission to create prosperity in Ottawa, Ontario, and Canada. The OBOT focuses on business interests, and issues that reduce barriers to business and create new opportunities for their region.

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CUI is Canada's Urban Institute. We are a national platform where policy makers, urban professionals, civic and business leaders, community activists, and academics can learn, share, and collaborate with one another from coast to coast to coast. Our mission is to support vibrant, equitable, livable, and resilient cities in Canada through research, engagement, and storytelling.

Partners

This work was created in partnership with Ottawa Board of Trade, City of Ottawa, Ottawa Tourism, Invest Ottawa, BOMA Ottawa, and National Capital Commission. A complete list of advisors, partners and participants is included in the [Acknowledgements](#) section.



NATIONAL CAPITAL COMMISSION
COMMISSION DE LA CAPITALE NATIONALE

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Land acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the land on which we gather is the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishinaabeg people. For centuries, they have been the stewards of this land, nurturing its resources and shaping its landscapes. We recognize their enduring connection to this territory and express our gratitude for their ongoing contributions to our community. May we continue to learn from their wisdom and strive for reconciliation, honoring their past, present, and future generations.

Further, we are cognizant that many urban planning practices reinforced racist and exclusionary practices of colonialism. The work of city-building today must include confronting the legacies of the past and search for new approaches that centre around equity and inclusion, making cities for and with everyone.



Message from Ottawa Board of Trade


In 1857, the Ottawa Board of Trade was created to protect and advance economic prosperity, industrial opportunity, and quality of life throughout our region. Business and community leaders came together in downtown Ottawa to talk about the challenges of the day. 167 years later, we remain called upon to ensure our city thrives.

It is to that end that in 2023 we declared downtown Ottawa a top priority and called on every level of government, the business community, and residents in the National Capital area to do the same. Our city core is the cultural and economic hub of our region. It is a beacon for our country. It is a prime asset for the visitor economy, which is the front door for every other form of economic development. Pre-pandemic, over one quarter of our workforce was in the core and over half of them were from the public sector. Government is a top sector in our local economy and our city core was built for that purpose.

Today, evolving consumer and workforce trends have created a unique opportunity to transform our downtown to be more diverse, resilient, and vibrant. However, we have a small window of opportunity. Doing nothing will result in the hollowing out of the core and the decline of the whole region as we have seen in other North American cities.

The state of the downtown is the single most significant shift in our local economic landscape to ever happen. It requires an action oriented, bold, collaborative multi-faceted approach. Now is the time. That is why we have been working with our OBOT economic development committee, local partners, and urban experts to create an Action Agenda for Downtown Ottawa, which considers and elevates the unique strengths and challenges of our region to create achievable outcomes.

One thing we know for sure. A thriving city core creates a prosperous region. A struggling city core will cause the region to wither. The health of downtown Ottawa is critical to the future of our city.



**A thriving city
core creates a
prosperous region.
A struggling city
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region to wither.**

We offer special thanks to the Canadian Urban Institute for going above and beyond in creating this Agenda for action. Thank you to our members, volunteers, economic and pillar partners for making it possible through your energy, expertise and funding support. Thank you to the leaders at Real Property Institute of Canada (RPIC) and those involved in our Good Neighbours Initiative for aligning our work with the federal presence.

Together, we are building up the capital city for the next generation of Canadians.

Brendan McGuinty

Chair, Board of Directors
Ottawa Board of Trade

Hugh Gorman

Chair, Economic
Development Committee
Ottawa Board of Trade

Sueling Ching

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Executive Summary



Executive Summary

This document – **Living Capital: An Agenda for Aligned Action** – is the result of months of research, deep listening and keen observation of local conditions, as well as of global urban trends, to arrive at a made-in-Ottawa strategy for the future of this city and the region. We are starting at its core: the Ottawa Downtown and metropolitan downtowns of Ottawa-Gatineau. **Living Capital** stands on the shoulders of a number of previous reports and inquiries. Building on those efforts, and the on-going endeavours of our many on-the-ground and institutional colleagues doing the hard work every day to support businesses and workers, residents, students, and service providers as we transition – we are proposing **An Agenda for Aligned Action (Action Agenda)** – to which every engaged participant who cares about and has an investment in the future of Ottawa-Gatineau is invited to commit.

Our focus has been on the core of the city: Ottawa is not viable without a culturally dynamic, safe and economically vibrant downtown, where so many of our assets are located. Ottawa offers a tremendous variety of land uses across an impressive geography, stitching together dense business and residential districts with more rural areas. This diversity is a strength – people have choices about where they live, work, and play – but it also places significant demands on our essential municipal services to be made equitably available, regardless of location. Basic municipal services across the city – from water treatment to transit to recreation – are essential to our civic functioning. Ottawa residents know we are interdependent with each other, as you go I go, but our needs are not always the same. The challenge of effective

Ottawa is not viable without a culturally dynamic, safe and economically vibrant downtown, where so many of our assets are located.

urban leadership is paying close attention to the particular – to the specific needs of our places which in turn support the whole. That challenges policy makers at every order of government and every corporate decision-maker: one size will never fit all.

The predominance of federal buildings – and the workers who use them – was for years one of our greatest assets but is now one of our most challenging liabilities. This Agenda calls on the Government of Canada to work with

us to best leverage these assets for their next incarnation – their next highest and best use. This necessitates an acceleration of decision-making, the development of new financial mechanisms, and transitional investments to support downtown transformation.

Rethinking building uses is necessary to make room for what Jane Jacobs sagely instructed: we need more people living downtown. These are the Action Agenda’s “Big Moves.” The background work undertaken to develop this Agenda clearly shows what’s possible: **40,000 more people** living downtown and the extraordinary impact that will have on the downtown, the city and the region. And it’s doable. Some may work and live downtown, some may live downtown and travel out. The virtual working world makes it all possible. What we used to import, **workers**, we will replace with **residents** and to create a truly daytime and nighttime community.

Concurrently, strategic investments in our downtown core can attract **50,000 more jobs**. We’ve acknowledged our pre-COVID vulnerability in being overly reliant on one dominant employment sector, but the pandemic accelerated the need for diversification of our downtown economy and its connection to other parts of the city and region. This Agenda includes a number of actions to deepen our bench strength, and our central and regional capacity.

And finally, this is no time to shy away from ambition for our downtown, our city and this region. We are Canada’s beacon, and to that end this Agenda includes ramping up our collective commitment to the public realm, calling for a **\$500M Capital Investment Fund**, to double down on key projects that make our downtown better connected, unique, and emblematic of what this place means to residents, workers – to everyone, including all Canadians, who should get to take ownership and pride in the health and vitality of their capital city.

High-level Summary of the Action Agenda



High-level Summary of the Action Agenda

The Downtown Ottawa Action Agenda leverages existing assets and expands its offerings, shifting from a predominantly commercial core to a more diverse neighbourhood. The following vision and strategic framework will guide execution.

Vision

Downtown Ottawa and its core neighbourhoods are the historic, cultural, and economic centre of the city. The evolution of downtown will:

- Leverage Ottawa's cultural and natural assets
- Enliven the commercial core and surrounding neighbourhoods to create mixed-use districts with unique characteristics, a diversity of uses and users, vibrant public spaces, economically sustainable businesses, civic landmarks and institutions that are easy to access
- Build equity and climate resilience

Strategic framework for action

To see results in Downtown vibrancy, renewal and resilience, a strategic framework will:

- **Build** on existing commercial, cultural, institutional and natural assets
- **Optimize connections** and mobility in, out, and across
- **Invest in public realm** and street-level action
- **Prioritize approvals** for adaptive reuse, new projects and businesses
- **Renew relationships with public institutions** to join the 'big tent' to create collaborative infrastructures
- **Encourage bold leadership** from all sectors
- **Reinforce public and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)** priorities of climate resilience, equity, reconciliation and inclusion

Four big moves

This Action Agenda establishes the following big moves:

- Add **40,000 new residents** to Downtown by 2034
- Attract **50,000 jobs** to Downtown by 2034
- Establish a joint **\$500M fund** to kick-start action
- Focus on **catalytic anchors** for downtown including investment in the **Sparks Street and ByWard Market public realms**, and creation of a **Business Incubation District and an Arts/Culture Corridor**

This agenda will add:



40,000
new residents



50,000
jobs



\$500M
in investment

to Downtown Ottawa

Outcomes

This Action Agenda will guide action to create a downtown that is:

- Desirable
- Resilient
- Robust
- Inclusive



Make
downtown
desirable

Affordable,
walkable, amenity
rich communities



Make
downtown
resilient

Public and private
investment in
infrastructure,
public realm and
placemaking



Make
downtown
robust

Employment
growth and
economic
diversification



Make
downtown
inclusive

Safety and security
for workers,
residents, visitors,
and vulnerable
people

Five immediate actions

Based on the desired outcomes, five immediate actions will kickstart implementation of this Action Agenda:



Prioritize housing

Increase the number of residents in downtown through streamlined processes, density, prioritization of public land for housing and consideration of fee reductions.



Position downtown nationally and internationally

Build momentum and economic activity and enhance the perception of downtown including dedicated website/social media.



Invest in the future

Create financial certainty and identify revenue sources for investment in downtown including 10-year pilt guarantee, public-private partnership, funding from all levels of government and other revenue instruments.



Improve regional mobility

Commit to efficient and accessible mobility choices including federal and provincial transit gap funding, incentivize transit use, employee transit passes and active transportation investments.



Address homelessness, addiction and mental health

Commit to a focused, results-oriented program with funding from all levels of government to address homelessness, mental health and addictions challenges affecting the livability and resilience of downtown.

These immediate actions will be built upon with 11 additional actions in the [Summary of actions](#) and the [Detailed actions and steps to implementation section](#).



The benefits of plan implementation

Investing in Downtown Ottawa will generate extraordinary economic benefits including increased local spend and new property tax revenue:

- 40,000 residents yielding \$120 million annually in new residential property taxes and \$778 million in annual local spend
- 1 million new tourists adding an \$80 million increase in annual spend downtown
- 50,000 jobs yielding \$340 million in annual spend by employees, \$18 million in new commercial property taxes
- 15,000-20,000 new transit riders
- In total, this amounts to an annual revenue increase of \$1.2B in new local spend and more than \$133M in annual property tax or more than \$1.3B total

The risk of a 'do nothing' scenario

A lack of investment in Downtown Ottawa could have dire consequences for the City as a whole. Increases in commercial vacancies and declines in commercial assets have an outsized impact on the City's revenue given the tax base generated from the downtown Study Area.

- An estimated **loss of 20% of assessed value for these commercial assets and a similar decrease in federal payment-in-lieu of taxes (PILT) would result in more than \$66 million in tax revenue not collected.**
- Assuming that some amount of new residential property tax revenue would add \$4 million for **an overall gap of \$62 million annually needing to be collected from commercial and other tax classes.**

Call to Action



Call to Action

Three years before the publication of what was to become the seminal volume on urban life, *Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Fortune magazine published an essay by the yet-to-be-famous Jane Jacobs, entitled 'Downtowns are for People'. The ideas in that article became the foundation of the book, which highlights the central importance – figuratively and literally – of **downtowns** to the survival and flourishing of a great city.

Sixty-six years later, a global pandemic behind us and who knows what ahead, Jacobs' observations of common sense and pattern-spotting are crystal clear in Canada's central cities. In the early Spring of 2021, the Canadian Urban Institute convened virtually a national table of municipal, social, business and civic leaders to assess the state of Canada's cities, following the catastrophic effects of a year of lockdowns and lockouts made necessary by COVID-19. Leaders of Canada's largest Business Chambers, Labour Councils, United Ways and municipal governments – many meeting each other for the first time – initiated what we have come to accept as a years-long process to put the humpty-dumpty of Canada's urban fabric back together again. Efforts in 2021 to address what then may have looked serious but temporary – to 'fix' our largest cities – is now widely understood as the ushering in of the most profound rethinking of urban environments in a century. And not just in Canada. Nowhere is this more vivid than in our downtown cores, from coast to coast to coast. We are reimagining, rebuilding, reinvesting. As Jacobs was, more than half a century ago.

Ottawa the city was here before Canada arrived. Situated on the ancestral territories of the Algonquin First Nation, the city was initially settled in 1826 as Bytown, incorporated as Ottawa twenty-nine years later, and a few years following was named the capital of Canada. As with every great city, Ottawa is a work-in-progress.

Despite its exceptionalism as a national capital with remarkable natural, cultural and civic assets, Ottawa is far from inured to the urban challenges being experienced globally. In fact, we are particularly vulnerable to a unique set of challenges, because of our prominence as the seat of the Federal government, and the symbiotic relationship that has evolved between our own civic identity and our principal tenant-for-life: the Government of Canada. This is our greatest strength – for decades we have had a guaranteed daily influx of workers filling our office spaces and fueling our service economy. Concurrently, extraordinary public investments have created some of Canada's most significant cultural institutions, located in our downtown, or in the



What we are advocating for and believe Ottawa needs, is never again to settle for any kind of normal, but instead to pursue a new future less governed by predictability and certainty, but more guided by opportunism and a unique vision. We must be a living capital.

downtown of our sister city of Gatineau. To this capital Core Area, we welcome millions of visitors annually. But our proximity to political power also brings challenges, as we experienced for several weeks in the early months of 2022, when a segment of Canada's population arrived at the country's front door to express its outrage. We were Canada's doorstep.

As much as many of us are desperate to 'move on' from the events of the last few years, we are not so foolish as to think things are ever going to return 'to normal'. Sentimentality for the past is never an effective strategy when it comes to living things like cities, which are constantly evolving, adapting to new conditions, always creating new opportunities for the people who live and work in them. There will be no new normal. In fact, what we are advocating for and believe Ottawa needs, is never again to settle for any kind of normal, but instead to pursue a new future less governed by predictability and certainty, but more guided by opportunism and a unique vision. We must be a living capital.

Downtown has delivered spectacular results to the city and region for over a century, attracting workers, residents and visitors and supporting our municipal tax base to invest in the metropolitan-level services we need. For years, commercial property tax revenues have boosted municipal coffers. But as everywhere, our downtown has borne the brunt of the pandemic's impacts, requiring the boldest vision and action to support its evolution into

something new, something equally financially productive to drive the economy of the city and region, and fund municipal services. But it won't happen without taking some courageous steps to achieve a bold vision that reaches beyond a few neighborhoods, one that stitches together a bigger, broader narrative, that straddles neighborhoods, jurisdictions, bureaucracies and corporate cultures.

We don't have to look too far south of the border to see the implications of historical disinvestment in downtowns, as forty years ago US cities began to hollow out as economic fortunes and sinister social forces drove people away. Chicago's storied Mayor Richard Daley famously said, like an apple, a city rots from its core. But that trend – unique to the US – began reversing twenty years ago, as people began to reinhabit their downtown cores.

That lesson – that people are the 'secret sauce' of urban revitalization – underpins the findings of this report

and the **Agenda for Aligned**

Action it advances. To put this in context, Canada is a vast country with a relatively small population and economy. Our economic fortunes lie in the wise stewardship of natural resources and civic assets, coupled with our capacity to harness human ingenuity

Canada is a vast country with a relatively small population and economy. Our economic fortunes lie in the wise stewardship of natural resources and civic assets, coupled with our capacity to harness human ingenuity and recruit and retain talent.

and recruit and retain talent. Six economic regions, of which Ottawa-Gatineau is one, generate over 65% of the country's GDP. This region attracts the millions of tourists annually, fronts the country's most dominant brand, is home to the most dynamic cultural institutions, anchors our democratic institutions, and is host to national and global decision-makers every single day. As much as some may want to 'let downtown take its course' and remain on the sidelines, this is our inflection point, as a place for people who live here, as an economy for people who invest in and work here, and as a cultural centre for everyone. There is no benefit to pitting one part of the city against another: making great cities it not a zero-sum game. For Canada's urban regions, it's never a case of either/or, but always both/and.

