



# TOWN OF PONOKA

## Downtown Action Plan



JULY 2017



## Acknowledgements

This plan is the result of the contributions made by:

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## Adopting Resolution

At their meeting on Tuesday, September 12, 2017, Council passed the following resolution:

Moved by Councillor Prediger

“Council adopts the Town of Ponoka Downtown Action Plan dated July 2017 as a general guide for the future planning of the physical improvements in the Downtown and the Town’s participation in efforts to attract increased levels of tourist and customer patronage of the Downtown subject to the following:

- a. The Downtown Action Plan will be used as the starting point for future more detailed plans undertaken by the Town in planning for future infrastructure and public space improvements;
- b. More detailed planning undertaken by the Town in the form of detailed site plans and construction drawings may affirm, refine or lead to changes from the directions of the Downtown Action Plan;
- c. The Downtown Action Plan will be used as a starting point for the selection, assignment of resources and delivery of annual events and initiatives intended to make Downtown more prosperous;
- d. Where so authorized through the formal adoption of the above mentioned plans by Town Council, changes from the direction in the Downtown Action Plan will not require a formal amendment.”

*CARRIED*

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# Downtown Action Plan

## Introduction

In 2007 the Town of Ponoka lead a process to evaluate and assess the potential for revitalizing the downtown area. The resulting report, Retooling Downtown Ponoka, put forward many suggestions and ideas on how to make downtown more attractive. It established a vision based on a conceptual drawing of a more fully developed, compact commercial and mixed use area with more activities and connections to the river valley.

Unfortunately, little happened after the 2007 report and downtown today largely remains very similar to what it is like in 2007. Some positive changes did take place such as the addition of more retail space and residential units. The community has expressed a desire to make further progress and to that end the Heritage & Downtown Revitalization Committee was established in late 2015 to be the lead in these efforts. In late 2016, the Downtown Ponoka Action Plan process got underway to assist the Heritage & Downtown Revitalization Committee in their role.

## Purpose of Action Plan

1. To re-affirm the overall vision for Downtown Ponoka based on the 2007 Retooling Downtown Ponoka report
2. To update the suggestions and directions of the 2007 Retooling Downtown Ponoka report
3. To provide a framework for decision making and action in Downtown Ponoka to guide the community's efforts

## Structure of Document

This document has been written to supplement and update the 2007 Retooling Downtown Ponoka report. Many of its observations pertaining to the challenges and possible opportunities facing Ponoka and downtown remain relevant today. This document picks up at the beginning of Chapter 3 of the 2007 report to re-affirm the vision and provide a more detailed set of actions for implementation based on broad topics.

Neither the 2007 Retooling Downtown Ponoka report nor this document should be treated as a static document. As circumstances facing downtown change there will be a need to adjust. Some initiatives may yield immediate results and others will take more time to come to fruition. Levels of resources committed to the efforts, be it public funding or volunteer time, will fluctuate. There is no single, right way to move forward.

*"just start somewhere...I feel there is a lot of talk but people only get enthusiastic about something when they see things taking shape." (2017 survey respondent)*



# Downtown Action Plan

The Downtown Action Plan consists of four main parts:

1. The updated vision and major actions to be pursued over the coming years;
2. A recommended streetscape design to guide the physical improvement of the streets and sidewalks as infrastructure re-investment and major upgrades are undertaken;
3. A parking management plan to guide the long term management and planning of public and private parking opportunities; and
4. A broad marketing strategy to attract visitors, customers and investment to the downtown.





# Downtown Action Plan

## A Vision for Downtown Ponoka

*“It is 2043 and twenty-five years have passed since the creation of the first version of the Downtown Action Plan. Downtown Ponoka is a lively, clean and active area with plenty to see and do for residents and visitors alike. The many small shops and services cater to patrons’ needs and special events draw people to the area from far away. Downtown Ponoka is a top choice to visit, shop, hang out and socialize with friends and fellow residents. Patrons and visitors enjoy a pleasant, attractive urban setting characterized by comfortable and appealing streetscapes and public places.”*

**Goal:** to maintain and enhance the downtown core as the primary retail and commercial district for the town and surrounding region by:

- Creating a mixed use environment by making an aesthetically pleasing place to shop, work, live and play;
- Creating a sense of place through the development of a safe, clean and pedestrian friendly environment;
- Attracting new investment and businesses to the downtown and supporting the development of vacant lots and underutilized properties;
- Encouraging the restoration and preservation of historically significant buildings;
- Providing an adequate supply of parking for customers;
- Working in conjunction with downtown merchants to address issues such as uniform shopping hours, customer service, business streetscapes and promotions; and
- Encouraging business owners to take a proactive role in creating engaging activities, special events and entertainment opportunities in the downtown core.

## Master Plan Concept

Figure 1 provides a graphic representation of what the long term future development of Downtown Ponoka could be like. It includes many concepts and suggestions. The precise look of specific properties and streets may vary from the concept. It is intended as a means of relating the broad vision to the physical space and is not meant to give set direction on the development of individual properties.

The prime idea conveyed in the development concept is to create more critical mass in the form of building area and spaces to accommodate more activities and more people. This involves adding residential units, attracting anchor tenants and creating draws to the area. Working towards the development concept will take many years. Success will depend on the efforts made and the economic climate over those years.



# Downtown Action Plan

Figure 1: Master Plan Concept



**Legend**



Existing and Renovated Buildings



New Buildings



# Downtown Action Plan

**Core** ideas for the future of Downtown Ponoka include:

- Encourage building on vacant lots and more intense use (more floor area) of properties
- Create a central, civic square for celebrations and special events
- Improve the streetscapes and appearances of streets to make them more inviting and appealing
- Plant more trees along streets
- Build more pedestrian and bicycle connections and links to surrounding areas
- Put civic uses like the Town Hall in the downtown area
- Develop the River Valley to create attractions and draws to the area
- Promote mixed used development (example: residential and commercial in same building)
- Increase residential density in the downtown area
- Provide adequate, attractive and functional parking areas for customers
- Build up the main commercial corridor along 50 Street

## Land Use Policy Areas

Different parts of the downtown area will play different roles in fulfilling the long term vision. Figure 2 shows six (6) distinct areas where varying land use policies and directions should be applied.

A central aspect is the development of a commercial and mixed use core that encompasses the existing development between 50 Street and 51 Street and extends along major travel routes. This includes a long term focus on 50 Street and the opportunity to add an anchor/draw to the north end and gradually fill the space between. Similar commercial expansion or transition along 48 Avenue continues the trends already started along this entranceway to the core area.

Residential areas will play a key role in the provision of a more intense pattern of residential development over time. In the residential areas closest to the commercial/mixed use it may take the form of medium and high density using multi-family residential types of buildings. It may also take the form of residential use in combination with other uses within the mixed use/commercial area.

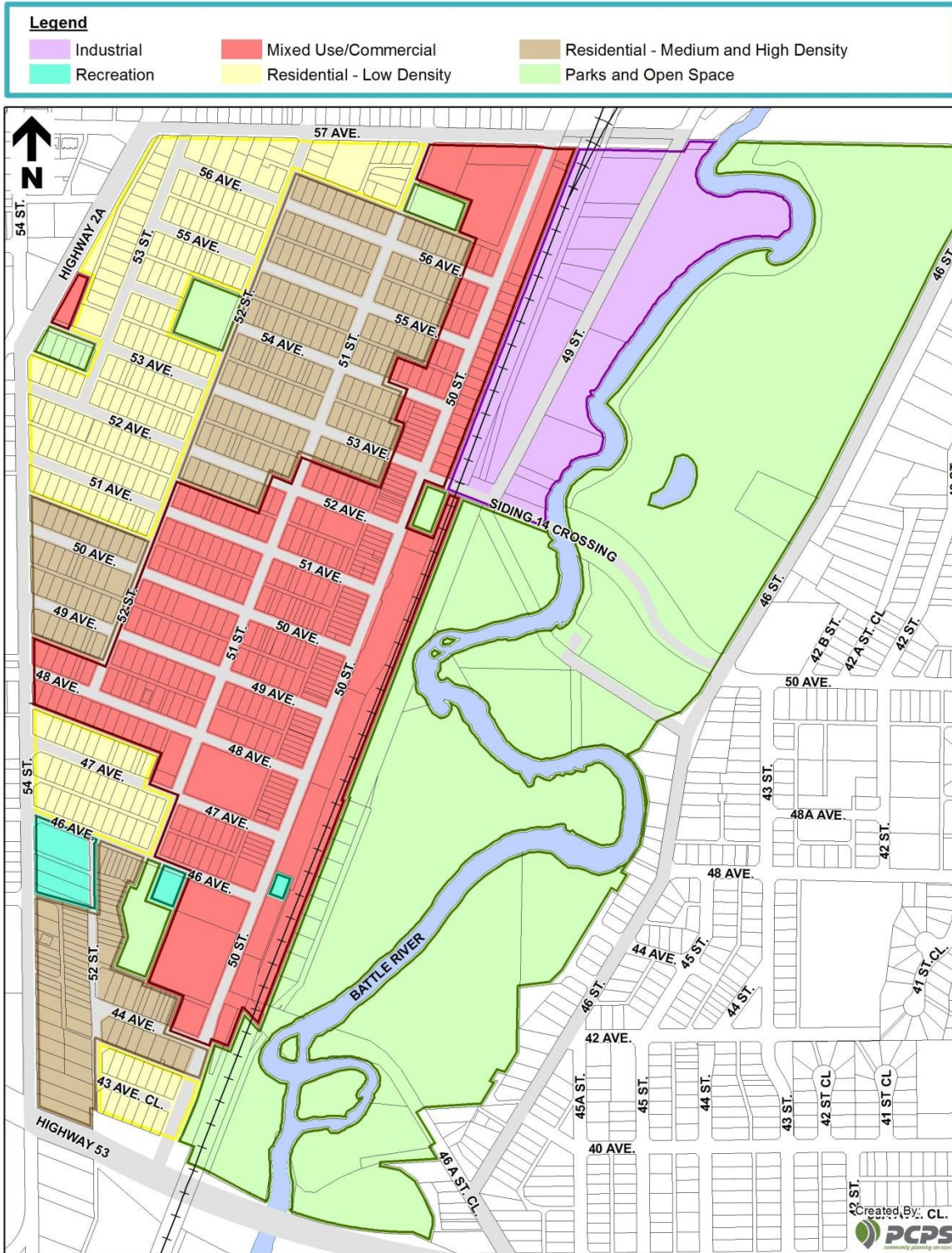
Parks and Open Spaces and Recreation sites provide opportunity for interesting areas with their own unique character and can draw people to the area. Existing spaces are shown on Figure 2 with the Battle River Valley being the most significant asset.

The existing industrial park is acknowledged and is not likely to be relocated. While close to downtown, the industrial use does not pose a significant barrier to revitalization of the overall area.



# Downtown Action Plan

Figure 2: Land Use Policy Areas





# Downtown Action Plan

## Role and Function of Streets

The public street is the one item that can tie the various parts of the downtown together to move towards the future vision. Well designed and attractive streets convey customers, visitors and residents through the area. The uniform and regular use of design elements like landscaping, sidewalk patterns and light standards gives a sense of a unique place in the community. Attractive, tree lined streets appeal to pedestrians and help blend what can sometimes be a diverse architecture along a street.