The working mantra of the Canadian Urban Institute since the onset of the pandemic has been connecting **people** and **place** to reach our **potential**: to leverage our assets. Ottawa is uniquely rich with natural, human and built-form assets. We need to invest in all three: more people, better places, and the policies and programs to realize our collective goals. This is no time to squander what we have by idly waiting, but instead, as our colleagues at the Ottawa Board of Trade will say, it is time to build up!

We are determined to have Downtown be at the forefront of possibility, at the forefront of change, connecting people to this place to realize our shared potential.

We see around us the effects of pandemic fatigue: every system we have is struggling: health care, housing, education, culture, post-secondary, newcomer settlement, tourism and transit. And everyone is tired. But out of the valley we will come, and as we do, we are determined to have Downtown be at the forefront of possibility, at the forefront of change, connecting people to this place to realize our shared potential. This is not for the faint of heart, and we know there will be naysayers. Caution may once have been one of our cultural assets. But not any longer.

We are a coalition of the willing, and we invite you to join us, to build a Living Capital.

The Importance of Downtown



The Importance of Downtown

Downtowns are iconic symbols of a city and functionally important. For centuries they have been the centre of commerce in a city, occupying small land areas but generating outsized economic activity and GDP, anchoring their regional economy. This is even more evident in Downtown Ottawa, the heart of the National Capital Region, with its predominance of federal workers and location of the Parliamentary Precinct – a symbol and real presence of governance and national identity. In addition to the people who call Ottawa home and have shaped it for generations, Ottawa and the National Capital Region attract millions of visitors annually, most of whom spend some time in the Downtown. Downtown is also home to dozens of nationally significant cultural and educational institutions and attractions – offering a unique concentration of art, music, performance and history.

Ottawa is a diverse agglomeration of dense urban neighbourhoods, suburban communities, and rural villages, each contributing unique opportunities and experiences for residents, businesses and visitors. With this diversity of land uses comes both choices and challenges to providing equitable servicing and attention. What is true is that the whole of the city – and the region that surrounds it including across the Ottawa River to Gatineau and beyond – relies on each of the parts to function in healthy and economically productive ways. An ailing downtown disadvantages everyone, which is why this Action Agenda galvanizes actions that will benefit not only Downtown Ottawa, but the entire city, metropolitan region, and its neighbours. City and region building – like life itself – is a noble endeavour to enable people and places to work for everyone.

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A once-in-a-generation moment

The patterns of work, travel and leisure transformed and, in some cases, accelerated by the pandemic are propelling new challenges and opportunities to reimagine Downtown Ottawa. The city – and the National Capital Region broadly – has reached an inflection point: to emerge from what was once a largely mono-cultural 9 to 5 commercial district dominated by largely public-sector office workers, to a people-focused, round-the-clock vibrant, livable, diverse and imaginative destination for residents, business travelers and visitors. Downtowns across North America – New York City, Chicago, San Francisco, Washington DC, Toronto and Montreal – once dominated by central business districts are similarly undergoing massive changes. Data indicates that overall footfall in downtowns across North America is now hovering between 80-85% of pre-COVID levels, with some districts as low as 60%. For Ottawa and Gatineau, these numbers are even lower in the commercial cores.

The challenges are more pronounced in Ottawa given the predominance of public sector office workers, many of whom are now commuting to the office only a few days a week, leaving vast amounts of office space under-utilized and increasingly vacant. Previously, servicing an economy of downtown workers required a broad ecosystem of coffee shops, office suppliers, dry cleaners, restaurants, cultural and entertainment venues, financial institutions and various forms of public infrastructure, particularly mass transit. Correspondingly, commercial taxes generated from central business districts disproportionately supported municipal services for decades.

To be economically viable, attractive to workers, residents and visitors, and produce the tax revenues upon which the City depends, Ottawa's downtown will need to transform.

However, without an influx of daily workers, these economic ecosystems are being disrupted.

To be economically viable, attractive to workers, residents and visitors, and produce the tax revenues upon which the City depends, as with its peer cities globally, Ottawa's downtown will need to transform. And as the seat of Canada's democracy, this downtown evolution will be the result of collaborative leadership and investment from the public, private, institutional and civic

sectors, recognizing the significance of Ottawa's core as a home, a destination, and beacon of what Canada strives to be: inclusive, prosperous and resilient.

This Five-Year Agenda for Aligned Action (the Action Agenda) sets out a leadership path for Downtown Ottawa as a Living Capital, supporting a robust mix of economic drivers to stimulate a diversity of uses and attract and retain more people to live, work, and visit Downtown.


Density and diversity is destiny

The Canadian Urban Institute's work on downtowns and main streets across Canada continues to show that neighbourhoods with a high density of residents, a diverse employment base and a robust mix of green space and public amenities coped better though the pandemic and are now recovering more quickly and are more likely to thrive than those urban neighbourhoods that lacked a diverse mix of uses and activities. Similarly, areas with more civic institutions and uses such as libraries, cultural centres, recreational amenities and educational institutions – destinations – are more likely to have higher levels of frequent visitors and foot traffic compared to those without. A diversity of uses is essential to the vibrancy and resilience of every neighbourhood, and to ensuring an urban environment that is successful socially, environmentally and economically. Diverse places attract a diverse user base: people. You won't get one without the other.

For Ottawa, this means that the key to getting residents, workers and visitors Downtown is to provide a dynamic, four-season environment by creating a variety of activities – economic and social – and places. This is not a new strategy for Downtown Ottawa, which has benefited from decades of extraordinary investments in its public realm, and civic and cultural assets. But as with every kind of infrastructure, constant investment – and adjustments – are needed to ensure optimal performance. This is a city – and a downtown district – with ‘great bones’ – assets to build upon through commercial activity, art, placemaking, and programming.

Downtown Ottawa is home to a diverse population. This Action Agenda leverages this diversity to create more economic opportunity for all, and to enhance the urban environment to provide more opportunities for diverse activities and instill a greater sense of social cohesion. In particular, Ottawa holds a crucial role as a leader in Reconciliation with its historical significance as a meeting place for Indigenous nations and its status as Canada’s capital. Given Ottawa’s position at the intersection of Indigenous cultures, the Federal government, and diverse communities, it has a unique opportunity and responsibility to foster meaningful dialogue, promote understanding, advocate for Indigenous rights and well-being, and to set an example for other municipalities across the country, to contribute to healing, equity, and respect for Indigenous peoples’ contributions and sovereignty.

Living Capital provides a bold vision and motivated champions who are committed to optimizing existing spaces and generating new ones by better leveraging under-utilized spaces including offices, lobbies and retail spaces, repairing our urban fabric, and building new vibrancy. These kinds of improvements do not have to be big and costly. In fact, adding art, design, colour, events, and targeted additions to the public realm will go a long way toward creating a new Downtown. Supporting economic growth, reconciliation, and providing new opportunities for residents and visitors to engage, can be a path to a new future, one that is creative, productive, inclusive and accessible.



This Action Agenda leverages this diversity to create more economic opportunity for all, and to enhance the urban environment to provide more opportunities for diverse activities and instill a greater sense of social cohesion.

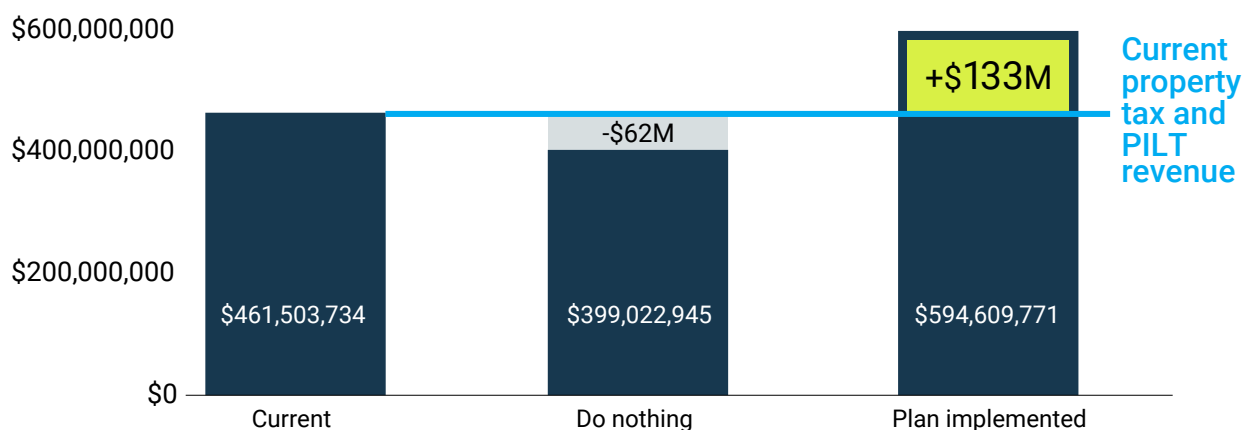
The crisis of a 'do nothing' scenario¹

A lack of investment in Downtown Ottawa could have dire consequences for the City. As demonstrated in other North American jurisdictions, increases in commercial vacancies and declines in commercial assets have an outsized impact on the City's revenue given the tax base generated from the downtown Study Area (Figure 1). Commercial and office space generates an estimated \$236 million annually in property tax revenue plus an additional \$73 million for PILT (payment-in-lieu-of-taxes) from the Federal government for the Somerset and Rideau-Vanier Wards.

An estimated **loss of 20% of assessed value for these commercial assets and a similar decrease in PILT would result in more than \$66 million in lost revenue per year needing to be redistributed across commercial properties and other tax classes such as residential.** Assuming that some amount of residential development would proceed (850 units annually based on the historic average for housing starts in the past five years), the addition of new residential property tax revenue would **add an estimated \$4.3 million in new revenue, resulting in an overall gap of \$62 million annually.** This scenario does not consider the continued impact of reduced footfall (see Figure 5) and a general decline in downtown vibrancy and economic activity, resulting in a lack of local spend but also impacting business confidence and solvency, and negatively impacting our ability to attract investment, talent and visitors.

FIGURE 1

Comparison between 'Do nothing' and 'Plan implementation' scenarios, based on annual property tax and PILT revenue





Comparing this to the potential of a \$133M tax revenue increase in the Plan Implementation Scenario and the \$1.3 billion annual Return-on-Investment Scenario detailed on the next page, the Do-Nothing Scenario is a bleak outcome.

Comparing this to the potential of a \$133M tax revenue increase in the Plan Implementation Scenario and the \$1.3 billion annual Return-on-Investment Scenario detailed on the next page, the Do-Nothing Scenario is a bleak outcome. A more dire scenario might suggest that with increased vacancy and a decline in commercial values, residential development would also slow, or office and retail vacancies would continue to climb.

The significant benefits of a 'do something' scenario: return-on-investment

Investing in Downtown Ottawa will generate extraordinary economic benefits including increased local spend and new property tax revenue.

Return on Investment: high-level summary²

- Addition of 40,000 residents yielding **\$120 million annually in new residential property taxes** and **\$778 million** in annual local spend
- Addition of 1 million new tourists drawn to Downtown's new amenities, public realm improvements and programming, adding an **\$80 million increase in annual spend downtown**
- Attract 50,000 jobs yielding **\$340 million in annual spend by employees**, **\$18 million in new commercial property taxes**
- Addition of people leading to **15,000-20,000 new transit riders**
- In total, achieving these goals will result in an annual revenue increase of **\$1.2B in new local spend** and more than **\$133M in annual property tax** or **more than \$1.3B**

Key to this analysis is the fact that bringing more residential units and residents to Downtown will generate a higher return than simply absorbing the current office stock in a 'return-to-normal' scenario.



Investing in Downtown Ottawa will generate extraordinary economic benefits totalling more than \$1.3B annually.

Summary of Actions



Summary of Actions

Actions and steps to implementation

Based on the established big moves and desired outcomes, the following represents a summary of actions to be undertaken to support Downtown Ottawa's transformation. Detailed steps to implementation, best practices and objectives for each action are included in the [Detailed actions and steps to implementation section](#).

 = Immediate Action



Make downtown desirable

Affordable, walkable, amenity rich communities

- **Prioritize housing**

Increase the number of residents in downtown through streamlined processes, density, prioritization of public land for housing and consideration of fee reductions.

- **Repurpose federal buildings**

Expedite the repurposing of federal buildings for new uses to stimulate economic growth.

- **Enhance neighbourhood services and amenities**

Improve existing neighbourhood services and amenities to attract and retain residents and visitors.



Make downtown resilient

Public and private investment in infrastructure, public realm and placemaking

- **Fund for the future**

Create financial security, establish a diversity of funding mechanisms and coordinate efforts and resources between Federal, Provincial, and Municipal governments, institutions, private sector and other partners to advance new and existing initiatives.

- **Improve regional mobility**

Commit to efficient and accessible mobility choices including federal and provincial transit gap funding, incentivize transit use, employee transit passes and active transportation investments.

- **Engage the design community**

Involve the design community in urban design, public art and placemaking to foster design excellence.

- **Prioritize public realm investment for all seasons**

Invest in public spaces to enhance the city's appeal and functionality and develop a Downtown Vibrancy Office to revitalize the downtown cores of Ottawa and Gatineau.

- **Invest in future resilience**

Invest in buildings and infrastructure at standards to optimize climate resilience, greening of downtown, and attractiveness of the public realm.



Make downtown robust

Employment growth and economic diversification

- **Position downtown nationally and internationally**

Apply a national and international lens to the Actions to elevate the perception and experience of attractiveness and place-identity and to build momentum and economic activity.

- **Support small businesses and main streets**

Foster vibrancy and economic opportunity in main street areas including activating ground floors, business development, construction mitigation, and data to track and link businesses with opportunities.

- **Support an inclusive economy**

Provide procurement access for local, small, and BIPOC-owned enterprises.

- **Enhance post-secondary institutions**

Increase the role and presence of post-secondary institutions downtown including student housing, downtown locations and partnership opportunities.

- **Promote an arts and culture corridor**
Establish designated areas for arts, culture, and entertainment.
- **Develop a business incubation district**
Designate space for business attraction and growth to diversify the downtown economy.



Make downtown inclusive

Safety and security for workers, residents, visitors, and vulnerable people

- **Address homelessness, addiction and mental health**
Commit to a focused, results-oriented program with funding from all levels of government to address homelessness, mental health and addictions challenges affecting the livability and resilience of Downtown.
- **Ensure safety and accessibility**
Incorporate safety and accessibility measures into public realm planning.

Each of these actions with steps to implementation can be found in the following section and the Implementation Plan ([Appendix A](#)).



Urban streetscape based on downtown Ottawa. WXY Studio.

Strategic timeline

The following diagram represents implementation at a summary level. Detailed roles, responsibilities, timing and targets for all Actions are included in the Implementation Plan ([Appendix A](#)).

FIGURE 2
Strategic timeline of project implementation



Downtown Ottawa Today



Downtown Ottawa Today

Ottawa's unique position

Ottawa's geography and linguistic context are exceptional: a capital city with beautiful natural assets in the form of rivers, hills, a canal, a greenbelt, urban and provincial parks and small rural villages. A city with a population of more than 1 million within a region of 1.5 million, Ottawa offers superb access to culture, arts, amenities and rugged nature. As a truly bi-lingual region, opportunities abound for education, culture and employment in Canada's two official languages. The distinctive assets of the city, and a region linking two provinces, can be leveraged to achieve many of the actions identified in this Plan.