Figure 3 lays out the anticipated function and approach to the many streets within downtown. These include:

Provincial Highway – major thoroughfare managed by the Province and subject to functional plans for future intersection changes and landscaping upgrades; opportunity to approach the Province about incorporating similar landscaping and streetscape elements once a design is selected

Major Road – Through Traffic – streets that allow for the flow of traffic into and through the downtown area; for the most part existing streets are attractive and already tree lined with the intent to maintain their character and function

Major Commercial Street – Full Streetscape Treatment – streets that connect most of the mixed use and commercial core and intended to be redeveloped over time to create a more pleasant and attractive space based on the selected streetscape design

Major Commercial Street – Transitional Streetscape Treatment – streets that link the residential areas to the mixed use and commercial area and form an edge or boundary between these areas and intended to be redeveloped using a reduced version of the selected streetscape design; also, proposed to serve as a major connection route to the Community Wellness Centre and Aquaplex sites

Residential Street – streets that mainly have residential uses along them and are intended to retain their existing tree lined character

Industrial Street – street that serves the existing industrial park and not intended for redevelopment based on the selected streetscape design

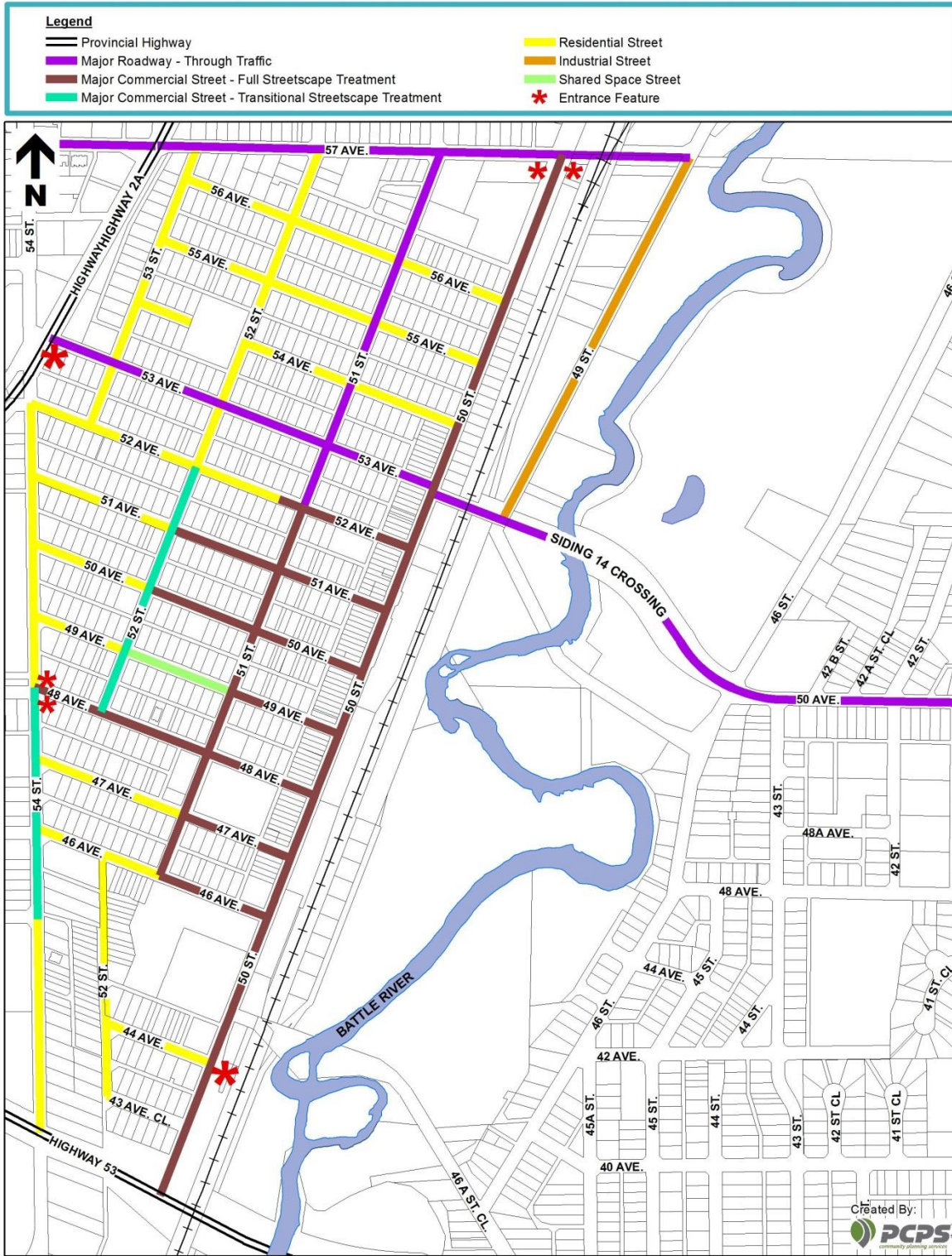
Shared Space Street – street that is intended to provide local vehicle access but have the ability to be closed off to favour pedestrian only use during special events; design of the space may draw on elements used in the selected streetscape design for the major commercial streets and may include its own unique elements such as textured or patterned road surface

Figure 3 also shows the location of future entrance features. These serve as key markers to convey the sense that one is entering a distinct part of the community. The feature may include signage tying into an overall wayfinding scheme and unique items like banners or a marker post.



# Downtown Action Plan

Figure 3: Street Classifications





# Downtown Action Plan

## Pedestrian Circulation and Connectivity

The ability to walk and move through downtown without relying on an automobile is a key part of the long term vision. An attractive and well connected pedestrian circulation system is critical in getting people out of their cars and walking about. Figure 4 shows the overall concept for pedestrian circulation.

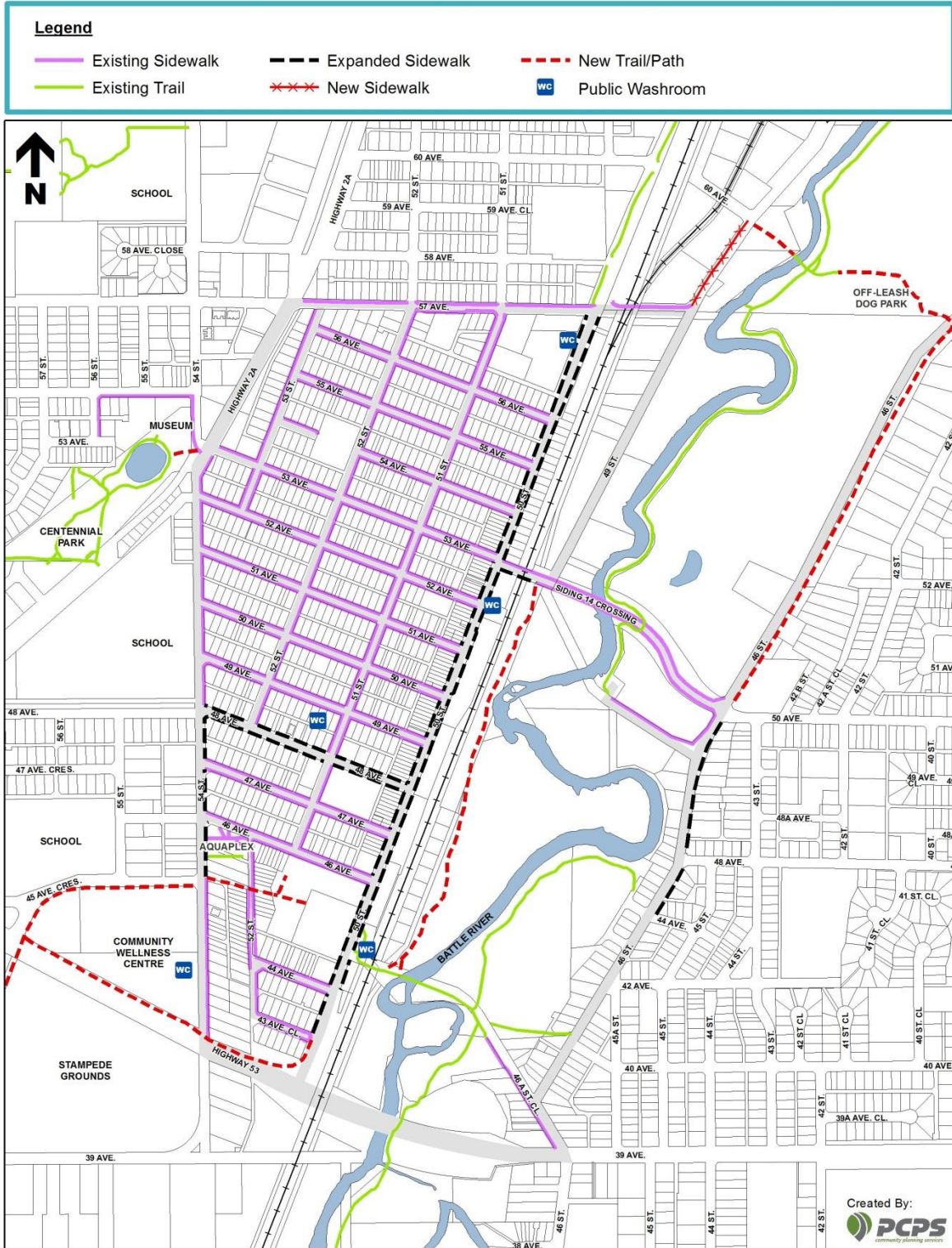
Key ideas and directions are:

- Maintaining the grid network of existing local sidewalks throughout the residential and mixed use and commercial areas
- Creating more connections and opportunities for different routes into and through downtown
- Filling in gaps in the sidewalk and trail network such as connecting the paths in Centennial Park to the sidewalk along 53 Avenue
- Providing a path and sidewalk from the IGA site to 45 Avenue Crescent and then along 45 Avenue Crescent to the Stampede Grounds
- Providing a path connection from the south end of 50 Street along the north side of Highway 53 to access the Community Wellness Centre and Stampede Grounds
- Providing expanded sidewalks (meaning a minimum 6ft width) along key routes such as 54 Street, 48 Avenue and 50 Street to make better connections to the trail system
- Adding new sidewalks, expanded sidewalks and trails to the trail system within and just outside the river valley to strengthen the connection to downtown and provide more walking route options; includes a new trail connecting to the gazebo by the old dam site
- Providing public washroom facilities at key locations to encourage walking and longer visits to the downtown



# Downtown Action Plan

Figure 4: Pedestrian Circulation Concept







# Downtown Action Plan

## Topic: Attracting People to Downtown Ponoka – The Customer Experience

### Context:

The success of Downtown Ponoka depends on the ability to attract people to the area. The reasons people come to Downtown are varied and a broad, multi-faceted approach will be needed. Some people will come to enjoy the pleasant physical setting; some people will come to their favorite restaurant or retailer. Others will come for special events or to visit a friend who lives close to Downtown. Some people will come out of desire to support local business and some people will visit as part of a weekend day trip based on word of mouth or a sense of exploration.

There is no single action or solution that will make Downtown Ponoka successful. It will take efforts on many fronts. The two most important ingredients for this effort are a determination to succeed and perseverance.

### Suggested Actions:

- Action A1: Provide a high quality experience. This relates to the nature of the goods and services provided and the type of customer experience that is offered.
  
- Action A2: Expand business hours beyond 6pm to the highest degree possible. Communicate regularly about the businesses and services that a customer can access after 5pm.
  
- Action A3: As businesses, coach and support each other in offering high quality experiences to all customers; even if they do not make a purchase. Hold “business after hour” events or “café sessions” to encourage as much cross-marketing between businesses as possible.
  
- Action A4: Demonstrate pride and quality by creating an attractive store front appearance that draws people in. This can include the quality of building architecture, the use of window displays, clear and attractive signage, seasonal decorations, and flower pots and benches in front of the business.