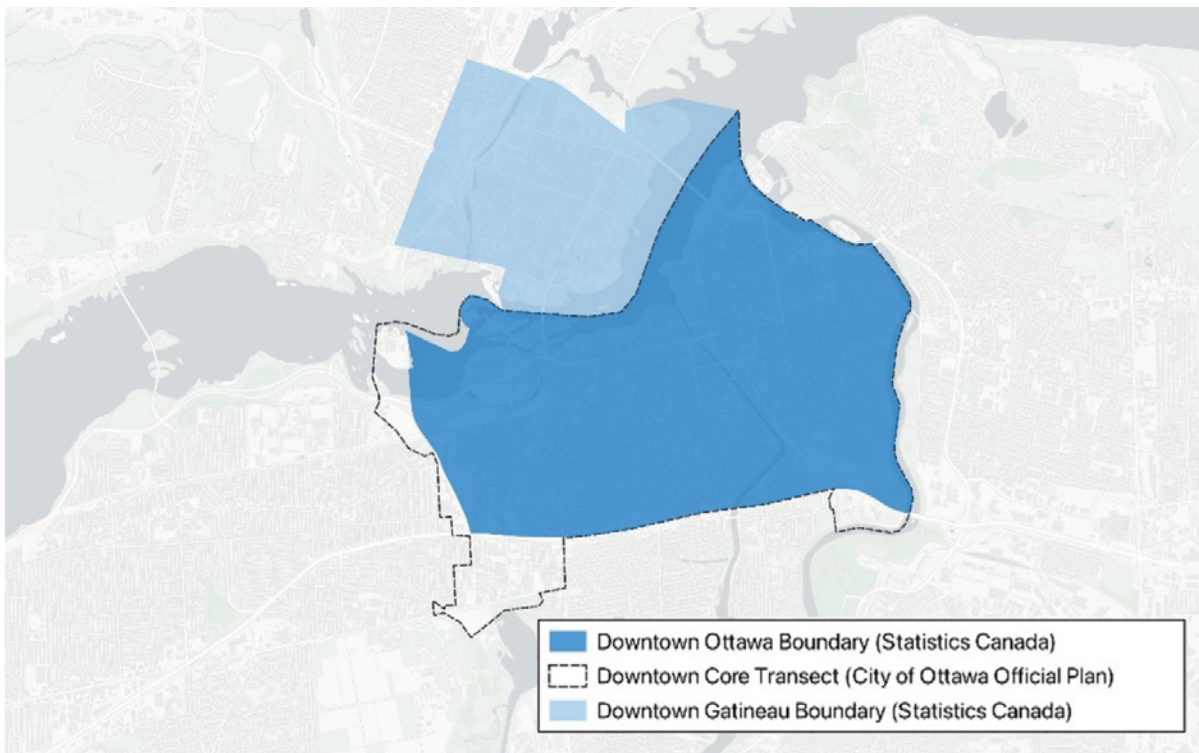


Study area

For the purpose of this Plan, Downtown Ottawa (Figure 3) is defined by the boundaries of the Rideau River to the east, the Ottawa River to the north, the Queensway to the south and the Line 2 LRT line to the west. This area is referred to throughout the Plan as the Study Area. The map also identifies the boundaries of Downtown Gatineau and the Urban Transect boundary applied for Official Plan policies to identify the metropolitan cores of both cities.

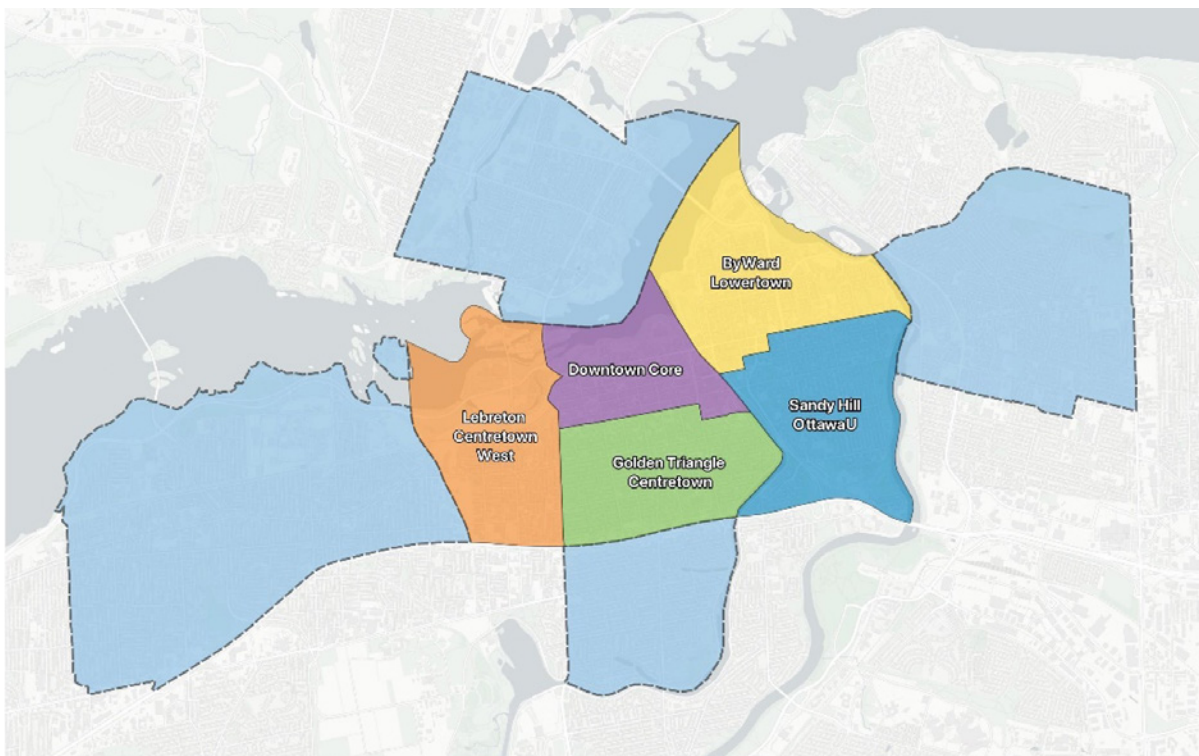
FIGURE 3

Downtowns Ottawa and Gatineau



Within this geography, we have established five districts within the Downtown boundary (Figure 4) with an understanding that there are neighbourhoods and core areas with distinct characteristics and unique challenges and opportunities. For analysis, we have also considered data from the adjacent subareas: downtown Gatineau, Hintonburg and Wellington West, the Glebe and Vanier with an understanding that these areas impact and are impacted by Downtown.

FIGURE 4
Downtown districts and subareas



Data and trends impacting Downtown

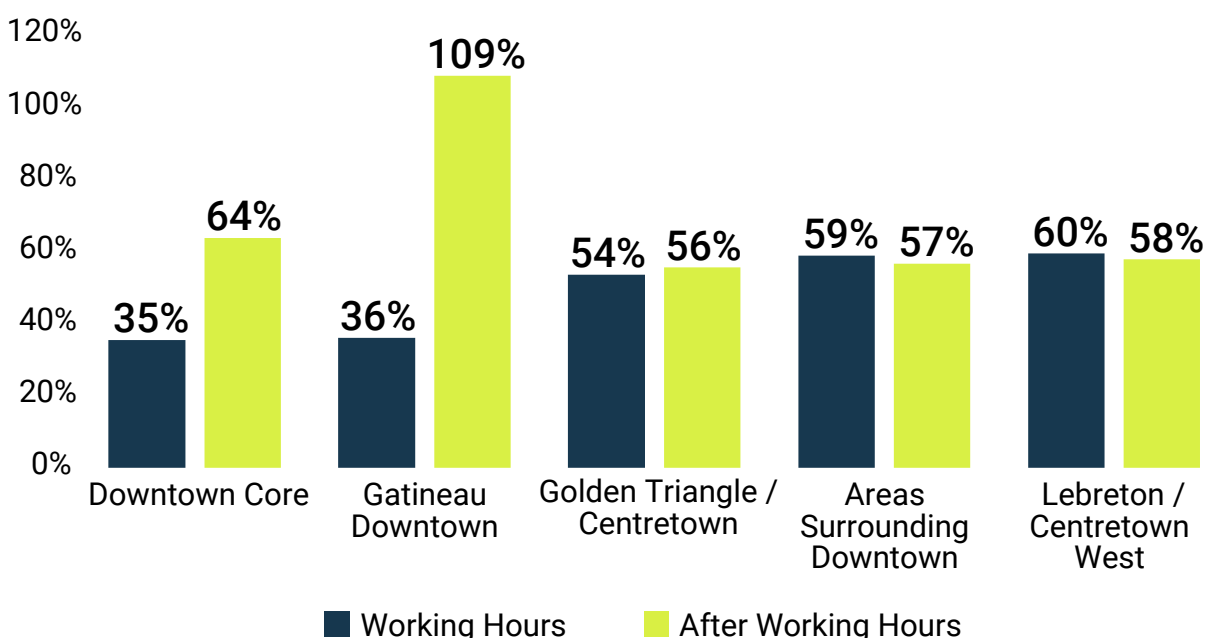
Many, though not all, of the macro trends impacting Downtown Ottawa are similar to those experienced by cities across North America. These similarities provide a window into the strategies and actions that have supported transformation in other cities and downtowns. Trends common to Ottawa include:

New patterns of work, travel and consumer behaviour changing the quantity and timing of people who enter and spend time downtown

Data collected in 2019, compared to 2023, reveal the level of footfall changes pre- and post-pandemic with downtown Gatineau and Parliament Hill suffering the worst at just **35-36% of pre-pandemic volume during working hours**, and other districts in the Downtown Study Area showing a rebound of 55-75% for working hours, and only slightly more during evenings and weekends (Figure 5).³ A lack of consistent foot traffic not only decreases economic activity, it reduces vibrancy, diminishes the feeling of public safety, and has a significant impact on public transit use. In total, these indicators suggest that on **any given day, 25,000-40,000 fewer people are in downtown Ottawa** than were there in 2019.

FIGURE 5

Footfall for Downtown districts March to mid-June for 2019 compared to 2023





Lower transit ridership compared to pre-pandemic

Transit use in Ottawa (OC Transpo) is hovering at **70% of pre-pandemic ridership**, amounting to 2.7M fewer monthly transit trips across the city and a significant financial deficit in the transit system.⁴

Increased congestion and parking challenges further diminish the experience of downtown

Without continued investment in and use of transit, active transportation infrastructure and densification of the Downtown, the majority of trips to Downtown (approximately 80%) will continue to happen by personal vehicle.

In Ottawa, as in cities across Canada, an increasing number of unhoused and street-involved individuals and mounting mental health and addiction challenges are being suffered not only by those who are street-involved, but by the general public⁵

Municipal programs have struggled to address the complexity of these issues, which require permanent, sustained housing and wrap-around services that have not been available at the scale required.



Economic factors: Dependence on office workers

For over a century, Ottawa has been overly reliant on the public sector as its principal employment base, (federal, provincial and municipal) leaving it subject to the effects of hybrid and remote work to a much greater extent than those downtowns with a greater diversity of employers.

The structural solution lies in Ottawa and the National Capital Region's ability to diversify its downtown economy and make it attractive to a wider array of employers and talent, to build an employment base that is more robust, and to cultivate a healthy retail mix and amenities that support new users, namely residents.

What happens to Downtown has a significant impact on the city as a whole. The following data illustrates the economic significance of the Downtown:

- Downtown provides jobs to **78,000 people**, approximately 17% of total employment in Ottawa.⁶
- The Downtown Core contains 18 million sq ft of office space – over 40% of all office space in the City.⁷ Another 10.5 million sq ft of office space is spread across the other four districts of the Downtown Study Area.⁸ Office space is a **considerable source of commercial property tax**, contributing to City revenues and lessening the burden on residential property taxpayers.

- **The office vacancy rate was 11.2% for Q1 2024 in the Downtown Core, representing 2 million sq ft of unleased office space.**⁹ While vacancy rate is highest in Class C buildings at 27%, given the prominence of Class A space, more than half of vacant office space (1 million sq ft) is within Class A buildings. Considering a similar rate of vacancy in other districts of the Study Area would yield **an additional 1.2 million sq ft of vacant office space.**
- Occupancy rates – the amount of office space occupied by workers - are more difficult to determine. Colliers estimates that **Ottawa’s total office occupancy as of Q1 2024 was 54%, with Downtown fairing worse at 43% of pre-COVID occupancy levels.** By contrast, Toronto’s overall office occupancy has risen to 78% and Vancouver is at 72%.¹⁰ Anecdotally, it is clear that on major blocks in Downtown Ottawa there are commercial spaces with very few workers present on a daily basis – often referred to as ‘zombie buildings’.
- Not surprisingly, **Public Administration makes up most jobs in the Downtown (38%).**¹¹ The Downtown Core district is even more specialized with **over half (57%) of jobs in Public Administration.**¹² Workers from these sectors support other types of businesses – such as retail, food services, and personal services – that in turn employ other workers. When office workers disappear, so do the jobs they support.
- In addition to the public sector, the city’s economy is driven by **knowledge-based sectors** such as scientific and technical services, **tourism and creative industries** such as the live entertainment and film industries, **and a diversity of small businesses.**¹³
- Ottawa receives more than 11 million visitors per year. Up to a quarter (25%) of all tourism spending happens in downtown totalling **\$450-600 million annually.**¹⁴



The office vacancy rate was 11.2% for Q1 2024 in the Downtown Core, representing 2 million sq ft of unleased office space.



Demographics and housing: Younger and more diverse, but with challenges

Although Ottawa is growing in residential population, the **ratio of residents to workers of nearly one-to-one leaves the Downtown dependent on daily office workers.**¹⁵

Current data shows:

- Downtown is home to **74,000 residents** and growing. The subareas (Figure 3) to Downtown include an additional **75,000 residents** for a total of nearly 150,000 residents or 10% of the regional population.¹⁶
- Downtown residents are young and diverse, with almost **50% between the ages of 20 to 39**, providing a strong base of young talent for employers, and a clientele for recreation, entertainment and dining establishments. **30% of downtown residents identify as a visible minority and 74% of households rent their home,**¹⁷ in contrast to the broader Ottawa-Gatineau region, where just 35% of households are renters.¹⁸
- Ottawa boasts **Canada's 4th largest downtown** in terms of residential population after Toronto, Vancouver and Montreal but its growth rate (7.1%) lagged from 2016-2021 compared to other downtowns such as Halifax, Montreal and Calgary, which each experienced downtown residential population increases of more than 20%.¹⁹

- **Evidence of housing demand** is reflected in the downtown rental vacancy rate, which was 2.9% in October 2023. The rental vacancy rate for Sandy Hill and Lowertown was a mere 1.8% demonstrating acute demand in these neighbourhoods.²⁰
- Between 2019 and 2023, there were 8,400 new housing units permitted in Downtown yet actual housing starts (construction) were just 4,200 units over the same period leaving approximately **4,000 units in the “pipeline” – permitted but unbuilt.**²¹
- Because of its compact housing form, **Downtown generates significant residential property tax revenue for the City.** The two prominent Downtown Wards (Somerset and Rideau-Vanier) generate \$15 million and \$6 million per sq km respectively, or **7.5 to almost 30 times²² the amount of residential property tax per sq km,** compared to lower-density wards. Studies have also documented that **infill housing provides a net gain to the City,** bringing in more revenue in property taxes than is required to service these units.²³
- Most Downtown **residents use active transportation or transit to move around the city (55%).** Additional investments in active transportation and transit service (notably frequency) will increase this share of users – both residents and workers. Bringing more residents and workers will add an estimated **15,000-20,000 new transit riders.**²⁴



The two prominent Downtown Wards generate \$15 million and \$6 million per sq km respectively, or 7.5 to almost 30 times the amount of residential property tax per sq km, compared to lower-density wards.