# Downtown Action Plan

## Topic: Built Heritage and Architectural Guidelines

### Context:

Downtown Ponoka hosts many of the community's historic buildings and sites. The heritage inventory conducted under the Alberta Municipal Heritage Partnership Program provides a starting point for decisions on individual sites. The architectural guidelines supplied through the Alberta Main Street Programme provide direction on how renovation of existing and new building construction can reflect traditional commercial building design.

The challenge for Downtown Ponoka is to preserve its connections to its past as part of what sets Ponoka apart from any other Central Alberta town. This sense of history can be an attraction or draw for some; however, not all structures were constructed or maintained in a manner that will allow their continued use. Reinvestment to create useable commercial and mixed use space and resulting changes to individual buildings and sites is expected.

### Suggested Actions:

Action B1: In setting the expectations for building construction and redevelopment combine aspects of preserving the best examples of traditional building style and providing direction to new buildings to fit in with the street or add visual interest on their own.

Action B2: Create a heritage themed interpretative walk or self-guided tour brochures/website.

Action B3: Implement the Downtown Design Guidelines created through the Main Street Program and the Retooling Downtown Ponoka report for the mixed use/commercial precinct. The intent is to give direction to building owners and the developers of new buildings about the community's expectations regarding the traditional elements that are favoured in design and appearance of buildings. This includes adding the guidelines to the Town's Land Use Bylaw. (see accompanying Central Commercial District).

Action B4: Ensure that proposed demolition of buildings that are on the heritage inventory receive sufficient scrutiny prior to approval of any proposed demolition or renovation. In the case of demolition, this should include the ability to slow the process and allow the Town to determine if it wishes to intervene to preserve the building. Intervention by the Town may include purchase of the property and building or a conditional grant to refurbish and maintain the building. (Note: see accompanying heritage overlay)



## Downtown Action Plan

Action B5: If a building on the heritage inventory is not structurally sound and cannot be salvaged for meaningful, continued use then the replacement building should incorporate some elements of the original building's appearance and design. This may include echoing rooflines, window and door spacing, use of similar building cladding and similar approaches.



# Downtown Action Plan

## Topic: Urban Design and Site Layout

### Context:

The proper placement of buildings on a site and their relation to the public space can make a significant contribution to the attractiveness and sense of comfort in an outdoor space. In a traditional downtown setting, this means framing the street with buildings along the edge to form a street wall. The sense of uniformity and enclosure gives the area a different feel. Building mass, especially at grade, is an important ingredient to making downtown feel compact and full of activity. In a residential setting, sensitive design it can mean providing for a gradual transition from one form of housing and density to another.

### Suggested Actions:

- Action C1: Promote the development and infilling of street walls wherever possible within the mixed use and commercial area. Many of these opportunities are shown in the Master Plan Concept (Figure 1). The Land Use Bylaw should include requirements to pull building fronts to the front of their lot and extend across the entire lot frontage.
- Action C2: On-site parking, if desired by the developer of a property, should be located behind or to the side of buildings. Parking along the edge of a sidewalk should be separated through the use of a low fence, hedge or landscaping bed. On larger sites, a liner building (narrow building) should be considered to shield the view of the parking area.
- Action C3: Favour building construction at grade over parking lot construction. Create a parking management plan for Downtown addressing the supply and operating considerations for private and public parking (see accompanying document). Update the parking management plan as needed.
- Action C4: Where a property has access to a rear lane, this access should be used as much as possible for on-site parking and utilitarian functions such as solid waste collection. Where the building itself cannot shield these items from view from the public street, screening in the form of fencing and landscaping should be provided.
- Action C5: Take advantage of opportunities to create terminating vistas at the end of streets. This can be accomplished with building placement and with permanent or temporary placement of landscaping or a key feature such as a piece of public art.



# Downtown Action Plan

- Action C6: Encourage two storey building construction throughout the mixed use and commercial area. Building construction greater than two floors should be encouraged to locate in the central part of the mixed use and commercial area.
- Action C7: Consider the effects of micro-climate when siting buildings and mitigate negative impacts on pedestrians, such as winter winds, as much as possible.



# Downtown Action Plan

## Topic: The Battle River Valley

### Context:

The valley along the Battle River offers tremendous potential for an interesting open space area along the entire east edge of Downtown. Parts of the river valley are publicly owned and are being used for public activities such as the existing trails, ball diamonds and soccer pitch. Other parts remain under private ownership and may be farmed or kept in a natural state.

The river valley area forms the floodway for the Battle River; it poses significant constraints on the nature of uses appropriate for the area. Activities which directly impact the bed and shore and function of the river itself require consultation and approval of Federal and Provincial government departments. Concerns about the health of the river and the impact of future uses should be a prime consideration in setting out the long term use of and investment in the river valley lands.

### Suggested Actions:

Action D1: The Town should start a process to negotiate public access to or acquire ownership of all lands in the river valley that are not currently owned by the Town. The top priority should be lands needed to create a new trail running north-south along the east side of the railway.

Action D2: The trail system in the river valley should be expanded to add a new trail running north-south along the east side of the railway. This trail segment links the two crossing points from 50 Street into the river valley, connects to the gazebo near the old dam site and establishes more route options for trail users. In combination with the improved sidewalk on the east side of 50 Street it provides a loop connecting activities on 50 Street to the river valley.

Action D3: Recreation, tourist and cultural oriented activities should be added to the river valley lands over time as more publicly owned parcels become available. This may include opportunities for:

- skating, snow shoeing and cross country skiing in winter;
- canoe launching facilities;
- viewing platforms and fishing opportunities;
- camping and day picnicking areas;
- natural trails;
- additional dog park or off-leash area; and
- interpretative signage programs spanning natural environment and cultural features.



# Downtown Action Plan

- Action D4: Prior to any large, significant public investment in new facilities in the river valley, a more detailed design process should be undertaken to program the available lands and confirm the suitability of proposed activities for an area subject to flooding.
- Action D5: Trail user amenities within the river valley such as benches, landscaping and waste receptacles should be sited to create points of interest and comfort. For example, bench locations should be spaced to provide opportunities to rest, enjoy a view, be protected from strong winds and provide some protection from exposure to the sun. A review, and where necessary, enhancement of existing amenities should be carried out.
- Action D6: Continue to organize an annual river clean up along the banks of the Battle River and throughout all public lands in the river valley.



# Downtown Action Plan

## Topic: Increasing Residential Downtown

### Context:

The addition of housing and people residing within the mixed use/commercial precinct of Downtown and within the adjacent residential precincts can be of great benefit to Downtown. It adds people to the area for all hours of the day and increases the level of activity in the area. For some household types, proximity to the shops and services of Downtown fits well with their life circumstances and household needs.

There is potential to increase the amount of residential. Very few of the buildings in the mixed use/commercial precinct have a second floor containing residential units. The surrounding residential precincts have been experiencing some intensification as small detached dwellings have been replaced with duplexes or fourplexes.

### Suggested Actions:

- Action E1: Allow residential dwellings in the mixed use/commercial areas either on floors above commercial space or located behind a commercial space on the ground floor. If necessary, amend the Land Use Bylaw to achieve this mix of use on individual sites.
- Action E2: Allow more medium and high density housing up to four floors in height in the areas between 50 Street and 51 Street north of 52 Avenue.
- Action E3: Encourage the development of secondary suites in the low density residential areas.
- Action E4: Recognize that the transition to more intense forms of housing along individual streets may take time and create a blend of housing forms and densities as properties undergo transformation one at a time. The long term goal is increased housing units rather than being fixed at present patterns of residential development.
- Action E5: Encourage a sensitive shift from one form and density of housing to another by regulating the transition in height and building mass and using streets and lanes as points of transition.
- Action E6: Promote the use of interesting architectural treatment of front and visible side façades for all new residential infill and intensification in the residential areas.





# Downtown Action Plan

Action E7: Ensure that new building construction in the residential areas does not remove existing boulevard trees and retains mature front yard landscaping as much as possible.

Action E8: Explore the possibility of creating a housing construction incentive program for the creation of new residential units above the main floor within the mixed use and commercial area.



# Downtown Action Plan

## Topic: Civic Plaza and Shared Space Street

### Context:

There is broad recognition in the community that Downtown Ponoka needs a strong focal point and a well-defined gathering space capable of hosting scheduled events or just available for hanging out. A well done civic plaza can be a source of community pride and an attraction. Following the 2007 Retooling Downtown Ponoka report, the Town of Ponoka began acquiring land along the south side of 49 Avenue to construct a civic plaza. The recent demolition of the Town Office and pending relocation of the public library provides further opportunity for the design of a plaza.

In addition to a civic plaza, there is opportunity to change the nature of 49 Avenue and the parking area on the west end of the block to create a shared space street. This street would accommodate vehicle use and could be blended into the plaza to create a larger space for special events during which vehicle access would be restricted.

### Suggested Actions:

Action F1: Explore the possibility of creating a civic plaza and shared space street that incorporates 49 Avenue between 51 Street and 52 Street and the publicly owned lands along the south side of the block. If the project appears possible, undertake a detailed design process.

Action F2: Take the following into consideration in designing the civic plaza and shared space street:

- micro climatic conditions such as the ability to favour sun exposure in the winter and shade in the summer;
- flexibility of space to accommodate a broad range of events;
- ability to frame or draw attention to the architecture of the Provincial Building;
- ability to visually draw people in from 48 Avenue (a main entranceway into the mixed use/commercial area);
- possible use of at least one water feature;
- ability to frame or define the edges of the plaza space with existing or planned buildings; and
- space for visitor amenities such as a publicly accessible washroom and drinking fountains.



# Downtown Action Plan

## Topic: Derelict Buildings, Vacancies and Property Upkeep

### Context:

As Downtown Ponoka progresses towards its desired future, the pace of redevelopment and re-investment will vary from property to property. It is important that the overall effort to revitalize Downtown is not hampered by the unsightly appearance of existing buildings and properties in the mixed use/commercial area.

Vacancy in available commercial space is natural and available spaces need to be advertised.

The Town owns lands that can be used to demonstrate the desired urban design and architectural treatment.

### Suggested Actions:

Action G1: Encourage realtors and property owners to market their vacant building space in a positive manner. This may include temporary blocking of window and doors with a screen, advertising as “coming soon” or available space, and cleaning up around the exterior to attract a potential tenant.

Action G2: Inventory each block in the mixed use and commercial area for blank or roughly finished walls that are visible from the public sidewalk. Encourage property owners to make these walls more attractive through painting or installation of a mural.

Action G3: As a stop gap measure, create a program to build false storefronts on vacant lots where there is a space between two buildings.

Action G4: As a longer term measure, encourage building development on empty lots to close gaps in the street façade.

Action G5: Work with the Canadian Pacific Railway to develop buildings along the west side of railway along 50 Street as shown in Figure 1. Buildings should be two storey constructions preferably with retail space at grade and offices on the second floor.



## Downtown Action Plan

Action G6: Use the Town owned lands along 50 Street that are surplus to any public function to showcase the desired form of buildings and architectural treatments. This can be achieved through a request for proposal process. As vendor of the land the Town can achieve more control of the final product compared to the development permitting process.

Action G7: Establish a program for land assembly by the Town of Ponoka with the goal of acquiring abutting small parcels of land as they come on the market and then selling larger blocks of contiguous land to prospective developers. The aim is to facilitate the intensification of the use of lands within the Downtown area.

Action G8: Explore and if feasible implement a brownfield redevelopment program based on the recent changes to the Municipal Government Act. This may involve providing tax forgiveness to property owners who remediate and redevelop their sites.

Action G9: Establish a façade improvement program to encourage upgrading of the publicly visible fronts and sides of existing buildings. Launch the program on a block by block basis after the target block has had its streetscape upgraded.