Downtown Ottawa Assets



14

Arts & Cultural Spaces



3

Waterways

Ottawa River, Rideau River, Rideau Canal



11

Museums



3

Indoor Recreational Spaces

Public only



20

Parks & Greenspaces

Comprising a total of 670,000 sq ft.



6

Libraries

2 public, 2 institutional, 2 federal



5

LRT Transit Stops



Urban and spatial qualities: Historic context meets mid-century development

Downtown Ottawa has several distinctive features as part of its natural and built environment. These are assets to be maintained and leveraged for downtown revitalization:

- The presence of both **natural and engineered waterways and their adjacent lands have shaped the city's development**, its economy and are a major component of Ottawa's identity and culture. They are available for boating, canoeing and kayaking, and have adjacent walking and biking paths. They also provide significant economic and social value as the sites of major events such as the Rideau Canal Skateway and Winterlude, the Canadian Tulip Festival, Canada Day celebrations and Ottawa Bluesfest.
- Downtown Ottawa benefits from **national monuments, greenspace, historic buildings and many arts and culture venues and museums**. Many of these assets exist along key avenues and gateways of the Downtown core along Elgin Street, Wellington Street and Sussex Avenue. These sites provide access to historic and cultural experiences for residents and visitors and give Downtown Ottawa its iconic, picturesque views captured again and again in photographs and shared around the world.

- The interior core of Downtown has a very different architectural character, having experienced a **significant amount of development in the mid-20th century**. This area, especially between Gloucester and Albert Streets, lacks an attractive and comfortable public realm and is inhospitable to street life. It is characterized by **narrow sidewalks, one-way streets that encourage moving in, out and through but limit choice of routes and fail at traffic calming, one incomplete protected bike lane, a lack of trees for shade and to reduce heat island effect, and few public spaces for socializing or recreating** such as benches, tables or play equipment. It is notable that 98% of the commercial space in this area is office space with only 2% of space used for ground floor retail resulting in a lack of retail services and other amenities that encourage foot traffic.²⁵ This area would benefit greatly from **simple placemaking interventions, retail pop-ups and small business incubation**, as well as longer-term streetscape improvements in alignment with infrastructure renewal as proposed in this Plan.
- South of the commercial core is a combination of **historic building stock, much of which is used for commercial and retail space** offering pockets of walkable, attractive streets and more modern, multi-unit residential towers as well as infill opportunities.
- Ottawa's unique **multi-jurisdictional environment** is unparalleled in other Canadian cities. This is particularly evident in Downtown where responsibilities for infrastructure and management are divided between the City of Ottawa, the National Capital Commission (NCC), multiple Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), the Provinces of Ontario and Quebec, and the Ville de Gatineau. While subdivided jurisdictions can present conflicting goals and inefficient processes, Ottawa benefits from the **many assets and investments made by the Federal government** and its crown corporations including monuments, amenities, open space, programming and more.



Ottawa's unique multi-jurisdictional environment is unparalleled in other Canadian cities.

Downtown Ottawa Tomorrow



Downtown Ottawa Tomorrow

Despite its challenges, **Downtown Ottawa and the National Capital Region have many bright spots.** Data suggests that **footfall and activity in the ByWard Market and Sandy Hill area** – owing to both visitors to the Market and a concentration of retail as well as the activity around Ottawa U – **has returned and, in some months, exceeded pre-pandemic numbers.**²⁶ The same is true of for pockets of **downtown Gatineau after work hours** (likely owing to new residential growth). Public Realm Plans to revitalize Sparks Street and the ByWard Market, including a new ByWard Market District Authority (BMDA), as well as implementation of the City's new Official Plan, Secondary Plans, Urban Design Strategy and Complete Streets Framework provide a **future path for revitalization and vibrancy.** Similarly, Downtown Ottawa benefits from its sophisticated urban qualities, heritage buildings and natural beauty. Leveraging this unique jurisdictional, linguistic and urban/natural context is key to the realization of this Action Agenda.

Delivering on an Action Agenda

The success of this Action Agenda is not guaranteed without **sustained commitment from a diversity of partners:** municipal, provincial, federal, private sector, non-profits, institutions, small businesses and more. First, a strategy to rebuild and revitalize a downtown **core requires leadership at all levels and a connection back to the local economies that drive renewal.** Second, partnerships are key, as not one sector alone (be it government or the private sector) can independently see this Action Agenda to fruition. Partnerships can come in many sizes from implementing small-scale changes in the built environment to large redevelopment projects. And finally, the opportunity for a downtown to reinvent itself is about its long-term sustainability – economic, environmental and social. If there is anything the pandemic taught us, it is the need to reconsider the monocultures of our downtowns. What arises from the work in this Action Agenda will **shape a new future – one that is more socially vibrant, more economically viable, more livable, more inclusive, more climate-ready and more fun.**



Relationship to other plans, strategies, and initiatives

This Action Agenda builds on the work of many individuals and organizations including existing and upcoming policies, plans and reports generated by the City of Ottawa, the National Capital Commission, Ottawa Board of Trade, Ottawa Tourism, Invest Ottawa and the Downtown Ottawa Revitalization Task Force, as well as input from many interested and invested parties. A list of individuals and organizations consulted and Plans reviewed is included in the Appendices. This Action Agenda also builds on many national and international Downtown Plans, Economic Development Strategies and best practices researched for this work.

Detailed Actions & Steps to Implementation



Detailed Actions & Steps to Implementation

The following sections provide details to support action and follow through including objectives, rationale and steps to implementation for 16 Actions and the big moves. This work is further supported by an Implementation Plan ([Appendix A](#)).

Four big moves

The Action Agenda is intended to achieve four big moves, some over the life of the Action Agenda (5 years) and some beyond that timeframe. By exceeding the timeframe of this Action Agenda, these goals are meant to create momentum that will carry on beyond the scope of this work.



Add 40,000 new residents to Downtown by 2034

New residents would replace a portion of employees no longer coming to Downtown on a frequent (daily) basis as well as increase the overall residential population. Achieving this goal means increasing the current population growth rate by three times the 5-year average for 2016-2021. This is possible with a combination of new development and office conversions. Permits for housing for nearly 8,000 new residents are already in the pipeline. Further, the development of LeBreton Flats is estimated to bring at least 7,500 new residents to the area based on the current Master Plan.²⁷

Key nodes include:

ByWard Market / Lowertown district including the Rideau Street corridor, LeBreton Flats and Centretown West, and O-Train network stations and corridors (transit-oriented development).



Attract 50,000 jobs to Downtown by 2034

This goal is based on the need to replace the 25,000-30,000 hybrid jobs/employees who are no longer in Downtown offices full-time and grow the employment base. Jobs could include in-person workers as well as work-from-home professionals living in Downtown. It is expected that a portion of jobs would be driven by an increase in the proportion of businesses and

services to serve new residents, the attraction of businesses looking to access the new talent living Downtown, and from existing organizations, such as post-secondary institutions, businesses, and government, expanding their employment footprint Downtown. Growth in the diversity of businesses and the number of employees will also increase Downtown's economic resilience.

Key nodes include:

The Downtown Core, ByWard Market and Sandy Hill districts, along the O-Train network, Bank Street and other adjacent retail corridors and main streets.



Establish a \$500M fund to kick-start action

This number is based on an aspirational goal to fund initiatives underway and new actions required for the implementation of this Action Agenda. The source of funding is intended to include all levels of government, institutional, private sector and others. **The return on this investment is expected to be \$1.3B annually within 10 years.**



Focus on catalytic anchors for downtown

This includes investment in the public realm for **Sparks Street** and the **ByWard Market**, creation of a **Business Incubation District** in the Downtown Core, and an **Arts/Culture Corridor** linking arts and cultural institutions. These catalytic projects will be anchored by housing, amenities, transit access and commercial uses to drive foot traffic and provide a range of complementary services and access.

Outcomes and steps for implementation

Outcomes are developed using four key pillars developed by the Ottawa Board of Trade (OBOT) and supported by Partners. These outcomes guide implementation and stewardship of the Action Agenda. They are also closely aligned with City of Ottawa Council priorities and the eight guiding principles of the City’s 2024 Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan.²⁸

The following section includes **16 Actions and Steps to support implementation**. Actions are further detailed in the Implementation Plan ([Appendix A](#)), which includes roles, responsibilities and timeframes.

This document also proposes a dynamic, action-oriented Action Stewardship Model ([Appendix B](#)) to oversee and commit to implementation.

Summary of actions



16 actions

To leverage and add to work underway (7 Actions have already been initiated)



60 steps to implementation

To detail and guide implementation



10 best practices

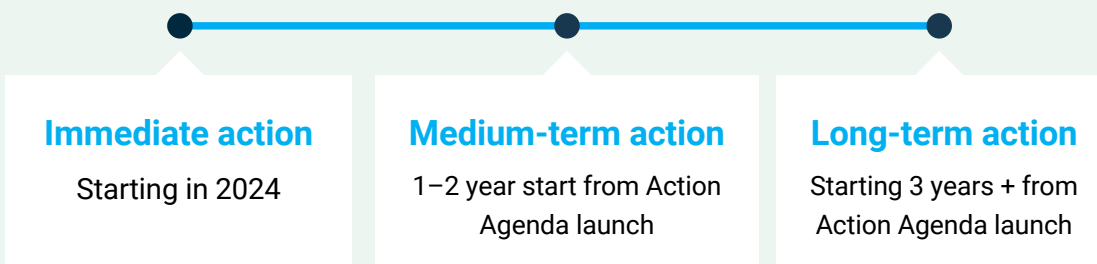
To inform best choices



5-year timeframe to initiate

To ensure that work is underway to achieve change in the near term

Timeline for actions





Make downtown desirable

Affordable, walkable, amenity rich communities

Objectives:

- **Build** affordable, diverse, family-friendly housing to stabilize and grow the Downtown and contribute to local and regional population growth.
- **Create** conditions to ensure the Downtown includes more diversity of uses that meets the daily needs of its residents and businesses.
- **Promote** Ottawa's Downtown as a 'best in class' centre of excellence for adaptive reuse and downtown regeneration.

Action 1: Increase the number of residents in Downtown

Adding residents to Downtown is key to increasing vibrancy, supporting economic development and increasing density to amortize new and existing infrastructure, amenities and other capital investments. Compared to other large cities, population growth in Downtown Ottawa has lagged in recent years. Ensuring that Downtown includes a wide range of housing opportunities for all segments of the population adds to overall stability and resilience. This is particularly true of family-friendly housing.

Steps to implementation:

- **Streamline planning approvals and development process** for new residential development.
- **Identify and prioritize** disposition of federal, provincial and municipal lands for affordable / supportive housing including leveraging proposals in the upcoming NCC Core Area Plan for housing development.
- **Identify alternative funding sources that would allow for flexibility on residential development charges** to incentivize high-density residential development and purpose-built rental.
- **Pursue greater residential densities** in parts of Downtown (Step: Review development height restrictions).
- **Review population growth targets and milestones** over the life of this Action Agenda.

Action 2: Repurpose federal buildings for new uses to support Downtown revitalization

The Federal government is looking to reduce their real estate portfolio by 50% over the next ten years to support the Government's workplace strategy. While the Federal government will continue to maintain a significant presence in the Downtown, the disposing of surplus federal buildings represents one of the greatest opportunities to reshape the role and composition of the Downtown and diversify uses, particularly in the area north of Gloucester Street.

Steps to implementation:

- **Revise the Federal Disposal Policy** to accelerate the release of assets in Downtown Ottawa.
- **Develop a federal incentives strategy** to support office-to-residential conversions (Step: Pilot a candidate conversion project.)
- **Identify models for adaptive re-use opportunities for federal buildings** suitable for non-office uses such as new amenities, neighbourhood services and destination uses.

Action 3: Target and support the development and retention of neighbourhood services and amenities

Complete communities are neighbourhoods where the daily needs of residents can be met in close proximity (i.e., schooling, groceries, social services, healthcare, jobs, recreational opportunities, etc.). These businesses and services provide convenience for both residents and visitors, make a neighbourhood livable and reduce auto dependence thus increasing foot traffic and vibrancy. Amenities encompass a wide range of active uses (i.e., arenas, tennis courts, playgrounds, skate parks, etc.) and passive uses (i.e., multi-use trails, parkland, etc.) as well as cultural and entertainment experiences. Combined, these uses support residential growth, tourism and business attraction. Major recreational and sporting facilities are also landmark buildings and tourism attractions with significant economic spin offs.

Steps to implementation:

- **Identify gaps in neighbourhood services and amenities** using the City's *15-min Neighbourhoods - Baseline Study* and the City's Parks and Recreation Master Plan for the Centretown, ByWard Market and Lowertown neighbourhoods.
- **Allow flexibility of ground-floor space use** in development and redevelopment proposals to support opportunities for commercial, retail, and neighbourhood services.
- **Revise the Zoning By-law** to maximize flexibility for residential, institutional, commercial, light industrial, cultural and recreational/amenity uses throughout Downtown.
- **Leverage opportunities to create additional recreational opportunities** on federal land and enhance public access and connectivity to Ottawa and Gatineau waterways.
- **Identify investment opportunities** for destination-focused amenities in the Downtown core.



BEST PRACTICE: **Stackt Market Toronto**

Established in 2019 in Toronto, Stackt Market is North America's largest shipping container market as it is made up entirely of shipping containers with a mix of shops, food options, a microbrewery, evolving community programming and beautiful views of the City of Toronto. It serves as a temporary way to bring life to otherwise under-utilized lots providing opportunities for dining, entertainment and recreation.



Make downtown resilient

Public and private investment in infrastructure, public realm and placemaking

Objectives:

- **Identify resources for implementation** (leadership, financial, existing investments, etc.).
- **Embed creativity, flexibility and resilience** into the Downtown public realm, transportation and infrastructure systems.
- **Improve transportation options** and multimodal access to provide for seamless access to, and around, the Downtown for residents, workers, and visitors.
- **Develop a beautiful and activated public realm** that promotes social interaction and commerce for residents, workers, and visitors.
- **Identify solutions to the development of under-utilized lots** including opportunities for temporary uses or methods to boost development opportunity.

Action 1:

Create financial certainty and identify revenue sources for investment in Downtown

A diversity of revenue sources is needed for implementation including multi-sectoral partnerships, leveraging current investments, diverting existing revenue streams and applying funding instruments such as Community Improvement Plan tax increment equivalent grants. Since downtown commercial and residential property taxes make up a significant portion of City revenue (a much larger proportion per area than the surrounding neighbourhoods and communities), the city as a whole is reliant on revenue generated in the Downtown. As new development and adaptive re-use of buildings occurs, this revenue will fluctuate. The Federal government is exempt from paying property taxes but instead makes discretionary payments in lieu of property taxes (PILT) to the City. As the Federal government reduces their real estate portfolio, an assurance of the value of PILT revenue is critical to stabilizing municipal revenue as buildings are disposed of and transitioned to new owners and uses.

Steps to implementation:

- **Federal government to commit to maintaining a 10-year Payment In-lieu of Taxes (PILT)** to fund downtown revitalization and ensure consistent revenue during ownership transitions and redevelopment.
- **Identify public-private partnership** models to fund and attract uses Downtown.
- **Advocate for federal, provincial and municipal funding** to realize this Action Agenda.
- **Explore the potential to develop a Community Improvement Plan** for Downtown with incentives for improvements to existing buildings, business retention, building retrofits, climate resilience and new uses.
- Empower the City to use a portion of **Downtown parking revenue and/or parking enforcement revenue to re-invest in public realm improvements** by amending the *Municipal Act* or establishing a Parking Authority.