Action G10: Ensure the Town's bylaws relating to unsightly premises and property upkeep are current and enforced where voluntary compliance is not forthcoming.



# Downtown Action Plan

## Topic: Desired Mixed/Commercial Uses and Activities

### Context:

There is strong desire to see more activities and range of mixed and commercial uses in the downtown. Many suggestions focus on re-establishing retail activities that used to be present. The changed nature of retailing, the dynamics of a more mobile customer base and the more regionally focused economy mean that some past retailers may not return. Instead, Downtown Ponoka must strive to distinguish itself with unique goods and services and a high quality experience to attract local patrons and patrons from the Calgary-Edmonton corridor.

### Suggested Actions:

- Action H1: Explore and if feasible establish an incubator space to encourage small scale business to locate in the downtown. The accommodated businesses may be home occupations that have become successful and require more space or start-up businesses.
- Action H2: Undertake a retail gap analysis to identify those businesses and services that may be missing in the mix of commercial activities and may be viable for Downtown Ponoka. Use this information to inform possible business entrepreneurs and existing businesses about market potentials.
- Action H3: Market to a broad customer base throughout the Calgary-Edmonton corridor making use of multiple advertising platforms.
- Action H4: Create and implement a marketing strategy that can be used by businesses and the community to promote Downtown Ponoka to local and broader markets (see accompanying marketing strategy document). Periodically assess and update the marketing strategy.
- Action H5: Make sure the Land Use Bylaw is permissive and allows as broad a range of compatible uses in the mixed use/commercial areas of Downtown Ponoka as possible.



# Downtown Action Plan

Action H6: Allow for the transition of existing residential buildings to a mixed or commercial use along 48 Avenue and on the periphery of the mixed use/commercial area. This may involve keeping the same building form as the existing building and making small modifications for commercial operations. It may also involve a diverse mix of stand-alone residential buildings and new commercial buildings as properties on a block gradually undergo re-investment and redevelopment.

Action H7: A mixture of uses is encouraged along the commercial streets to add variety and interest for pedestrians and passers-by. Uses that do not generate much opportunistic or spur of moment shopping or benefit from having ground floor display windows, such as office functions, should be encouraged to locate on above grade floors. At grade or ground level floors should be available for activities such as retail, personal services, and food services.

Action H8: Redevelop the “old hospital site” on the north end of 50 Street to form an anchor or draw to downtown by hosting activities that attract people. It is intended that promoting activity at this site will increase people and movement north and south along 50 Street through the centre of the mixed use/commercial area. The building at the corner of 57 Avenue and 50 Street should have a modern, attractive design to create a new signature building in the Downtown area.

Action H9: Explore the creation of a community development corporation with the mandate to invest in opportunities and take an active role in the redevelopment of Downtown. The corporation should have a long term focus (patient investors/money) and offer the opportunity for small scale investors to make a contribution.



# Downtown Action Plan

## Topic: Events and Programs

### Context:

Attractive physical spaces in Downtown Ponoka will only go so far in attracting people. Organizing and holding special events offers a way to get people who otherwise may not visit or travel through Downtown during their usual routine to visit. The hope is that the special event builds up their familiarity with the area and entices them to come back on a regular basis.

### Suggested Actions:

- Action I1: As initiatives and capital improvements are completed in Downtown Ponoka, for example the construction of a civic plaza, host a celebration to mark the occasion and get word out about the improvement.
- Action I2: Working with other community organizations, establish a calendar of festivals and special events currently taking place and assess opportunities to fill in and have at least three annual events in Downtown.
- Action I3: Select and design special events that have the greatest possible connection to businesses in the Downtown area. This includes opportunities for sponsorship and demonstration of the services and products available in the Downtown area.
- Action I4: Make use of the street for space to host special events such as an outdoor farmers market.



# Downtown Action Plan

## Topic: Local Parks and Community Recreation Facilities

### Context:

Besides the river valley, Downtown Ponoka has four smaller parks and open space areas. Some of these spaces have defined roles and functions and some do not. In each case there is opportunity to incorporate them into the overall concept for Downtown.

The proximity of the major community recreation facilities to Downtown Ponoka is an advantage in terms of drawing people to the area and serving existing and future Downtown residents. Physical connection to these facilities and cross marketing to visitors at the Aquaplex and Community Wellness Centre offers potential.

### Suggested Actions:

- Action J1: Central Park should continue to serve as a local/neighbourhood park serving residents of Downtown. Proximity to a play area in a local park will assist with attracting more multi-family residential to the area to the east. Re-investment in Central Park should incorporate similar themes as is used in the streetscapes for the major commercial streets. For example, similar planting beds and furniture could be added to the park.
- Action J2: The site of the Central Boosting Station at the corner of 53 Avenue and Highway 2A should be landscaped in a way that matches the features of the major commercial street design. An entrance marker should be placed on the site along with wayfinding signage indicating how to get to the mixed use/commercial area of Downtown and the river valley via 53 Avenue.
- Action J3: Siding 14/Tractor Park should be redesigned to create defined pedestrian access to draw people into and through the park. It should otherwise retain its role as an ornament park with the addition of elements similar to those of the abutting streetscape design. The possible blending of the park with the utility site to the south to create the impression of a single park area should be explored.
- Action J4: The park space directly south of the Seniors Drop In Centre should be the subject of a design process to assess the long term future of this space. At a minimum, formal pedestrian access should be defined to encourage use by the general public. Landscaping beds and furnishings similar to that along the major commercial streets should be added.





# Downtown Action Plan

Action J5: The skate park should receive re-investment to make it more appealing. This includes the addition of some shade trees and, if possible, replacement of the existing perimeter fencing with a more aesthetically pleasing barrier. The potential for a limited expansion of the park into the former recycling depot yard to the south should be explored.



# Downtown Action Plan

## Topic: Safety Downtown and Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

### Context:

For the most part, Downtown Ponoka is a safe place to visit, live and work. On occasion there are incidents of undesirable behaviour. These can be managed through enforcement of community norms and expectations. There is also a role for the physical design of a space to deter undesirable behaviors and to promote a greater sense of safety and security.

### Suggested Actions:

- Action K1: An assessment should be undertaken for each of the mixed use/commercial blocks in the Downtown to identify items that could be altered to better secure a property or contribute to a higher degree of safety. For example, installing motion activated lighting in back lanes in small areas that may be screened from plain view. Once a list is identified, the Town and RCMP should work with landowners and tenants on each block to implement those items having the greatest possible benefit to safety and security.
- Action K2: The Town should review its Licensing Bylaw to ensure that it adequately addresses ways to mitigate potential negative behaviours associated with business activities in the Downtown.
- Action K3: In applying the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design it is important to balance the desire for security of property with attractive building design and architectural interest on the street. For example, the Town should discourage the use of chain link fence to address site security in favour of more visually appealing and equally effective forms of fencing and enclosure.



# Downtown Action Plan

## Topic: Design and Function of Streets

### Context:

Streets in Downtown Ponoka perform a variety of roles. They serve as corridors for vehicle, pedestrian and bicycle access to properties and throughout the area. They connect the area to adjoining residential and open space areas and key community facilities such as the arena and Stampede Grounds.

Well designed and attractive streetscapes can create a unifying impression for an area. The consistency and rhythm of common elements (boulevard trees, light standards, banners, landscaping, etc) can tie a diverse collection of buildings along a street together. Chipman Avenue is a well done local example in a commercial setting and streets like 55 Avenue are a good example for a residential setting.

### Suggested Actions:

Action L1: Develop a comprehensive streetscape design for those streets identified as having a major commercial function as shown on Figure 3. (see accompanying streetscape designs)

Action L2: Consider the following in the streetscape design:

- wide enough sidewalks for pedestrian movement, plantings and furnishings, and signs;
- use of bulbs at corners to shorten crossing distances for pedestrians and create space for benches and low level landscaping;
- the addition of street trees to create a sense of continuity and soften the built environment for the enjoyment of pedestrians;
- use of landscaping strips across the frontage of vacant lots as a means of framing vistas at the ends of streets and avenues until a building is constructed;
- setting aside spaces for the future installation of public art and wayfinding facilities;
- ability to add and vary flowers and decorations on a seasonal and annual basis;
- retaining as much on street parallel parking as possible; and
- increasing universal access to buildings from the sidewalk.

Action L3: Where sidewalks are sufficiently wide (at least 5 feet clear for pedestrian movement) allow for the use of the sidewalk in front of a business for the following types of activity:

- flower pots and planters
- a-board signs
- display of sale items
- benches, chairs and small tables

If necessary, make the required changes to the Town licensing bylaw and traffic bylaw (and any other bylaw regulating the use of the public street) to make these activities possible with minimal amount of formal approval requirements.



# Downtown Action Plan

**Action L4:** Where sidewalks are not wide enough to accommodate a seasonal use of the sidewalk in front of a business, allow the use of temporary sidewalk diversions through the parallel parking spaces. Develop a program to manage this form of activity and, if necessary, amend Town bylaws to facilitate the selected approach.

**Action L5:** Allow for the temporary closure of streets to host events like an outdoor farmers market, sidewalk sales, or block party. Create a process to obtain the required permission, notify affected property owners and arrange for the supply and set up of signage and barriers from the Town.

**Action L6:** As part of the preparation of a community wide Transportation Master Plan, review the function of the various intersections in and around the Downtown area and assess the need for and nature of any improvements. This should include consideration of:

- traffic control at the intersection of 50 Street and Highway 53
- traffic control at the intersection of 48 Avenue and 51 Street
- reducing the speed limit within the Downtown area
- ensuring heavy truck traffic is not encouraged to use 50 Street

**Action L7:** Boundary markers and entrance features should be designed and placed at select locations. Potential entrance feature locations are shown on Figure 3. These could be a single identifiable item or a collection of items signifying the boundary of the downtown area. Similar, smaller scale items can be placed to mark the edges of the downtown area.

**Action L8:** A wayfinding program should be undertaken to create better directional signage for the Downtown. This includes how to get into Downtown and, once there, how to find key amenities like a banking machine or public washroom. The aim is to make Downtown as user friendly as possible. The program should also consider larger font street signs for key intersections and major streets.



# Downtown Action Plan

## Topic: Pedestrian Connectivity and Amenities

### Context:

Making Downtown more attractive for walking and making walking more convenient are crucial. The environment for pedestrians links to store fronts, parking areas, surrounding amenities and draws and the various public spaces. More connectivity and amenities to promote walkability is required.

### Suggested Actions:

- Action M1: Close the gaps between existing trail/path and sidewalk systems (quick easy fixes in some cases) as shown on Figure 4.
- Action M2: Add more trail looping around and in the river valley and incorporate the major streetscape treatment along 50 Street as part of the circulation loop.
- Action M3: As new sidewalks and trails are built, provide for universal access on the system including the creation of universal access into individual storefronts where possible.
- Action M4: Expanded sidewalks that have a role as a major pedestrian connector or corridor should have at least 6 feet width of clear walking surface consistently along the entire length of each block.
- Action M5: Provide formal path and sidewalk connections to the Stampede Grounds and the Community Wellness Centre along 54 Street, 48 Avenue and 45 Avenue Crescent and along Highway 53 to 50 Street as shown on Figure 4. The main crossing point into the Stampede Grounds should be considered in any intersection changes along Highway 53.
- Action M6: Add a series of public washrooms and drinking fountains throughout the downtown (see Figure 4) to provide for the basic needs of pedestrians and encourage longer stays in the area. These facilities can be part of a public use building or a stand-alone feature.
- Action M7: Provide benches and places for pedestrians to rest along all major pedestrian routes.



# Downtown Action Plan

## Implementation Framework

The overall implementation of the Downtown Ponoka Action Plan should consist of five parallel streams of activity. These are:

**Capital Improvements** – public space improvements led by the Town of Ponoka and private space improvements by individual property owners

**Marketing and Promotions** – ongoing efforts to get the word out about Downtown Ponoka and its offerings

**Beautification** – annual efforts on public and private lands to make Downtown attractive, inviting and safe

**Special Events and Programming** – annual efforts to bring people into the Downtown area

**Stage Setting** – research and initiatives that create the foundation for future changes

Within each category, a short list of projects should always be identified. As one project moves off the list another can be added. The selection of one-time projects for a given period may be based on available resources or expressions of interest by the volunteers who will be carrying it out. It is also important to be able to adjust and take advantage of unexpected opportunities that may arise.

The following is suggested as a starting point:

### Capital Improvements

Purchase and install benches and waste receptacles based on the approved streetscape design

Identify the first one or two blocks to be redeveloped based on the approved streetscape design following assessment and identification of priorities for underground infrastructure upgrades; proceed with redevelopment (over several years)

Design and secure funding for a civic plaza and shared space street along 49 Street; construct when funding available

Design and install wayfinding facilities and signage



# Downtown Action Plan

## Marketing and Promotions

Finalise theme and identity for marketing campaigns; convert website and prepare social media tools

Develop marketing opportunities for a two year cycle and seek business support

Launch first major promotion

## Beautification

Continue with hanging baskets and add low level planters where possible; encourage storefront additions (planters, bench) by individual businesses

Continue with annual clean up events for commercial area and river valley; host volunteer barbeque in downtown

Undertake CPTED and safety assessment for two blocks north and south of Chipman Avenue; continue throughout downtown

Approach owners of buildings in need of repair to encourage regular maintenance

## Special Events and Programming

Establish calendar of events hosted throughout the community to find space for downtown events

Arrange and host at least two small and one large event (e.g. outdoor farmers market throughout summer months and one larger festival type event like a sidewalk sale and celebration)

## Stage Setting

Start process to acquire lands in the river valley; acquire properties as financial resources allow

Establish façade improvement and mural programs

Explore creation of an incubator space

Explore establishment of a community development corporation; if feasible create corporation

## Appendix A – Recommended Streetscape Design

The drawings presented represent the intent to create an identity and upgrade to Downtown Ponoka.

Key Objectives and Goals that influence the design include:

- Enhancing the appearance of the street
- Improving pedestrian circulation
- Provide space for elements such as benches, trash receptacles, sidewalk displays, planting, etc.
- Replace aging sidewalks

Creation of a Western type design was introduced in order to reinforce the current Ponoka culture and enhance a sense of place that is authentic to its surroundings.

Three design concepts were developed using public input gathered during open houses and through the use of written and on-line survey forms. From the input provided, the Stagecoach/Western, Post and Rail, and River Valley concepts were developed and presented again on-line and at open houses for comment. The survey forms submitted were reviewed, and comments were implemented into the plans for the Steering Committee approval.

The preferred streetscape concept was developed based on a combination of the three designs, input from the design team and town administration. Considerations such as long term maintenance, balancing new design with current downtown elements, and flexibility of location of design elements were all factors in the preferred concept. The following outlines the individual design elements and the preferred choices.

### Trees – Overhead Canopy

- Create shade and enclosure for sidewalk experience.
- Located on property corner to reduce signage obstruction
- Ties into existing tree types in the downtown -unity

### Lighting – Hooded

- Ties into existing light standards in the downtown – unity
- Design suits Western identity
- Long term cost and maintenance advantages

### Corner Bulbs

- Slow traffic to improve pedestrian safety
- Narrows pedestrian crossing distance
- Provides planting opportunities for visual interest
- Sizes will be refined during construction/ phasing process



Site furniture

- Post and Rail Concept bench selection was preferred
- Post and Rail Concept trash receptacle was preferred
- Stagecoach Concept bike rack was preferred – Western identity
- Hitching post feature was preferred – Western identity reinforcement
- Grain elevator feature was preferred – historic tie-in to Town – Additional Western, Railway, and Livestock sculptural elements will be considered to provide variety along the 50<sup>th</sup> street.



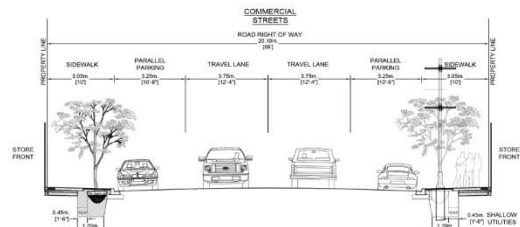
**HITCHING POST FEATURE**



**BLOCK END SCULPTURE / FEATURE LOCATIONS- SIDEWALK VIEW**



**IGA CROSSING**



**TOWN OF PONOKA**  
DOWNTOWN ENHANCEMENT CONCEPT FEATURES/DETAILS



Midblock Crossings

Based on public feedback and issues concerning reduced curbside parking spaces and loading zones, future consideration will be given to different locations of crossings in order to provide additional pedestrian connections, decrease the visual scale of the block and provide additional planting areas along the street.



**MIDBLOCK CROSSING**  
LOCATIONS TO BE DETERMINED



**STREET FURNITURE**



**SIDEWALK VIEW**



**PLAN VIEW**



**ROOF TOP VIEW**



**TOWN OF PONOKA**  
DOWNTOWN ENHANCEMENT CONCEPT - STAGECOACH / WESTERN

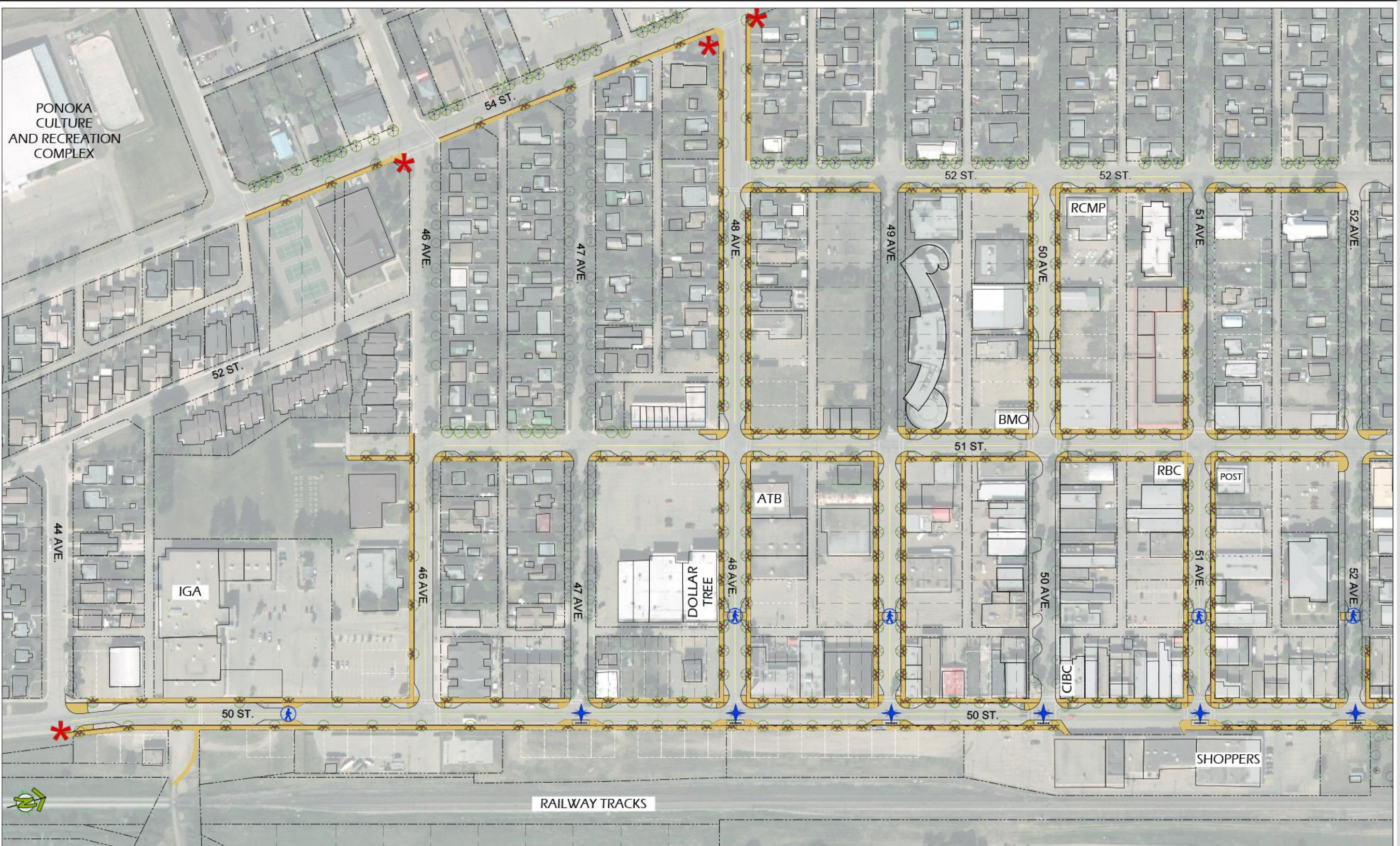


The final concept plans that are presented will be further refined during the construction, phasing and budgeting stage of the design process. There may be revisions to plans as detailed planning takes place; however the overall goal is to maintain the general character shown in the Stagecoach/Western drawing.

Areas To Be Improved

Drawings L1 and L2 show the streets to be improved over time and where the preferred design will be applied to each block





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- LEGEND**
- ALL EXISTING TREES TO REMAIN
  - PROPOSED CANOPY TREES
  - PROPERTY LINES
  - ENTRANCE FEATURE
  - FEATURE LOCATION
  - MIDBLOCK CROSSING  
FINAL LOCATIONS TO BE DETERMINED  
DURING CONSTRUCTION/PHASING DESIGN