BEST PRACTICE:

City of Saskatoon: Parking revenue to fund Urban Design Program

The City of Saskatoon's Urban Design Program was created in the 1980s to help revitalize the downtown core and adjacent neighbourhoods including Riversdale and Nutana. A Streetscape Business Improvement District (BID) Reserve was established to set aside funding generated from a portion of parking meter revenue. The focus of investments is based on BID boundaries though services are available for areas outside of prescribed boundaries as needed. Investments include streetscape improvements (wider sidewalks, benches, bulb outs) and façade improvements, as well as temporary seasonal measures such as planting pots and banners. The program is allotted both capital funding for new initiatives as well as annual operational funding.



Image credit: saskatoon.ca

Action 2:

Multi-sector commitment to transit investments for efficient and accessible mobility choices across the National Capital Region

Transportation can be challenging in a dispersed area like the National Capital Region. Continued investments, including frequency, weekend and night-time service improvements, are required to increase trips to and from Downtown by transit. A multipronged approach to mobility including improved public transit service, active transportation infrastructure, integrated mobility services (such as mobility-as-a-service or MaaS) platforms will be key to reducing congestion and improving accessibility to Downtown. Prioritizing active transportation investments in Downtown will provide additional ways of accessing Downtown, relieving strain on parking, while offering climate and public health benefits.

Steps to implementation:

- **Federal and Provincial governments to fund the transit budget gap** to maintain and improve service levels and build back consumer confidence in the transit system.
- **Identify ways to incentivize transit and boost transit ridership** during periods of low ridership (i.e. during late weekend hours).
- **Work with OC Transpo and employers to pilot an Employee Transit Pass to encourage transit use** and offer a predictable monthly revenue source for transit (similar to UPass at Ottawa U and Carleton).
- City of Ottawa and Ville de Gatineau to **identify and support mobility links between Ottawa and Gatineau** Downtowns (e.g., Gondola over the Ottawa River, Alexandra Bridge, Gatineau Tram).
- **Prioritize active transportation investments outlined in the Transportation Master Plan for the Downtown** where most active transportation happens (approximately 40% of all trips) (Step: re-introduce bike share program).
- **Initiate a Pilot Study to convert one-way streets to two-way** in key areas of the Downtown to enhance commercial opportunities and to increase public safety and comfort for pedestrians as per the Central and East Downtown Core Secondary Plan.

Action 3: Engage the creative sectors and urban design community

Good urban design and an attractive public realm has positive quantitative and qualitative outcomes including increased resident and business attraction, property values and civic pride. Downtown Ottawa is the symbolic heart of Canada, a major gateway to the country, and a place of pilgrimage for many Canadians. As such, its architecture and public realm should reflect and enhance this unique position. National and/or international design competitions should be used for public realm initiatives such as gathering spaces or major public buildings. Ottawa also benefits from post-secondary programs in fine arts and architecture as well as Indigenous design professionals. Involving the design community in urban design, public art and placemaking will build a culture of design excellence, create linkages to post-secondary institutions and cultural organizations, and enable the design community to find their place in re-invigorating the Downtown.

Steps to implementation:

- **Create a new downtown-focused “Capital Works” Initiative**

Engage international creative sectors in design competitions/expressions of interest for small-scale, public realm improvements that are easily implementable, low-cost, scalable and all-seasons, unique to downtown environments, and ongoing. Create design competition frameworks to inform future capital projects and investments and identify partnerships with post-secondary art, architecture, planning and design programs.



BEST PRACTICE:

Design Office: City of Montreal

Created in 1991, the mission of Montreal’s [Design Office](#) is to collaborate with designers and architects to enhance city planning, offering support to municipal departments and boroughs in implementing quality-focused processes through activities such as competitions, workshops, and events. Additionally, efforts are made to support the work of local designers and architects through incentives and projects to showcase their talent locally and internationally.

BEST PRACTICE:

Winnipeg's Annual Warming Huts competition

Created in 2009, the Warming Huts is an art and architecture competition on ice with entries from across the globe. Since its inception, it has garnered international attention and awards. In late January of every year, competition winners travel to Winnipeg to begin construction on their warming hut. Warming huts are then brought out to the Nestaweya River Trail for visitors to skate to, interact with, and enjoy. Warming huts remain out until the end of the skating season. Once created, huts are added to the skating trail in subsequent years.



Image credit: warminghuts.com

- With creative partners, **expand the City's mural program** and create additional opportunities to add light, colour and art to blank walls.



Image credit: wintercityedmonton.ca

BEST PRACTICE:

Edmonton WinterCity Strategy

The City of Edmonton's WinterCity Strategy includes design strategies to activate the city in winter including methods to block wind, maximize exposure to sunshine through orientation and design, use color to enliven spaces, create visual interest with strategic use of creative lighting, and provide infrastructure that supports the desired winter life. The Strategy has been successful in not only invigorating Edmonton in the winter but providing a model for other winter cities.

- Work with the City, building owners and design professionals to undertake a **design charette to explore a renewed vision and programming for the current Central Library building to consider incubator or cultural uses** and create a 'beacon' in the Downtown core.
- Work with the **National Capital Commission to ensure there is deliberate architectural direction** or guidance provided **for new buildings on federally-owned lands** at key locations.

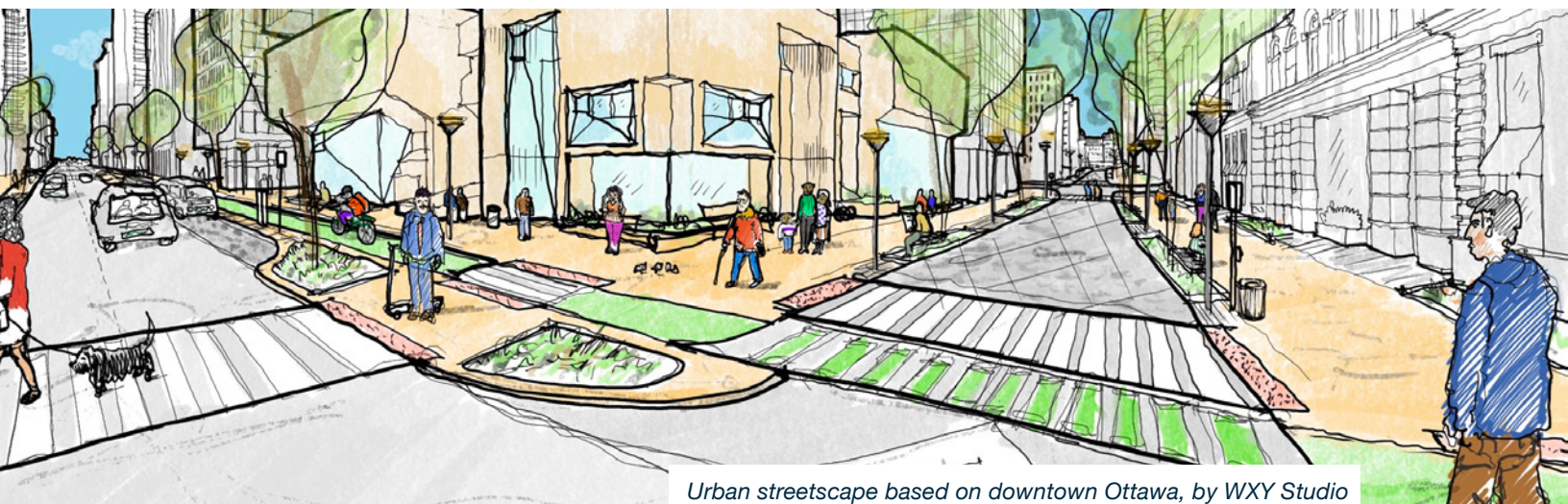


Creating cultural beacons

The Central Library Building at Metcalfe and Laurier will soon be replaced by a new Central Branch at Ādisōke at LeBreton Flats. The former library building represents an exciting opportunity to explore and pilot alternative programming, uses and design in the Downtown. The library building is currently under private ownership, having been sold by the City. The central location of the building provides an opportunity to create a cultural 'beacon' that draws people into the commercial core and provides a new destination in Downtown.



The Central Library Building



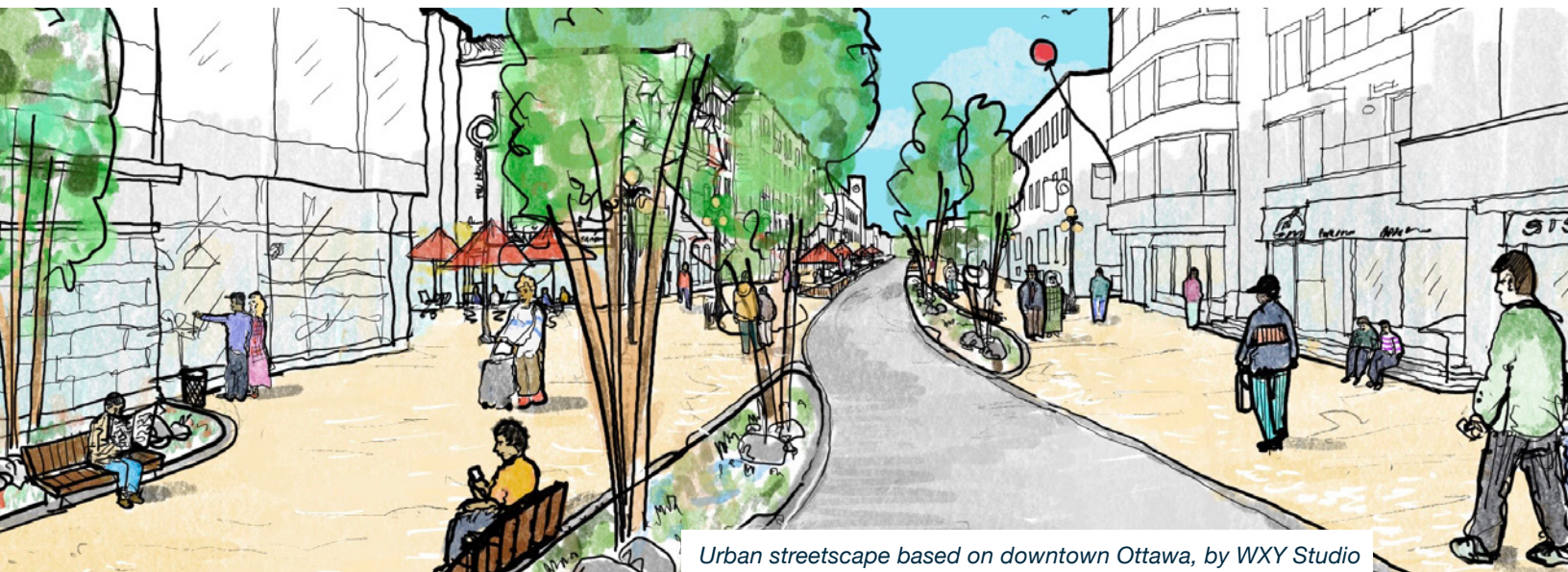
Urban streetscape based on downtown Ottawa, by WXY Studio

Action 4: Prioritize public realm investments for all seasons

As a winter city, it is imperative that the public realm be designed and activated over all four seasons in ways that celebrate Ottawa's seasonality, reflect the character and culture of the city, and maximise tourism opportunities, particularly during off-peak seasons. When designed creatively and with attention to detail, the use of temporary or pop-up public realm interventions such as farmers / craft markets, beer gardens, terrasses, parklets, public art, seating and gathering areas can provide high-quality and highly attractive settings for socializing, commerce, and arts and culture. To advance public realm improvements, there needs to be collaboration within Ottawa's multi-jurisdictional environment where responsibilities for infrastructure and management are divided between multiple entities. A coordinating office or initiative dedicated to revitalizing the downtown cores of Ottawa and Gatineau will serve to identify areas of collaboration and resolve duplication of processes and initiatives, or conflicting objectives.

Steps to implementation:

- **Create a Public Realm Implementation Plan** including recommendations from the Central and East Downtown Core Secondary Plan, Complete Streets Framework and Downtown Ottawa Urban Design Strategy.
- **Identify and secure resources for a Downtown Placemaking Fund to invest in climate-adaptive public realm improvements** (Step: Increase and redirect funding from Temporary Construction Encroachment permits to fund placemaking efforts; include public investment and corporate partnerships).
- Work with the municipalities of Ottawa and Gatineau, the National Capital Commission, Business Improvement Areas and other partners (**a "Capital Core Downtown Vibrancy Office"**) to **champion and harmonize initiatives and processes for revitalization and** secure five-year sustainable funding.
- **Prioritize the implementation** of ByWard Market and Sparks Street Public Realm Plans as models and leverage proximity to Wellington Street, Centre Block and Block 2 redevelopment.
- **Work with libraries and other civic institutions (NAC, post-secondary)** to activate right-of-way (ROW) and under-utilized public space.



Urban streetscape based on downtown Ottawa, by WXY Studio

Action 5: Invest in buildings and infrastructure and implement standards that support the greening of downtown, attractiveness of the public realm and climate resilience

Well-designed infrastructure that prioritizes both performance and design contributes to a more efficient and sustainable urban environment and can lead to long-term cost savings, environmental benefits, and enhanced quality of life. Prioritizing the highest architectural and design quality for new buildings while ensuring the maintenance of existing buildings is essential to fostering a sense of pride and safety, preserving architectural heritage and enhancing Downtown Ottawa's unique character. Further, regular maintenance of existing buildings prolongs their lifespan, contributes to the overall sustainability of the built environment, enhances property values, attracts investment, and bolsters the Downtown's reputation as an attractive destination for residents, businesses, and visitors.

Steps to implementation:

- **Prioritize investments** in infrastructure and asset management plans to promote greening, aesthetic benefits and enhance natural ecosystems.
- **Explore additional district energy opportunities** to support electrification and unlock development potential.
- Implement an **Environmental Tax Credit** for embodied carbon for adaptive re-use of building vs. demolition based on a per-square-footage GHG calculation.

- **Work with downtown partners** to encourage building maintenance, cleanliness of right-of-way, public realm interventions, and quality architecture and urban design –and communicate the value of these investments to building owners and tenants.



Zibi community development

Downtown-wide district energy systems

District energy systems distribute thermal energy on an area or neighbourhood-basis and typically consist of a heating and cooling centre, and a thermal network of pipes connected to area or neighbourhood buildings. These systems provide many benefits over conventional energy systems including: energy efficiency, reduced environmental impact, lower long term energy costs, and a more reliable and resilient energy network. Currently there are two district energy systems in Downtown Ottawa in the Parliamentary Precinct and at Zibi on the Ottawa River which could provide a template for the expansion of a Downtown-wide district energy system.

Green buildings to help the environment

In most cases, the embodied carbon in existing buildings exceeds any GHG savings that can be achieved through a new and more efficient building. With a need to reduce GHG, preserving buildings or establishing a fund from those that cannot be preserved will help advance climate goals.²⁸



Francois Dupuis Recreation Centre, Ottawa





Make downtown robust

Employment growth and economic diversification

Objectives:

- **Effectively market Downtown's value proposition** to businesses, residents,³⁰ and visitors at a national and international level as a unique and significant metropolitan experience.
- **Leverage under-utilized spaces** and concentration of economic activity to develop a diverse and entrepreneurial business ecosystem that supports small business development, diversification and growth.
- **Develop a dynamic arts and culture scene** as a major pillar of the Downtown economy and must-see destination.