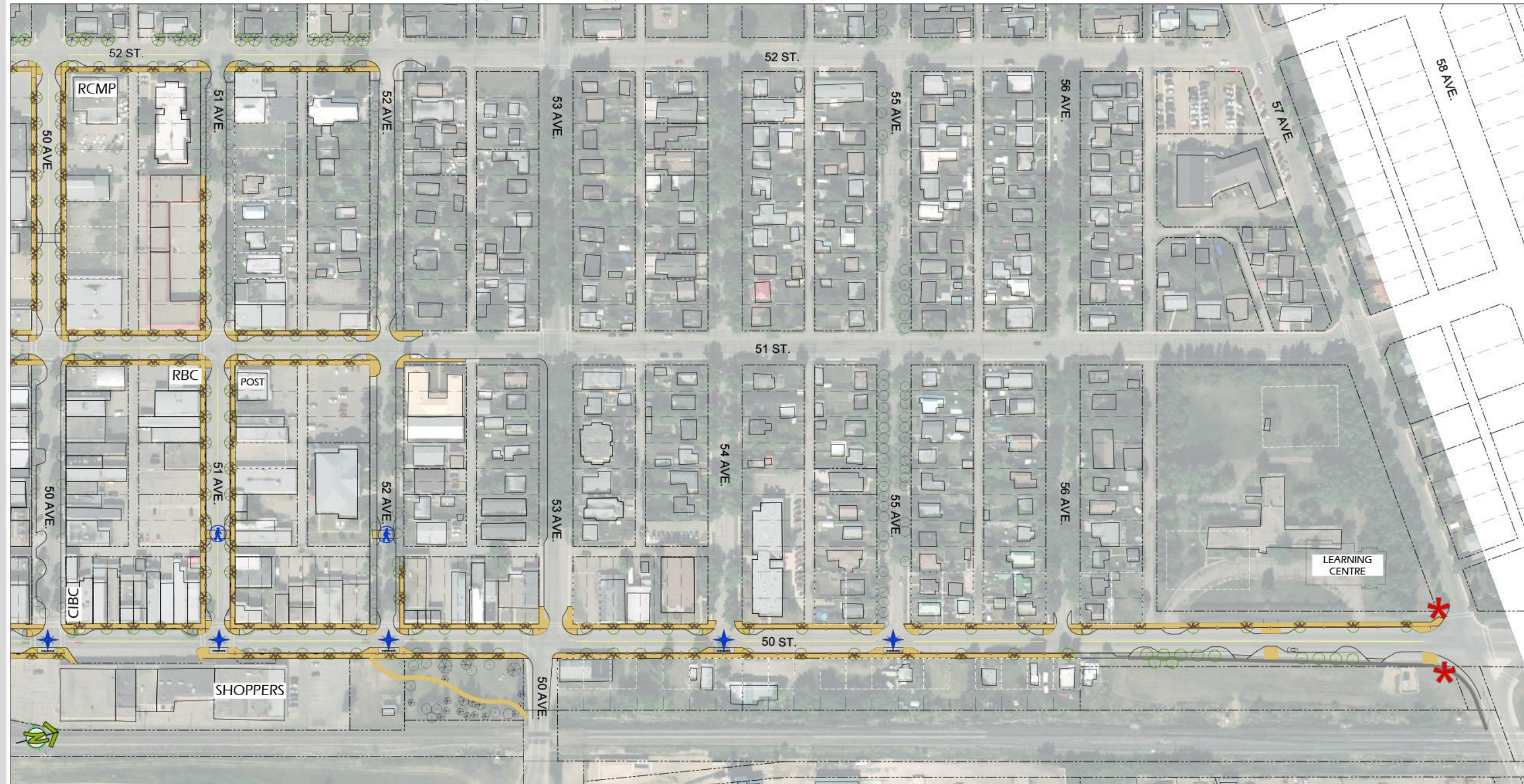
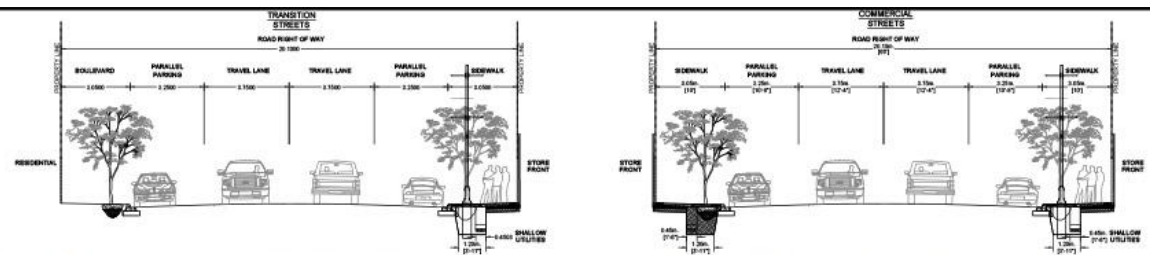


project  
TOWN OF PONOKA  
PONOKA, AB

drawing title  
DOWNTOWN ENHANCEMENTS  
STREETScape CONCEPT PLAN



design: BGG  
date: JULY 2017  
sheet no. **L1**



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 (Calgary) Inc.  
 Landscape • Architectural • Design • Consultants

- LEGEND**
- ALL EXISTING TREES TO REMAIN
  - PROPOSED CANOPY TREES
  - PROPERTY LINES
  - ENTRANCE FEATURE
  - STREET LIGHTS  
FINAL LOCATIONS TO BE DETERMINED DURING CONSTRUCTION/PHASING DESIGN
  - FEATURE LOCATION



project  
**TOWN OF PONOKA**  
 PONOKA, AB

drawing title  
**DOWNTOWN ENHANCEMENTS**  
**STREETSCAPE CONCEPT PLAN**

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design  
 BGG

date  
 JULY 2017

sheet no.  
**L2**

# Appendix B: Parking Management Plan

## Introduction and Purpose

The Parking Management Plan is a key part of implementing the vision and desired future direction for Downtown Ponoka. It addresses a key issue that can often become an impediment to the desire to create a compact, vibrant urban area containing many diverse activities and draws. With the dominant mode of transportation used by visitors to Ponoka and the Downtown area being the private automobile provision has to be made to store the vehicles and get visitors and customers walking.

The Parking Management Plan provides a policy framework that supports the concept of “right-sizing” the supply of public parking provided in the Downtown area with the goals of:

- Reducing the consumption of land for parking facilities;
- Promoting use of modes of travel other than the single-occupant vehicle; and
- Encouraging a more intense and attractive urban form.

The Plan is meant to guide future investments in parking facilities and operational considerations in the routine management of the existing inventory of public parking.

The Plan does not replace the requirements of the Town of Ponoka Land Use Bylaw regarding the number and design of parking stalls to be provided as private lands are developed. However, some of the recommended actions and strategies can be applied to privately owned inventories of parking.

When appropriately implemented, parking management can provide numerous benefits, including:

- *Improved Service Quality* – it can improve user experience by providing better information, increasing user options, reducing congestion and creating more attractive facilities;
- *Urban Form and Land Use Support* – it can help create more accessible and efficient land use patterns and support other strategic land use planning objectives such as compact development;
- *Support for More Modes of Travel* – it can promote walking, cycling and, carpooling, and where available, use of public transit; and
- *More Liveable Communities* – it can help create a more attractive urban environment.

The Plan emphasizes the concept of shared parking. This is the use of a parking space to serve two or more individual land uses. The ability to share parking is a result of variations in the time of day or time of week when parking accumulation occurs and the tendency for one user to visit multiple uses during

the same trip. The concept is not new to downtown planning as witnessed by shared on-street parking and investment in public parking lots.

## Relation to Other Downtown Goals and Plans

Parking in Downtown Ponoka needs to be considered in the context of the community’s overall goals and desires for Downtown. Parking is a part of the “support system” and not a goal in itself. Great downtowns address parking but do not surrender the majority of the surface land area to parking. While this Plan has been written as a standalone document it needs to be read and used in conjunction with the Downtown Action Plan and other implementing tools such as the Land Use Bylaw.

## Current Situation and Analysis

Both the Town of Ponoka Municipal Development Plan (2012) and the Retooling Downtown Ponoka Study (2007) identified the opportunity to moderate the overall requirement for new parking supply in the Downtown. This was based on the number of public and private parking stalls available in and around the existing commercial uses (see map in Appendix A1). In 2016 a survey and estimate of public parking found that between the Town owned parking lots and available on street parking and large, privately owned surface parking lots there were a total of 1,200 parking stalls available. This does not account for private parking off rear lanes or informal parking areas like the gravel lots along the railway. Table 1 provides an estimate of the available supply of private and public parking stalls.

Table 1: Inventory of Parking Stalls

| Type of Parking                           | Ownership                | Number of Available Stalls |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Surface Parking in Off-Street Lots        | Town                     | 239 (actual)               |
| Surface Parking in Larger Off-Street Lots | Private (Various Owners) | 429 (actual)               |
| Surface Parking off Rear Lane             | Private (Various Owners) | 300 (estimated)            |
| On Street Parking                         | Town                     | 546 (actual)               |
| Total Estimated Inventory                 |                          | 1,514                      |

On December 14, 2016 a license plate survey was undertaken for the three Town owned parking lots closest to the commercial core centred on Chipman Avenue and the on-street parking on Chipman Avenue and on the west side of 50 Street. The findings support the general sense that over the course of a week day there is available capacity in the inventory of public parking spaces to accommodate parking generated by additional uses and development in the Downtown area. More detail about the survey is contained in Appendix A2.

The current situation for public parking in Downtown Ponoka includes the following factors:

- Parking is not metered and there is no fee for use system in place for on-street parking or any private or public off-street parking areas;
- Very few time restrictions are in place with a one hour limit applying to two blocks on the west side of 50 Street and 30 minute limits in place in front of the RCMP station and the Post Office;
- There are few marked on-street handicap parking stalls;
- The majority of on-street parking is parallel parking with the only exception being one block of angled parking on the south side of Chipman Avenue between 50 Street and 51 Street;
- With the exception of the angled parking on Chipman Avenue on-street parking stalls are not marked and the “no parking” areas near fire hydrants and intersections have painted yellow curb and regulatory signs indicating “no parking”;
- There is limited directional signage to guide drivers to the off-street public parking areas and no signage at the three main Town parking lots; and
- The Town does not have an active enforcement program devoted to parking in the Downtown area.

## **The Downtown Parking Challenge**

Providing adequate parking in the era of widespread use of private automobiles faces numerous challenges. They are not insurmountable. Some of the more common themes that arise when discussing parking availability in a downtown setting are briefly discussed below. These themes are not unique to Ponoka.

### *Perception of Parking Shortage*

An oft heard refrain is that there is nowhere to park downtown. The perception that there is a shortage of convenient parking downtown often is not based on the actual supply and use of parking but rather on a lack of awareness of its location. It can be reinforced through the absence of well-defined pedestrian connections between parking facilities and downtown destinations. Shoppers tend to sense that parking supply is inadequate and inconvenient unless they can find a space either in front of the store or in a surface parking lot in the store’s immediate vicinity.

Perceived inadequacies of downtown parking can be overcome by:

- Creating an identity for downtown as a multi-purpose destination and making this more readily apparent through marketing efforts;

- Making downtown compact with well-defined links between activities and a strong pedestrian orientation to support the sense of a one-stop activity centre (where multiple activities can be accomplished on foot from a single parking space – just like the suburban mall);
- Providing an easy-to-understand consistent system of directional signage, location maps, and similar wayfinding devices.

### Unwillingness to Walk

Ideal, acceptable walking distance from parking stall to destination is 400 feet in an outdoor environment. The distance a person is willing to walk depends on the nature of the trip (quick pick up of a single item versus out for an afternoon of shopping) and the quality of the walking environment (pleasant atmosphere, safe, etc.). Walking distance can be as far as 800-1,200 feet and still be considered acceptable if it is a pleasant experience.

### The Angled versus Parallel Parking Debate

The debate between the relative merits of angled on-street parking and parallel on-street parking can be lively. Two opposing views are presented below.

“ Parallel parking is preferred in an urban setting because it improves the appearance of the street and reduces traffic hazards associated with angled parking. ” Cy Paumier

“ Angled parking increases spending by more than 20% and increases the number of parking spaces by a third. Nobody likes parallel parking. ” Roger Brooks

The decision to provide parallel versus angled parking depends heavily on the amount of space available in the street right of way. Angled parking on both sides of a street, requires at least 82 feet of width without sacrificing all other amenities that contribute to a great street (sufficiently wide sidewalks, space for boulevard trees and benches, etc.). The majority of street rights of way in Downtown Ponoka are 65-66 feet wide. Providing angled parking on one side of the street, like Chipman Avenue, is an option; however, the benefits of additional parking supply are lost due to the absence of parking on the other side of the street. In addition, one direction of travel has to be given preference over the other.

Parallel parking is not a favorite choice of many drivers. Similarly, the hesitation that comes with backing out of an angled parking stall is not looked upon favourably.



## Plan Principles

The following general principles were used to prepare the Plan. They are intended to help guide future planning and operational decisions to support the overall aim of the parking management effort. In the absence of a set action or strategy, the plan principles should be applied to the situation to reach a decision.

|                    |                              |                                                                                                  |
|--------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <i>Principle 1</i> | <i>Consumer Choice</i>       | People should have viable parking and travel options.                                            |
| <i>Principle 2</i> | <i>User Information</i>      | People should have clear information on their parking and travel options.                        |
| <i>Principle 3</i> | <i>Sharing</i>               | Parking facilities should serve multiple users and destinations to the greatest extent possible. |
| <i>Principle 4</i> | <i>Efficient Utilization</i> | Parking facilities should be sized and managed so spaces are frequently occupied.                |
| <i>Principle 5</i> | <i>Flexibility</i>           | Parking plans should accommodate uncertainty and change.                                         |
| <i>Principle 6</i> | <i>Prioritization</i>        | The most desirable parking spaces should be managed to favour higher priority uses.              |

## Recommended Actions and Strategies

This section contains the recommended actions and strategies. Each provides a general direction to shape the Town's overall approach to parking. Implementation is expected to take place through routine operations, major infrastructure improvements by the Town, capital investment on private properties and delivery of targeted programs.

### Management of On-Street Parking

|           |                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|-----------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Action 1: | <i>On-Street Stall Markings</i>  | With the exception of handicap stalls, individual on-street parking stalls should not be marked. The intent is to reduce maintenance and provide flexibility in the use of the curb line based on vehicle sizes.                                                                                                 |
| Action 2: | <i>Streetscape Redevelopment</i> | As the streetscape along a block is redeveloped, curb line parking should be maintained and the number of parking stalls should be kept as close to the original number as possible. The loss of one or two parking stalls to meet aesthetic and operational considerations at intersection bulbs is acceptable. |

- Action 3: *Preserving Curb Line* The Town should limit the number of new curb cuts and access points onto streets in an effort to preserve the largest amount of curb line parking possible. Where a new driveway has to be created a shared driveway should be used. Where a parcel has access to a rear lane this should be used to provide vehicle access to the parcel.
- Action 4: *Handicap Parking* The provision of handicap parking stalls in private parking lots is regulated by the Alberta Building Code. The Alberta Building Code does not apply to the management of public road rights of way. The Town should provide at least one designated handicap parking stall per block in a location where access up onto the sidewalk is provided with a para-ramp.
- Action 5: *Large Vehicle Parking* The agricultural community and tourism communities often need parking for vehicles larger than the typical 18-22 foot long private vehicle. The Town should identify areas for larger vehicle parking such as recreational vehicles and cattle liners through wayfinding signage and information materials. One possible area is the curb line parking along the east side of 50 Street between 46 Avenue and 49 Avenue and between 53 Avenue and 55 Avenue.
- Action 6: *Encroachment into Residential Areas* Parking for commercial uses should not be allowed to encroach into adjacent residential areas as it undermines neighbourhood stability and detracts from residential character. For the purposes of this action/policy encroachment is any commercial use parking that occurs on a street not marked for on-street parking for non-residential uses on the map in Appendix A3.

### **Town Owned Parking Lots**

- Action 7: *Number and Location* The existing Town parking lots shown on the map in Appendix C are well located to serve the various activities in the commercial part of Downtown. These lots should be retained and improvements should be made to their general appearance and attractiveness. This includes more defined pedestrian connections to and from the parking lots and sidewalk network and links to a wayfinding system.
- Action 8: *Off-Street Stall Markings* All parking stalls in paved off-street parking lots should be clearly marked.

## Appearance and Design of Off-Street Parking

- Action 9: *Appearance of Parking Areas* Parking areas both privately owned and publicly owned should be attractive and improve the visual environment to the greatest extent possible. This can be accomplished through planting shade trees and providing a low level (maximum 3 feet high) screen fence to fill the gap between buildings along the street frontage.
- Action 10: *Parking Structures* The economics of development in Downtown Ponoka do not support the construction of parking structures (above ground - \$15,000 per stall or below ground - \$30,000 per stall) at this point in the community's evolution. This may change in the future. If built, parking structures will be expected to have a high quality of appearance from all sides visible along a public street. This can be accomplished through a liner building consisting of retail/commercial space at grade and/or intense landscaping and/or high quality architectural appearance.
- Action 11: *Stand-Alone Parking* The only stand-alone parking facilities, meaning parking facilities not on the same site as a principal use, should be those owned and operated by the Town. This ensures that sharing of parking will occur and avoids creating an incentive to replace building mass with private surface parking lots.
- Action 12: *Building Facades* Where a building façade faces into a permanent off-street parking area, the façade should be as clean and attractive as possible. For rear facades the standard will be less than for side facades in recognition of the "utilitarian" aspect of rear lane access. The intent is to help make the parking area as attractive and inviting as possible.
- Action 13: *Murals* Where blank walls face into permanent off-street parking areas, the Town should make use of the opportunity to install a mural or similar art to create an attractive edge to the parking area.

## Relation to Pedestrian Circulation Network

- Action 14: *Pedestrian Links* To succeed in getting drivers to become pedestrians in the Downtown a complete and functional pedestrian circulation system needs to be established between all major off-street parking areas and all Downtown destinations. This means pedestrian facilities on both sides of the street and continuous routes.
- Action 15: *Attractive Walking Environment* Available parking areas and location of public parking lots must work with an attractive and safe pedestrian system if drivers are to be encouraged to park two or three blocks from concentrated areas of activity. This means providing adequately wide sidewalks, street trees for shade and visual appeal and amenities such as benches, waste receptacles and wayfinding signage.

## Managing the Demand for Parking

- Action 16: *Transportation Modes* Ponoka does not, at this point in time, have a mass public transit system that can offset the need for parking in the Downtown. The community can focus on other active transportation modes such as walking and cycling as part of its approach to managing the demand or pressure for Downtown parking.
- Action 17: *Bicycle Facilities* The Town should provide bicycle parking facilities along streets as each street is re-constructed and business owners are encouraged to provide bicycle parking and changing facilities for their staff. Having these facilities available to the general public and employees is intended to encourage use of a non-motor vehicle means of getting to the Downtown which then takes away some need for vehicle parking. At least one location for sheltered bicycle parking should be explored.
- Action 18: *Employee and Business Owner Parking* Encourage employees and business owners to use parking on-site where available from a rear lane or more peripheral, less used public on-street and off-street parking areas.

## Signage and Communication

- Action 19: *Regulatory Signs* The Town should undertake a review of all on-street regulatory signage to ensure that sufficient signage is in place to be enforceable and provide clear communication to drivers. Regulatory signage should be consistent in appearance and there should be as few signs as necessary.
- Action 20: *Wayfinding Signage* Clear and simple wayfinding signage should be generously distributed throughout Downtown and along the main entranceways into Downtown to assist visitors in locating parking areas. Getting drivers to parking areas should be a top priority in the overall wayfinding program within the Downtown area. Each parking area should have clear identifying signage (e.g. Free Parking Courtesy of the Town of Ponoka) and indication of permissible limits (if any).
- Action 21: *Tone of Signs* All language and messaging on signage should be positive and friendly. For example, communicate where people can park and not just where they cannot. If a sign must say “no parking” then it should also indicate where a permissible alternative can be found. The only exceptions to this approach should be those signs that must meet an enforceability standard (e.g. no parking here to corner).
- Action 22: *Marketing Available Parking* The Town should prepare and install directional signage to show customers and visitors where to access parking. Pamphlets with similar information should be prepared for distribution by Downtown businesses and the same information should be made available through social media and websites.

## Parking Requirements for Development

- Action 23: *Remove Requirements for Non-Residential Uses* The Land Use Bylaw should exempt non-residential uses in the designated commercial and mixed use areas of the Downtown from providing off-street parking.

- Action 24: *Encourage Rear Lane Parking* Despite any exemption for off-street parking, the development of non-residential properties should be encouraged to provide parking stalls in the rear of the property where rear access is provided by a lane.
- Action 25: *Residential Uses* Residential uses within the Downtown Area should continue to provide off-street parking for each dwelling unit. Unlike other uses, sharing parking for residential can be difficult and the lack of dedicated parking for each dwelling unit may work against efforts to successfully incorporate residential use into the desired mixed use setting.
- Action 26: *Relaxing Residential Parking Requirements* Parking for residential uses must continue to be provided on-site and relaxations based on available street parking should be avoided. While the short term may suggest ample parking is available, future intensification and infill will result in more households sharing the available supply of on-street parking.

### **Time Restrictions and Pricing Structures**

- Action 27: *Time Restrictions* The Town should continue with the limited amount of time restrictions that are currently in place. Introducing further time restrictions should be based on demonstrated need to encourage higher rates of turnover and accommodation of short term parking. When time restrictions have to be modified in the future the following arrangements should be considered:
- Preserve all on-street parking for short term parking (less than 2 hours);
  - Limit the Town parking lots on 49 Avenue and 51 Avenue to up to 4 hours parking;
  - Allow parking longer than 4 hours to occur in the Kinsmen Lot and the lot on 52 Avenue and any other peripheral locations.

Action 28: *Price of Parking* The Town should continue to provide free parking on-street and in Town owned parking lots as long as possible. In the event that there is a need to introduce a pricing mechanism to modify parking patterns the highest priced parking should be located in the central part of downtown and the price should gradually decrease towards the periphery of the downtown.

### **Sharing and Partnerships**

Action 29: *Unbundling Parking* Where a private landowner has more on-site parking than what is needed for them or their tenants onsite, they should be encouraged to share or rent out the extra parking stalls to other users. “Unbundling” refers to avoiding regulations that prevent the desired sharing of facilities from occurring.

Action 30: *Partnerships* The Town should partner with the owners of existing surface parking lot to provide some public access to any surplus parking stalls that may be available. This may not be needed in the short term but may help address any increases in parking demand as intensification and revitalization of Downtown takes place. Potential private parking lots to involve in a partnership are shown on the map in Appendix A3.

Action 31: *Overflow Parking* Occasionally special events may change the nature of the available parking supply due to street closures or use of Town parking lots to host an event. The Town should work with CPR to make their undeveloped properties along the west side of the railway available as overflow parking. Similar arrangements may be needed with other owners of large private parking lots close to Downtown.