Action 1: Position Downtown nationally and internationally

Experiencing the core area of Canada's Capital should be the main reason Canadians travel to the region and one of the main reasons tourists from other countries come to Canada. There must be a deliberate national and international positioning lens applied to everything that is done in this Action Agenda which starts with the question: "What impression will Canadian and international visitors get from this?" and the outcome must be to elevate that perception to international standards of impressiveness, attractiveness and confident place-identity.

Steps to implementation:

- Agree and commit to **maintenance and cleanliness standards** for major public spaces amongst all jurisdictions.
- Establish a **positioning strategy to enhance the Capital's visibility** internationally, beyond traditional visitor markets, including working with the Ottawa Board of Trade, Invest Ottawa, Ottawa Tourism, BIAs, and marketing specialists **to develop and implement a bold marketing campaign** aimed at promoting downtown as a place to live, work, play, invest, learn and visit, and target specific **international publications** for articles and features.

- Elevate the **dialogue with Destination Canada** to enhance the Capital's profile and presence.
- **Amplify awareness through a two-year, centralized social media channel** for Downtown events (Ottawa Alive!)

Action 2: Support small businesses and create vibrant commercial main streets

The ground floors of Downtown's main streets, including Bank, Sparks, Rideau, Elgin, Somerset and others are comprised of small commercial and retail spaces that have been particularly hard hit by changing retail patterns and the pandemic. These businesses are the backbone of Downtown's main streets but, in many cases, have suffered from a lack of investment and market conditions that favour large redevelopment projects. These challenges are compounded by new, larger floor plates that command high rents making it difficult for small retailers to establish themselves. CUI's work on main streets has demonstrated that small businesses anchor local economies accounting for approximately 25% of total employment and more than 25% of total sales revenue.²⁹ Their success is a neighbourhood's, and a city's, success.

Steps to implementation:

- **Work with BIAs and building owners to curate and activate** existing ground floor spaces, including lobbies, for arts, cultural and retail uses.
- **Expand the mandate and support to BIAs** to include business development and expansion.
- **Develop a construction mitigation strategy with funding** to support areas and main streets impacted by large public realm and infrastructure projects.
- **Create a shared data platform to track retail growth** and retention, inform planning, and match businesses with available retail space.



BEST PRACTICE:

Hamilton pop-ups licensing program

Hamilton, Ontario has implemented a pop-up licensing program under By-law 07-170, aimed at regulating various businesses to ensure the health and safety of residents. The program mandates businesses to obtain a Temporary Business License, which involves undergoing multiple inspections to ensure compliance with regulations. These inspections cover aspects such as health, fire safety, building codes, traffic, parking, and zoning regulations.

Action 3:

Reform procurement processes to create opportunities for local, small and BIPOC-owned enterprises

Overly complex procurement processes requiring lengthy proposals and extensive insurance requirements have made it very difficult for small and local enterprises to compete with large national and international firms to win requests for proposals or tenders for public projects. This not only diminishes the impact of local talent on shaping the city and region, it also fails to support small businesses, advance reconciliation or reward innovative solutions. There are examples in Canada and internationally of alternative processes (Expression of Interest, Open Ideas contest, Indigenous Procurement Initiatives) as a precursor to RFPs, and identifying local presence as a positive attribute that provides environmental benefits of local supply chains and uses the local labour pool. Applying new approaches to procurement for small or temporary placemaking projects provides an opportunity to test new models.

Steps to implementation:

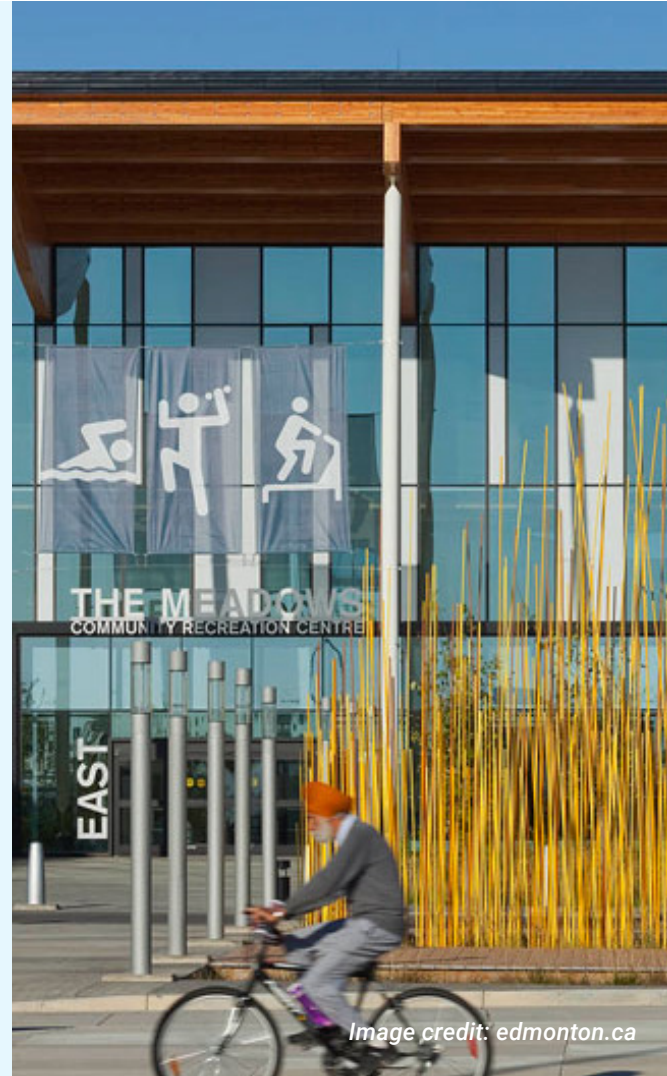
- **Develop a social procurement 'source-local' policy** focused on local, small and BIPOC-owned enterprises, as a model for adoption by other key employers including building owners, cultural and post-secondary institutions and include Indigenous procurement policies and participation plans.

BEST PRACTICE:

Edmonton's Office of City Architect and refinement of procurement for public buildings

Appointed as City Architect in 2010, Carol Bélanger was given a mandate to reform the procurement process for public buildings and establish a key role for architecture and design. Belanger established a "quality-based" procurement process to include a multi-stage process starting that includes the firm's vision, design history and design approach as well as the basics of schematic design for the desired building that are presented to a Design Review Committee by short-listed candidates.

In other instances, the City has hosted a design competition to select design solutions. Bélanger altered the selection criteria that would typically favour the lowest cost proposal by establishing a fee structure using guidelines established by the Alberta Association of Architects and allotting only 10 per cent of the overall score to design cost. The results have been a number of significant public buildings: recreation centres, libraries, transit hubs and pavilions that have consistently received design awards for quality of design and creative novelty.



Action 4: Increase the presence of post-secondary institutions

Universities and colleges are dynamic institutions that can have a highly symbiotic relationship with downtowns, bringing highly-skilled workers and students with large-scale space requirements to an institutionally and culturally-rich neighbourhood with the ability to accommodate their space and facilities requirements. The mutual benefits of these arrangements, economic, academic, and otherwise, has been demonstrated by extensive research on the subject.

Steps to implementation:

- **Work with post-secondary institutions** (Ottawa U, Carleton U, Algonquin College, La Cité) to establish a satellite presence in Downtown and/or expand current downtown footprint by considering non-traditional space.
- **Leverage opportunities for student housing** through adaptive re-use of commercial buildings.
- **Identify partnership opportunities between businesses and post-secondary institutions** to advance skills training, talent retention and business incubators.



BEST PRACTICE:

Re-purposing of Central Library for U of C school of Architecture, Planning and Landscape

In 2018, the University of Calgary took over the ground floor of the former Central Library in downtown Calgary after the building was vacated with the construction of the new Calgary Central Library. Space was leased to the university by the Calgary Municipal Land Corporation. The space is being used by faculty in urban design, architecture and landscape design as both a teaching facility as well as a studio and events space. With a key corner downtown location, use of the building for post-secondary programs enlivens the streetscape with activity and the presence of displays of student work. The Development Corporation was responsible for the initial investment of \$200,000 for retrofits to allow for the adaptive-re-use of the ground floor and basement.

Action 5: Designate an arts, culture and entertainment corridor

Downtown is a multifaceted area comprised of multiple arts, cultural, entertainment venues and distinct neighbourhoods: ByWard / Lowertown, Sandy Hill, Centretown, Chinatown, Little Italy, etc. A coordinated approach that uses events, public realm improvements, wayfinding and marketing to connect destinations can create a

signature identity that links creative venues and distinct areas, connects the vibrant arts and culture community, and supports local organizations and businesses. Events, festivals, and experiences that leverage the City's creative sectors provide a reason to be downtown, increasing foot traffic, retail activity and the overall appeal of Downtown Ottawa.

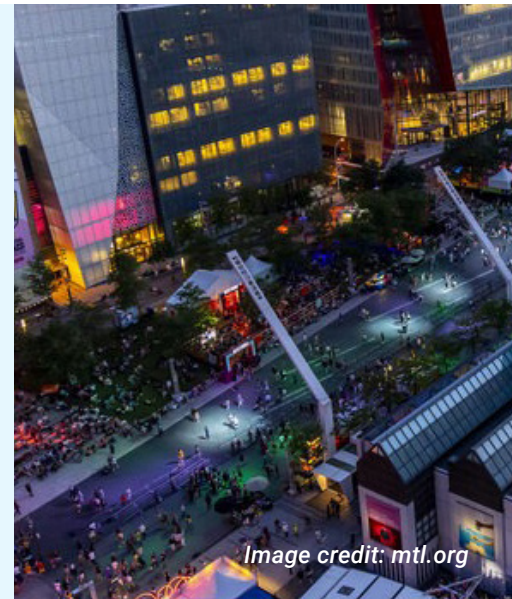
Steps to implementation:

- Establish a **Downtown Cultural and Arts District or Corridor** including consistent wayfinding, branding and promotion.
- **Implement and amplify the Nightlife Economy Strategy** and its actions for Downtown.
- **Organize and fund recurring arts-related programs** to bring people Downtown off-hours and off-season (Best practice: "First Friday", "Nuit Blanche", "Lights on Stratford").
- **Incentivize investments from public and private sectors** for new outdoor performance infrastructure such as lighting, permanent stages, public restrooms and beautification.

BEST PRACTICE:

Permanent festival amenities at Places des Art / Quartiers des Spectacles in Montréal

Quartiers des Spectacles, a large events and entertainment complex that includes the Places des Arts (theatres and indoor events space) and hosts the highest concentration of arts and cultural venues in Canada. The area includes permanent events spaces that can be retrofit for a variety of performance types and function outside of festival season as animated public spaces with seating, public art, light, a summer spray pad and views of downtown and Mont Royal.





BEST PRACTICE:

First Fridays, Nuit Blanche as example of recurring arts and cultural events

First Fridays are a popular monthly event usually hosted by a group of arts and cultural organizations (museums, private galleries, events spaces) to remain open late one night per month to the public. The recurring event drives clients to local businesses such as restaurants, bars and retail shops providing a economic boost. Nuit Blanche—literally “white night”—is a sleepless night that translates to “an all-night arts and culture extravaganza”. It happens in cities world wide and provides access to various arts and culture exhibitions, projections and installations. Toronto, Montreal and Saskatoon have annual Nuit Blanche festivals. In Toronto, Nuit Blanche is put together through the collaboration between the City and the arts community. Featuring over 1,600 art installations by around 5,800 artists since 2006, this award-winning event has produced over \$489 million in economic impact for the City.

Action 6:

Develop a business incubation district to diversify the economy in downtown

As the traditional government and professional services presence in Downtown shifts, new economic drivers are needed. Focusing on targeted and growing sectors of the economy in the areas dominated by large and medium-sized office complexes has the potential to breathe new life into Downtown, transforming it into a hub where post-secondary and government research institutions, start-ups, cultural organizations, design community, Indigenous organizations, and established companies are able to collaborate, innovate, and actuate new ideas and growth opportunities, building a renewed vision of the Downtown core as a destination for new and diverse businesses and industry.

Steps to implementation:

- **Work with the City, post-secondary institutions, Invest Ottawa and others** to identify key growth industries for Downtown (Step: Leverage the City's forthcoming Labour Market Assessment Study).
- **Establish a Business Incubation District** in the area bounded by Sparks, Bay, Gloucester, and Elgin Streets to revitalize and direct private sector investment in the Downtown including outreach and incentives for targeted sectors.
- **Work with City of Gatineau and other partners to link economic development initiatives** in Downtown with regional growth opportunities.



Make downtown inclusive

Safety and security for workers, residents, visitors, and vulnerable people

Objectives:

- **Urgently address** the interrelated crises of homelessness, mental health, and addiction with long term solutions focused on addressing root causes.
- **Provide critical social and safety supports** for existing residents and businesses in the Downtown to address the impacts of the multiple crises happening at street level.
- **Create a safe public realm** for all segments of the population, including vulnerable people, that prioritizes human dignity.

Action 1:

People first: Commit to a results-oriented collaborative action, with funding from all levels of government, to address homelessness, addiction, mental health and challenges affecting the livability and resilience of Downtown

Using a systems approach to reducing homelessness and addressing mental health, addictions, and multigenerational trauma of residential institutions with a compassionate approach that considers street level issues, is essential to finding solutions over the long term.

Steps to implementation:

- **Support and amplify current work including** City of Ottawa *Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan* and the *Housing and Homelessness Plan (2020-2030)* as well as the federal *National Housing Strategy (Housing First)* to fast track needed funding and policy changes to boost supports including emergency and permanent affordable housing, community health centers, transitional housing supports, and necessary wrap around services.

- **Ensure that the Housing and Homelessness Leadership Table (HHLT)** is the governance structure that drives the response in Ottawa as per the Housing and Homelessness Strategy.
- **Replicate or expand the Community Engagement Team (CET)** and programs such as Block Captains throughout Downtown, as needed, to support businesses and residents including vulnerable and street-involved individuals.
- Support calls for the Federal government to work with the provincial and municipal governments to develop a **pan-Canada Mental Health Strategy** to address challenges of individuals and issues in downtowns and main streets across the country.

Action 2:

Place next: Incorporate safety and accessibility into the public realm

When people think of incorporating safety into the design of public buildings and spaces there is often an association with surveillance cameras, fencing, and warning signs, however the solutions can be more nuanced and focused on prioritizing safety considerations, such as well-lit streets, clear sightlines, and accessible pathways. This is also true of traffic safety where the incorporation of protected bike lanes, landscaping, and adequate sidewalks can be just as effective as enforcement and other traffic calming measures such as speedbumps.

Steps to implementation:

- Support implementation of the **City of Ottawa's Complete Streets Implementation Framework**.
- **Support implementation of traffic calming and accessibility measures** such as priority crossing, prohibiting right-on-red, longer crossing lights at intersections, and enhanced snow clearance.
- **Adopt the CPTED standard** (Crime Prevention through Environmental Design) that includes street lighting, parkade entrances, weather protection and accessible transit stops in all seasons, after hours priority bus stops and apply standards to **new Downtown developments**.

Ongoing and existing initiatives

The following Initiatives represent work and plans underway to support implementation of the Actions:

- City of Ottawa Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan
- City of Ottawa Zoning By-law Review
- City of Ottawa Central and East Downtown Core Secondary Plan
- City of Ottawa Parks and Recreation Master Plan
- City of Ottawa Nightlife Economy Action Plan
- City of Ottawa Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan (2024)
- Office-to-residential conversion projects and City of Ottawa work to implement a streamlined process for the conversion of office space to residential uses
- ByWard Market Public Realm Plan
- Sparks Street Public Realm Plan
- City of Ottawa Complete Streets Implementation Framework
- Downtown Ottawa Urban Design Strategy
- City of Ottawa Transportation Master Plan – Parts 1 and 2
- City of Ottawa Energy Evolution Strategy
- City of Ottawa 15-Minute Neighbourhoods - Baseline Report (*completed as Part of the Official Plan review*)
- District Energy Systems
- City of Ottawa Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan
- City of Ottawa Housing and Homelessness Plan (2020-2030)
- City of Ottawa Community Engagement Team
- Federal National Housing Strategy
- CPTED training and application for Transit infrastructure
- National Capital Commission Core Area Plan
- Envisioning a Great Downtown – Revitalizing Downtown Ottawa – A Call to Action for our City
- Federal Housing Accelerator Fund – Putting the Housing Accelerator Fund into Action for Ottawa
- Ottawa Board of Trade – Economic Development Committee Reports
- Sparks Street BIA retail pilot program and “Locate Ottawa” relaunch
- Small Business Property Tax Sub-class



Resources for implementation

Realizing a “living capital” will require both leveraging work underway and initiating new actions. The combination of consistency and newness provides a pathway to implementation with results. Ottawa needs bold and creative thinking, big moves and both new funding and the reallocation of existing resources.

Resource considerations should include:

- **Initiate New Deal interim joint funding** from Federal, Provincial and Municipal governments
- **Guarantee 10-year Payment-in-Lieu-of-Taxes (PILT)** from the Federal government to the City of Ottawa
- **Identify new financial tools:** Bond issuance, pension fund vehicles, Canadian Infrastructure Bank (CIB)
- **Dedicate 1% of the HST generated in Downtown to downtown revitalization**
- **Apply Community Improvement Plan (CIP) instruments** such as Tax Increment Financing and Municipal Grants
- **Privilege public land reallocation** for housing and public realm
- **Amend the Municipal Act to allow the City to allocate parking revenue** and parking enforcement revenue to Downtown investment
- **Divert fees such as Temporary Construction Encroachment permits** to invest in the public realm

Appendices

Appendix A: Implementation plan

Implementation plan summary table

This implementation plan outlines a framework for the realization of this Action Plan, and to provide general guidance to organizations who are intended to lead the implementation of individual initiatives. To that end, in addition to identifying both primary and supporting implementation leads, it also outlines the initiatives respective timelines. **The table is a preliminary overview of the implementation plan and is subject to further refinement, detailing and costing amongst partners.**

TABLE 1

Summary of actions implementation with timeframe

Make downtown desirable	Make downtown resilient	Make downtown robust	Make downtown inclusive
Immediate Actions (2024 start)			
Increase the number of residents in Downtown through streamlined processes, density, prioritization of public land for housing and consideration of fee reductions	Create financial certainty and identify revenue sources for investment in Downtown including 10-year PILT guarantee, public-private partnership, funding from all levels of government and other revenue instruments Commit to efficient and accessible mobility choices including federal and provincial transit gap funding, incentivize transit use, employee transit passes and active transportation investments	Position Downtown Nationally and Internationally to build momentum and economic activity and enhance the perception of downtown.	Commit to a focused, results-oriented program with funding from all levels of government to address homelessness, mental health and addictions challenges affecting the livability and resilience of Downtown

Make downtown desirable	Make downtown resilient	Make downtown robust	Make downtown inclusive
Medium-term Actions (2025-2026 start)			
<p>Re-purpose federal buildings for new uses including incentives for office-to-residential conversions and other adaptive re-use models.</p> <p>Support the addition of services and amenities through revisions to the zoning bylaw, identification of service gaps, and options for improving services and amenities for residents and visitors including key destination-focused amenities</p>	<p>Prioritize Public Realm with secured funding, partnerships and implementation of the ByWard and Sparks Street Public Realm Plans and create a Downtown Vibrancy Office to champion and harmonize initiatives</p> <p>Engage the creative sectors and urban design community through a ‘Capital Works’ Initiative including design competitions to advance small-scale, scalable public realm improvements</p> <p>Create an Arts, Culture and Entertainment Corridor including wayfinding, branding, recurring programming, and investment in permanent event facilities</p>	<p>Foster economic vitality and opportunity at the main street level including activating ground floors, business development, construction mitigation, and data to track and link businesses with opportunities</p> <p>Increase the presence of post-secondary institutions including student housing, downtown locations and partnership opportunities</p> <p>Reform local procurement access for local, small and BIPOC-owned enterprises through a social procurement ‘source-local’ policy</p>	<p>Incorporate safety and accessibility into the public realm including traffic calming, accessibility measures and crime-prevention through environmental design (CPTED) approaches</p>
Long-term Actions (2027 + 2028 start)			
	<p>Invest in buildings and infrastructure to standards that optimize resilience including building maintenance, greening of downtown, and attractiveness of the public realm.</p>	<p>Develop a Business Incubation District to diversify the Downtown economy to identify key growth industries, leverage regional opportunities and utilize vacant commercial space</p>	

Implementation entities

Implementation entities refers to organizations, levels of government as well as industry and community representatives who will be primarily responsible for the implementation of the actions identified in this strategy. It is recognized that many individuals and groups will play a part, including some that are not specifically listed or that may also be included with one of the identified groups below (i.e. OC Transpo is included within the City of Ottawa).

- **City of Ottawa (City):** The City includes Council, departments, and arms-length bodies such as Ottawa Police Service and OC Transpo.
- **Ville de Gatineau (Ville):** La Ville includes conseil municipal, departments, and arms-length bodies such as police and STO.
- **Federal government including** Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), National Capital Commission (NCC) as a major land holder and special purpose body, and other Federal government entities and departments.
- **Province of Ontario (Province):** The Province of Ontario includes provincial ministries as well as arms-length bodies administered by the Province.
- **Economic Development Organizations:** Invest Ottawa, Ottawa Tourism, Ottawa Board of Trade (OBOT), Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), etc.
- **Development Community:** Composed of members of the land development and real estate communities including developers and landlords.
- **Design Community:** Composed of members of the consulting community including architects, urban planners, landscape architects, artists, performers, and urban designers.
- **Downtown Community:** Composed of downtown residents, organizations and businesses and other participants who may not fall within one of the other noted categories

Roles

Implementation roles have been summarized based on the organization(s) anticipated to lead the implementation versus those that are expected to play a supporting role (advocacy, advisory role, funding or in-kind support, etc.)

Timeline

The Action Agenda is intended to be implemented over a five-year timeline. The results of implementation are anticipated to continue beyond this timeline thus actions are identified based on timeframe to initiate action, as follows:

- **Immediate:** Initiatives to be initiated starting 2024
- **Medium-Term:** Initiatives to be initiated in years 2-3 of implementation (2025-2026)
- **Long-Term:** Initiatives to be initiated years 4-5 of implementation (2027 -2028)

TABLE 2

Action Agenda leads, roles, & timelines

Action	Primary Lead	Supporting Role	Initiation Timeline
Prioritize housing. Increase the number of residents in downtown through streamlined processes, density, prioritization of public land for housing and consideration of fee reductions	City, Province, Federal (PSPC)	Development Community, Design Community, Downtown Community	Immediate
Repurpose federal buildings. Expedite the repurposing of federal buildings for new uses to stimulate economic growth.	Federal (PSPC)	City, Development Community	Medium-Term
Enhance neighbourhood services and amenities. Improve existing neighbourhood services and amenities to attract and retain residents and visitors.	City, Federal (NCC, PSPC)	Development Community, Design Community	Medium-Term

Action	Primary Lead	Supporting Role	Initiation Timeline
<p>Fund for the future. Create financial security, establish a diversity of funding mechanisms and coordinate efforts and resources between Federal, Provincial, and Municipal governments, institutions, private sector and other partners to advance new and existing initiatives.</p>	<p>Federal (PSPC, Treasury), Economic Development Organizations, City</p>	<p>Province, Downtown Community</p>	<p>Immediate</p>
<p>Improve regional mobility. Commit to efficient and accessible mobility choices including federal and provincial transit gap funding, periods of free transit, employee transit passes and active transportation investments.</p>	<p>City, Ville</p>	<p>Federal, Province</p>	<p>Immediate</p>
<p>Engage the design community. Involve the design community in urban design, public art and placemaking to foster design excellence including design competitions and a ‘Capitol Works’ Initiative.</p>	<p>City, Federal (NCC), Ville</p>	<p>Economic Development Organizations, Development Community, Design Community, Downtown Community</p>	<p>Medium-Term</p>
<p>Prioritize public realm investment for all seasons. Invest in public spaces to enhance the city’s appeal and functionality and develop a Downtown Vibrancy Office to revitalize the downtown cores of Ottawa and Gatineau.</p>	<p>City, Ville, Federal (NCC), Economic Development Organizations</p>	<p>Development Community, Design Community, Federal (PSPC, NCC)</p>	<p>Medium-Term</p>
<p>Invest in future resilience. Invest in buildings and infrastructure at standards to optimize climate resilience, greening of downtown, and attractiveness of the public realm.</p>	<p>City, Development Community, Federal, Economic Development Organizations</p>	<p>Economic Development Organizations, Development Community, Design Community, Downtown Community</p>	<p>Long-Term</p>

Action	Primary Lead	Supporting Role	Initiation Timeline
Position downtown nationally and internationally. Apply a national and international lens to the Actions to elevate the perception and experience of attractiveness and place-identity and to build momentum and economic activity.	Economic Development Organizations	City, Federal, Downtown Community	Immediate
Support small businesses and main streets. Foster vibrancy and economic opportunity in main street areas including activating ground floors, business development, construction mitigation, and data to track and link businesses with opportunities.	City, Federal (NCC), Economic Development Organizations	Development Community, Design Community	Medium-Term
Support an inclusive economy. Provide procurement access for local, small, and bipoc-owned enterprises.	City, Federal, Province	Economic Development Organizations, Development Community	Medium-Term
Enhance post-secondary institutions. Increase the role and presence of post-secondary institutions downtown including student housing, downtown locations and partnership opportunities	Post-Secondary Institutions, Economic Development Organizations	City, Province, Development Community, Design Community,	Medium-Term
Promote an arts and culture corridor. Establish designated areas for arts, culture, and entertainment.	City, Federal, Economic Development Organizations, Design Community (Arts/Cultural organizations)	Development Community, Downtown Community	Medium-Term
Develop a business incubation district. Designate space for business attraction and growth to diversify the downtown economy.	City, Economic Development Organizations	Development Community, Ville, Federal, Downtown Community	Long-Term

Action	Primary Lead	Supporting Role	Initiation Timeline
Address homelessness, addiction and mental health. Commit to a focused, results-oriented program with funding from all levels of government to address homelessness, mental health and addictions challenges affecting the livability and resilience of downtown	City, Province, Federal	Ville, Province, Downtown Community (housing providers, social support organizations)	Immediate
Ensure safety and accessibility. Incorporate safety and accessibility measures into public realm planning.	City	Economic Development Organizations, Federal (NCC), Development Community, Design Community, Downtown Community	Medium-Term

Implementation plan by role

The following outlines key roles for each action by implementer. These actions include actions led by the implementation entity as well as steps requiring a key role such as regulatory changes, staff or financial support. Roles and responsibilities are subject to change based on detailed implementation planning.

City

- **Prioritize housing.** Increase the number of residents in downtown through streamlined processes, density, prioritization of public land for housing and consideration of fee reductions.
- **Enhance neighbourhood services and amenities.** Improve existing neighbourhood services and amenities to attract and retain residents and visitors.
- **Fund for the future.** Create financial security, establish a diversity of funding mechanisms and coordinate efforts and resources between Federal, Provincial, and Municipal governments, institutions, private sector and other partners to advance new and existing initiatives.

- **Improve regional mobility.** Commit to efficient and accessible mobility choices including federal and provincial transit gap funding, incentivize transit use, employee transit passes and active transportation investments.
- **Engage the design community.** Involve the design community in urban design, public art and placemaking to foster design excellence including design competitions and a 'capitol works' initiative.
- **Prioritize public realm investment for all seasons.** Invest in public spaces to enhance the city's appeal and functionality and develop a downtown vibrancy office to revitalize the downtown cores of Ottawa and Gatineau.
- **Invest in future resilience.** Invest in buildings and infrastructure at standards to optimize climate resilience, greening of downtown, and attractiveness of the public realm.
- **Position downtown nationally and internationally.** Apply a national and international lens to the actions to elevate the perception and experience of attractiveness and place-identity and to build momentum and economic activity.
- **Support small businesses and main streets.** Foster vibrancy and economic opportunity in main street areas including activating ground floors, business development, construction mitigation, and data to track and link businesses with opportunities.
- **Support an inclusive economy.** Provide procurement access for local, small, and bipoc-owned enterprises.
- **Enhance post-secondary institutions.** Increase the role and presence of post-secondary institutions downtown including student housing, downtown locations and partnership opportunities.
- **Promote an arts and culture district.** Establish designated areas for arts, culture, and entertainment
- **Develop a business incubation district.** Designate space for business attraction and growth to diversify the downtown economy.
- **Address homelessness, addiction and mental health.** Prioritize programs, funding and collaboration to address homelessness, mental health, and addiction issues.
- **Ensure safety and accessibility.** Incorporate safety and accessibility measures into public realm planning.

Federal

- **Prioritize housing.** Increase the number of residents in downtown through streamlined processes, density, prioritization of public land for housing and consideration of fee reductions.
- **Repurpose federal buildings.** Expedite the repurposing of federal buildings for new uses to stimulate economic growth. **[PSPC]**
- **Enhance neighbourhood services and amenities.** Improve existing neighbourhood services and amenities to attract and retain residents and visitors. **[NCC]**
- **Fund for the future.** Create financial security, establish a diversity of funding mechanisms and coordinate efforts and resources between Federal, Provincial, and Municipal governments, institutions, private sector and other partners to advance new and existing initiatives. **[PSPC]**
- **Improve regional mobility.** Commit to efficient and accessible mobility choices including federal and provincial transit gap funding, periods of free transit, employee transit passes and active transportation investments.
- **Invest in future resilience.** Invest in buildings and infrastructure at standards to optimize climate resilience, greening of downtown, and attractiveness of the public realm.
- **Engage the design community.** Involve the design community in urban design, public art and placemaking to foster design excellence including design competitions and a 'capitol works' initiative. **[NCC]**
- **Prioritize public realm investment for all seasons.** Invest in public spaces to enhance the city's appeal and functionality and develop a downtown vibrancy office to revitalize the downtown cores of ottawa and gatineau. **[NCC]**
- **Invest in future resilience.** Invest in buildings and infrastructure at standards to optimize climate resilience, greening of downtown, and attractiveness of the public realm. **[PSPC]**
- **Support small businesses and main streets.** Foster vibrancy and economic opportunity in main street areas including activating ground floors, business development, construction mitigation, and data to track and link businesses with opportunities. **[NCC]**
- **Support an inclusive economy.** Provide procurement access for local, small, and bipoc-owned enterprises.

- **Promote an arts and culture district.** Establish designated areas for arts, culture, and entertainment
- **Address homelessness, addiction and mental health.** Prioritize programs, funding and collaboration to address homelessness, mental health, and addiction issues.

Economic development organizations

- **Fund for the future.** Create financial security, establish a diversity of funding mechanisms and coordinate efforts and resources between Federal, Provincial, and Municipal governments, institutions, private sector and other partners to advance new and existing initiatives.
- **Prioritize public realm investment for all seasons.** Invest in public spaces to enhance the city's appeal and functionality and develop a downtown vibrancy office to revitalize the downtown cores of Ottawa and Gatineau. **[Tourism, OBOT, BIAS]**
- **Invest in future resilience.** Invest in buildings and infrastructure at standards to optimize climate resilience, greening of downtown, and attractiveness of the public realm.
- **Position downtown nationally and internationally.** Apply a national and international lens to the actions to elevate the perception and experience of attractiveness and place-identity and to build momentum and economic activity.
- **Support small businesses and main streets.** Foster vibrancy and economic opportunity in main street areas including activating ground floors, business development, construction mitigation, and data to track and link businesses with opportunities.
- **Enhance post-secondary institutions.** Increase the role and presence of post-secondary institutions downtown including student housing, downtown locations and partnership opportunities.
- **Promote an arts and culture district.** Establish designated areas for arts, culture, and entertainment.
- **Develop a business incubation district.** Designate space for business attraction and growth to diversify the downtown economy.

Other (province, development community, design community, downtown community)

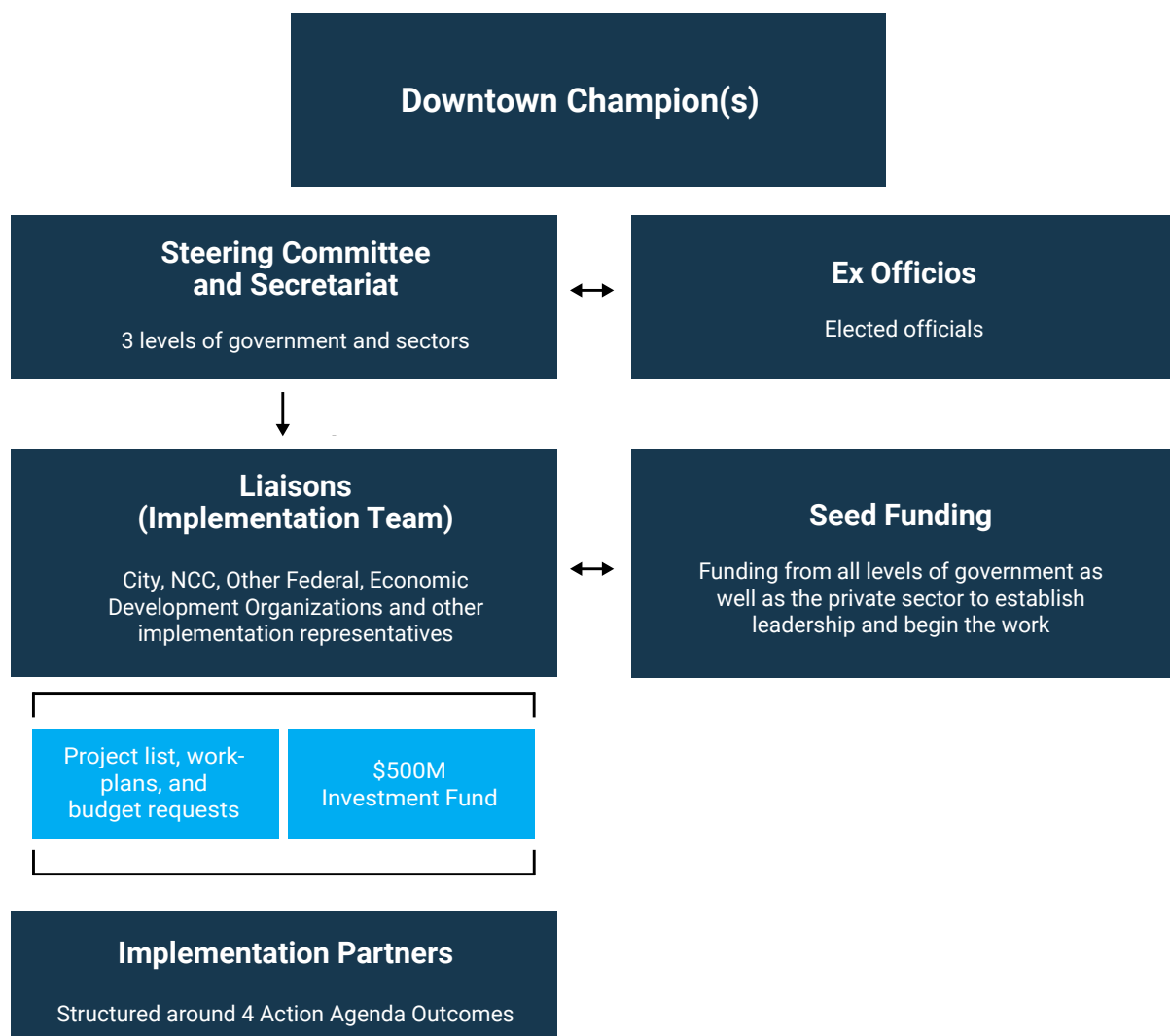
- **Prioritize housing.** Increase the number of residents in downtown through streamlined processes, density, prioritization of public land for housing and consideration of fee reductions. **[Province, Development Community]**
- **Improve regional mobility.** Commit to efficient and accessible mobility choices including federal and provincial transit gap funding, periods of free transit, employee transit passes and active transportation investments. **[Province]**
- **Engage the design community.** Involve the design community in urban design, public art and placemaking to foster design excellence including design competitions and a 'capitol works' initiative.
- **Prioritize public realm investment for all seasons.** Invest in public spaces to enhance the city's appeal and functionality and develop a downtown vibrancy office to revitalize the downtown cores of ottawa and gatineau. **[Ville]**
- **Support an inclusive economy.** Provide procurement access for local, small, and bipoc-owned enterprises. **[Province]**
- **Enhance post-secondary institutions.** Increase the role and presence of post-secondary institutions downtown including student housing, downtown locations and partnership opportunities. **[Post-secondary institutions]**
- **Promote an arts and culture district.** Establish designated areas for arts, culture, and entertainment.

Appendix B – Action agenda stewardship model

Stewardship model

The effectiveness of this model will be incumbent on the consistent involvement of those organizations identified here. It is also important to consider that as Plan implementation is underway, leaders, partners and advisors may evolve.

FIGURE 6
Action Agenda stewardship model



Appendix C – Plans reviewed

Ottawa specific

- Ottawa Board of Trade Economic Development Committee Report (2023)
- Ottawa Tourism Destination Stewardship Plan (2022)
- City of Ottawa Economic Assessment Report (2023)
- City of Ottawa Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan (2024)
- Ottawa Nightlife Economy Action Plan (2023)
- Invest Ottawa Strategic Plan (2023)
- Downtown Revitalization Task Force (2023)
- ByWard Market Public Realm Plan (2021)
- Sparks Street Public Realm Plan (2019)
- Lansdowne 2.0 Plan (2023)
- LeBreton Flats Master Plan (2020)
- NCC Core Area Plan (2005, 2025)
- Cultural Road Map for Ottawa (2019-2022)
- Tourism by the Numbers
- City of Ottawa Term of Council Priorities (2023)
- City of Ottawa Official Plan (2021)
- City of Ottawa Transportation Master Plan (2023, 2025)
- Secondary plans for downtown neighbourhoods
- Major development plans for Study Area
- City of Ottawa Housing and Homelessness Plan (2020-2030)
- City of Ottawa Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan
- City of Ottawa Specialty Spaces and Streets Maintenance Quality Standards
- City of Ottawa Community Improvement Plan program
- City of Ottawa 15-Minute Neighbourhoods – Baseline Report
- City of Ottawa Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan (2021)

Other cities - Canada

- Montreal - Acting Now to Prepare Recover
- Gatineau - Attractivité et diversification économique du centre-ville de Gatineau
- Gatineau - Programme Particulier D'urbanisme du Centre-Ville
- Calgary - Calgary Greater Downtown Plan
- Edmonton - Downtown Vibrancy Plan; 2030 City Plan; Edmonton Winter City Strategy
- Winnipeg - Downtown Recovery Framework
- Vancouver - Downtown Vancouver Reimagined
- Halifax – State of Downtown; Halifax Inclusive Economic Strategy (2022-27)
- Kitchener – Make It Kitchener 2.0
- Toronto - 2018-2022 Economic Development and Cultural Divisional Strategy

Other cities – U.S, Europe

- Washington DC - Comeback Plan and DC's Downtown Action Plan
- Philadelphia - Respond, Restart, Recharge, Reimagine
- New York City - Action Plan: Making New York Work for Everyone
- Chicago - Central City Recovery Roadmap
- Boston – Revive and Reimagine: A Strategy to Revitalize Boston's Downtown
- San Francisco - Roadmap to San Francisco's Future
- Limerick 2030: An Economic and Spatial Plan for Limerick, IR

Acknowledgements

This report was created by the Canadian Urban Institute in partnership with the Ottawa Board of Trade, the City of Ottawa, Invest Ottawa, Ottawa Tourism, and the National Capital Commission. CUI facilitated input to this plan with more 75 attendees at the Ottawa Downtown Summit held November 23, 2023 and interviewed and engaged partners across different fields and industries separately and as part of the creation of this Action Agenda. We thank each and everyone of the individuals who provided feedback and ideas.

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References

- 1 *Data:* City of Ottawa for commercial property tax revenue (commercial and office space tax class) and PILT revenue, summarized at the scale of the Ward using Rideau-Vanier and Somerset Wards for their proximate area to the downtown Study Area used for this work. For residential, property tax revenue is based on a per unit basis using and property tax rate based on average assessed value of a residential unit.

Assumptions and analysis: The Do-Nothing Scenario assumes a decline in commercial assets by 20% in assessed value with consideration that Class A assets would retain their assessed value from 2016 (but not appreciate), Class B assets would likely decline by 20-40% in value and Class C assets would be based on the value of land, not the building. A similar calculation would be true for payment-in-lieu of taxes (PILT) for federal buildings.
- 2 Assumptions for these estimates including: 1) property tax revenue per housing unit of \$5,170 as per average assessed value in downtown; 2) annual resident spend based on food, housing, services assuming 50% of disposable income spent locally; 3) Average spend per tourist person in downtown of \$80; 4) Commercial property tax based on estimated assessed value of \$20 per square foot calculated for property tax estimate using City of Ottawa tax estimator and assuming that most jobs are accommodated in existing under-utilized space with a net new total of 2 million sq ft of additional commercial space added. The calculation of revenue also assumes 500,000 sq ft of existing commercial space is converted from commercial to residential resulting in a lower mill rate or property revenue for this space.
- 3 *Data source:* Aggregated mobility data is provided by Spectus, a location intelligence platform. Data is collected from anonymized users who have opted-in to provide access to their location data anonymously, through a CCPA and GDPR-compliant framework. Through its Social Impact program, Spectus provides mobility insights for academic research and humanitarian initiatives. The Spectus responsible data sharing framework enables research partners to query anonymized and privacy-enhanced data, by providing access to an auditable, on-premise Data Cleanroom environment. Sensitive Points of Interest are removed from the dataset entirely. All final outputs provided to partners are aggregated in order to preserve privacy.

Analysis: School of Cities, University of Toronto, 2023. For the purpose of this analysis, working hours are 8 AM to 6 PM, Monday to Friday. After-work hours consist of weeknights 6 PM to 8 AM + the entire weekends (all hours on Saturday and Sunday). The recovery metrics are computed by counting the number of unique visitors in a city's downtown area in the specified time period and then dividing it by the standardized number of unique visitors during the equivalent time period in 2019 using a Self-Attention-based Imputation for Time Series (SAITS) modelling technique. A recovery metric greater than 100% means that for the selected inputs, the mobile device activity increased relative to the comparison period. A value less than 100% means the opposite, that the city's downtown has not recovered to pre-COVID activity levels. The analysis applies the boundaries used for the purpose of this Action Agenda.
- 4 City of Ottawa data for September 2019 vs. September 2023.
- 5 Research from Ottawa Public Health revealed that one in four residents (25%) reported poor mental health in 2021 compared to just 6% in 2015. There is also evidence that some groups are more affected, or are faring worse, than others including: people with disabilities, people who identify as LGBTQ2S+, racialized and youth, and those with low income (less than \$60,000). Many of these vulnerable populations reside in Downtown.
- 6 Environics Analytics, 2023. Statistics Canada, 2021.
- 7 Colliers Ottawa Office Market Report, Q4 2023. The Downtown is defined by Colliers as the area within the boundaries of Elgin, Lisgar, Bronson and Wellington, a small subsection of the overall Study Area of this plan.
- 8 PWC, The Impact of the Pandemic on downtown areas of Canada's six major cities, 2021. Total office inventory is 28.5M sq ft based on the Statistics Canada boundary used for the purpose of this Plan to define downtown.
- 9 Colliers Ottawa Office Market Report, Q4 2023. Vacancy rate refers only to office space within the boundaries of Elgin, Lisgar, Bronson and Wellington.

- 10 Colliers Ottawa Office Market Report, Q1 2024.
- 11 Environics Analytics, 2023.
- 12 Environics Analytics, 2023.
- 13 Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan, staff report to City of Ottawa Finance and Corporate Services Committee, March 5, 2024.
- 14 Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan, staff report to City of Ottawa Finance and Corporate Services Committee, March 5, 2024. Ottawa Tourism, 2023.
- 15 Data from other cities shows that Ottawa is more similar to Vancouver with a 1:1 ratio of residents to jobs. Calgary is at the top with 4 jobs per downtown resident, followed by Montreal at 2.4 and Halifax at 2. Toronto, Edmonton and Winnipeg are similar with one another at 1.7 jobs per person. Revitalization appears to have a more consistent relationship between the type of jobs and the quality of the downtown in terms of amenities, activities, and access than exclusively a jobs to resident ratio. Data: Statistics Canada, 2021.
- 16 Statistics Canada, 2021
- 17 Environics Analytics, 2023
- 18 Statistics Canada, 2021
- 19 Statistics Canada, 2022, 2021. All three cities noted out rank Ottawa in terms of absolute numbers of new downtown residents added for the period of 2016-2021: Montreal (21,340 new residents), Calgary (8,100), Halifax (5,288), and Ottawa (4,444).
- 20 CHMC Rental Market Report, January 2024
- 21 City of Ottawa development permit data, 2023; CMHC, Housing Starts, 2019-2023
- 22 Calculation based on the Somerset Ward at \$15M per sq km and Rideau-Vanier at \$6M per sq km of residential property tax as the two highest grossing Wards in downtown compared to \$550k - \$2M per sq km for the average suburban ward.
- 23 Summary Update of Comparative Municipal Fiscal Impact Analysis. Hemson Consulting Ltd. September 9, 2021
- 24 Statistics Canada, 2016. 2016 data is used given the patterns of travel in 2021 due to pandemic lockdowns. Estimates based on the goals of 40,000 new residents and 50,000 more jobs and anticipating some increase in transit ridership from 2016 levels.
- 25 School of Cities, 2023. Data source: CoStar
- 26 School of Cities, 2023. Data source: Spectus
- 27 Given the demand for housing, there is potential for the Lebreton Master Plan to be adjusted to shift the mix of housing versus commercial space.
- 28 The four Council priorities as established in the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan are: 1) affordable housing and more livable for all; 2) connected with reliable, safe and accessible mobility options; 3) green and resilient; 4) diversified and prosperous economy. The 8 principles of the City's 2024 Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan are: Environmental Sustainability; Preparedness and Resilience; Growth and Diversification; Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion; Talent and Innovation; Unique Geography; Partnerships and Collaboration; and One City, Two Languages.
- 29 Canadian Urban Institute Measuring Main Street project, 2024.
- 30 CUI's work on office to residential conversions included an analysis of the GHG impacts of conversion versus construction of a new building under current building and energy code standards. The results revealed that a new building cannot compensate for the demolition of a building given that the majority of GHG impacts are in the embodied carbon, not the building operations.



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