## Monitoring and Enforcement

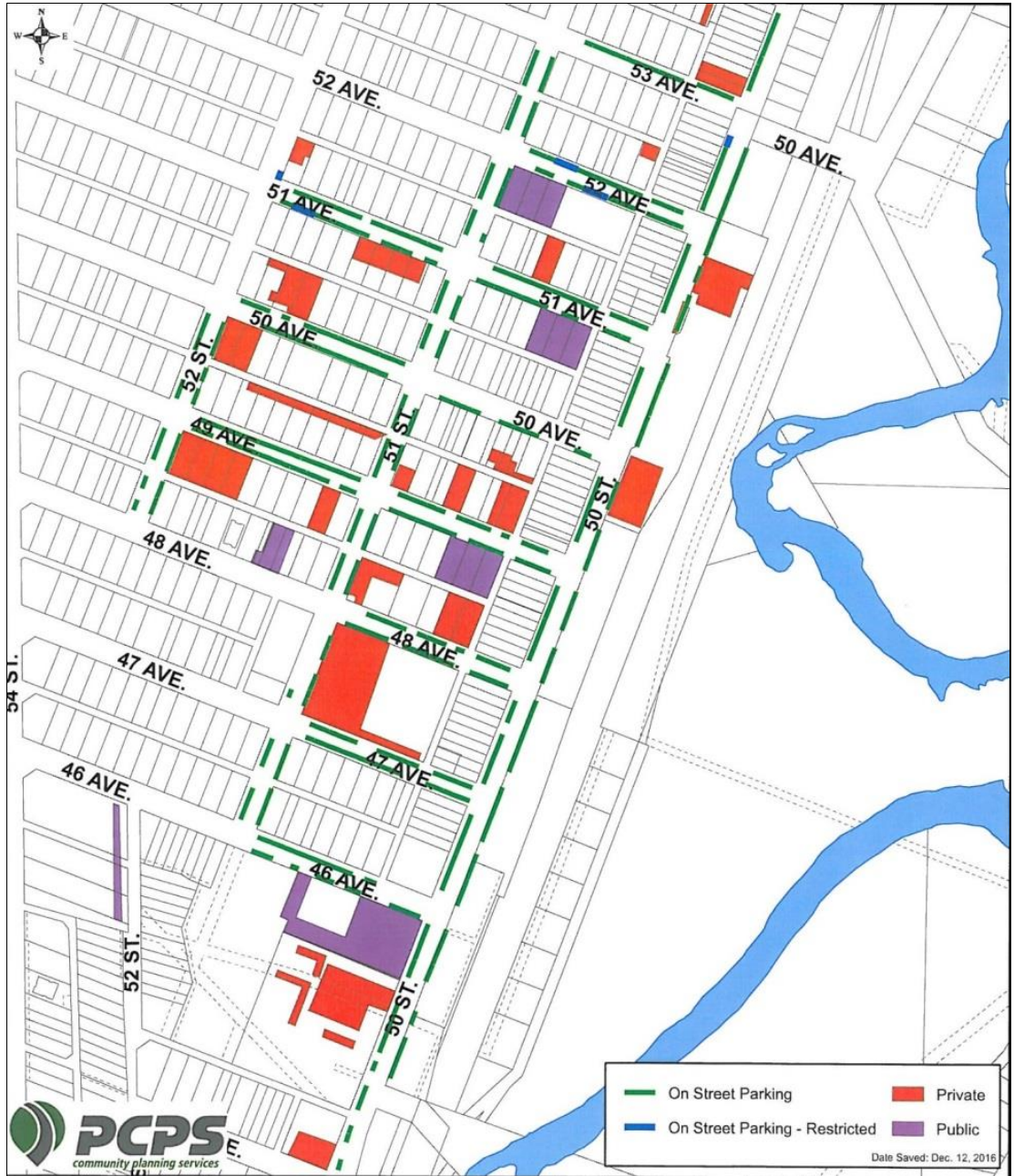
- Action 32: *Monitoring* Periodic (every 5 years) monitoring of parking use and patterns in the Downtown should be undertaken. This should involve counts and license plate surveys to be able to gauge length of stays.
- Action 33: *Enforcement* The current regulation of parking Downtown does not lend itself to much need for enforcement beyond illegal parking in no-parking areas. Should enforcement programs be needed in the future they should begin with an educational awareness approach first (bulletin reminder followed by warning note) followed by more significant consequences for repeat or chronic offenders.

## References

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- Litman, Todd, *Parking Management: Strategies, Evaluation and Planning*, Victoria Transport Policy Institute, 2006
- Paumier, Cy, *Creating a Vibrant City Center*, Urban Land Institute, 2004
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# Appendix A1: Location of On-Street and Off-Street Parking Areas



## Appendix A2: Parking Use Survey

On Wednesday, December 14, 2016 PCPS staff undertook a parking survey for the following areas:

- the three Town owned parking lots closest to Chipman Avenue on 49 Avenue, 51 Avenue and 52 Avenue;
- the on-street parking on Chipman Avenue between 50 Street and 51 Street; and
- the on-street parking areas along the west side of 50 Street extending one block north and one block south of Chipman Avenue.

The date of the survey was selected to correspond with auction day and the holiday shopping season. The weather conditions were overcast with a slight wind and a temperature of -26 degrees Celsius.

A license plate survey was carried out with observers driving/walking through the selected areas on a 30 minute cycle. The survey began at 9:00 am and ran until 5:00 pm. The license plate of the vehicle occupying the parking stall or space was recorded. Where marked stalls were available the observers matched the license plate with the stall occupied. Where marked stalls were not available, such as the parallel parking area on 50 Street, the parking spaces were approximated. In some cases the parking stall markings were obscured by a light covering of snow.

The key findings from the survey are presented in the tables below.

| <b>Town Owned Parking Lot</b>                          | <b>North<br/>52 Avenue</b> | <b>Central<br/>51 Avenue</b> | <b>South<br/>49 Avenue</b> |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Number of Available Stalls                             | 47                         | 40                           | 40                         |
| Total Number of Users/Vehicles                         | 31                         | 55                           | 13                         |
| Average Turnover Rate per Stall (vehicle/stall)        | 0.66                       | 1.38                         | 0.33                       |
| Total Parking Hours Available (hrs)                    | 399.5                      | 357                          | 340                        |
| Total Parking Hours Used (hrs)                         | 87                         | 238                          | 90                         |
| Total Capacity Used (%)                                | 22                         | 67                           | 26                         |
| Average Length of Stay (hrs)                           | 2.80                       | 4.33                         | 6.92                       |
| Length of Stay 2 Hours or Less                         | 16                         | 21                           | 0                          |
| Length of Stay More than 2 Hours and Less than 4 Hours | 4                          | 6                            | 0                          |
| Length of Stay 4 Hours or More                         | 11                         | 28                           | 13                         |
| Peak Time of Use (time of day)                         | 1:30 pm                    | 1:30 pm                      | 9:00 am                    |
| Capacity Used at Peak Time (% of stalls)               | 36                         | 90                           | 33                         |

Observations for parking lots:

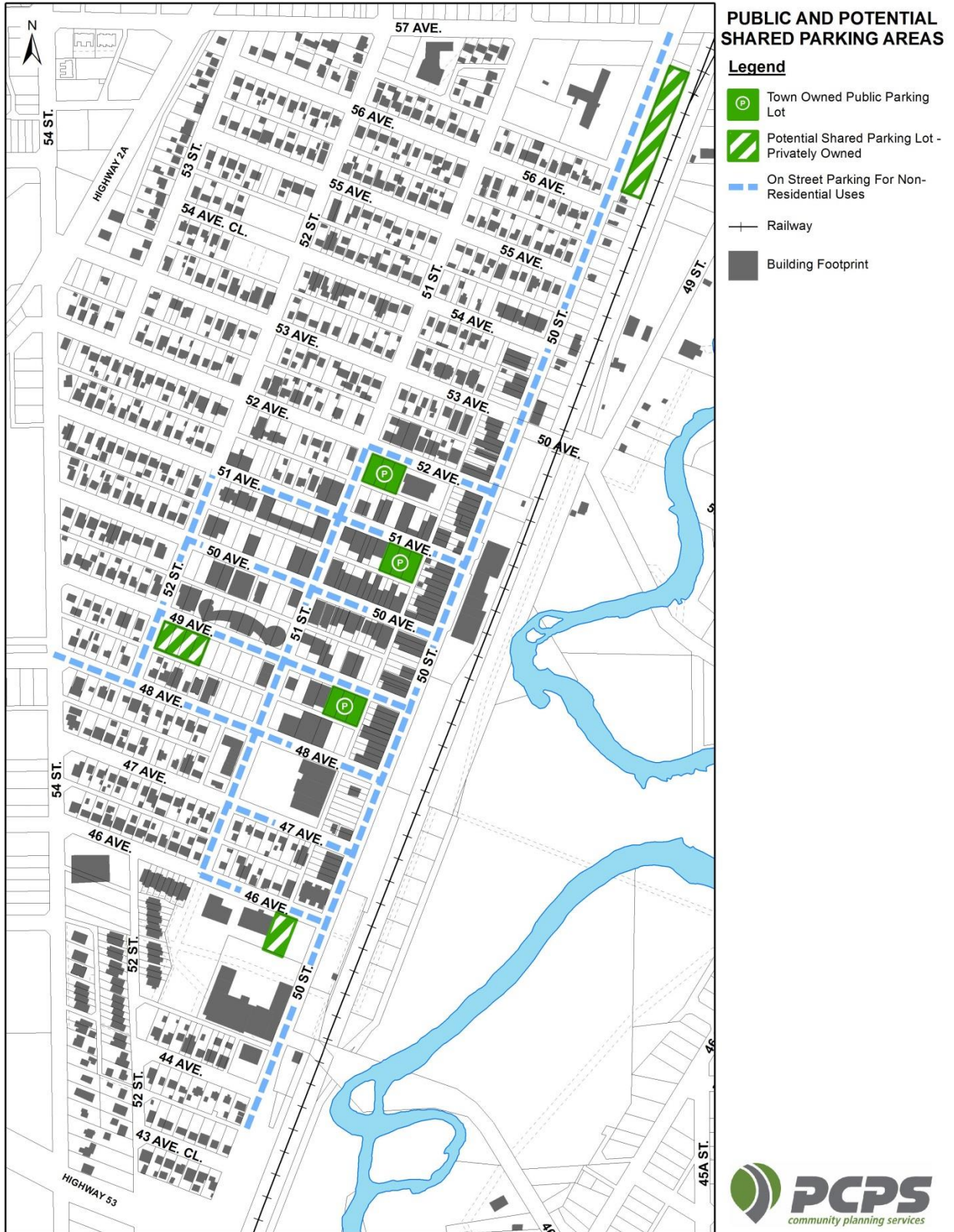
- capacity used over the observation period is below the 85% use mark that would suggest a highly used parking lot with no remaining capacity; North and South lots have substantial capacity available
- longer term stays greater than 4 hours represents majority of use; short term stays most prominent in Central lot

| <b>On- Street Parking Area</b>                        | <b>50 Street</b>     | <b>Chipman Avenue</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Number of Available Stalls                            | 16                   | 24                    |
| Total Number of Users/Vehicles                        | 100                  | 135                   |
| Average Turnover Rate per Stall (vehicle/stall)       | 6.25                 | 5.63                  |
| Total Parking Hours Available (hrs)                   | 136                  | 204                   |
| Total Parking Hours Used (hrs)                        | 70                   | 137.5                 |
| Total Capacity Used (%)                               | 51                   | 67                    |
| Average Length of Stay (hrs)                          | 0.70                 | 1.02                  |
| Length of Stay 1 Hour or Less                         | 104                  | 123                   |
| Length of Stay More than 1 Hour and Less than 2 Hours | 3                    | 13                    |
| Length of Stay 2 Hours or More                        | 2                    | 6                     |
| Peak Time of Use (time of day)                        | 11:30 am and 2:00 pm | 11:30 am and 12:30 pm |
| Capacity Used at Peak Time (% of stalls)              | 69                   | 96                    |

Observations for on-street parking areas:

- 50 Street is only area surveyed with a parking time restriction; number of short term stays includes repeat visits at different points in day
- capacity used over the observation period is below the 85% use mark that would suggest a highly used parking area with no remaining capacity

# Appendix A3: Map of Public and Potential Shared Parking Areas



# Appendix C – Marketing Strategy

## Key Objectives and Messages

The intent of this Marketing Strategy is to inform the Committee and Town of the objectives, and tools to use to effectively implement the Downtown Action Plan. It is very important that the implementation of the Downtown Action Plan through public realm improvements and other initiatives be communicated to property owners, businesses, developers, potential end users, residents within the Plan Area and the greater community to ensure the success of the Downtown Action Plan. The purpose of this Marketing Strategy is to proactively and regularly educate and advertise the Town’s planned improvements to actively support the revitalization of the Downtown.

Objectives for the Marketing Strategy:

- A. Inform property owners, business owners, and developers with regards to actions planned by the Town to improve the investment environment and conditions with the Downtown Plan Area;
- B. Promote, connect and build relationships with the Downtown community to enhance the lines of communication;
- C. Publicize recent development, business activity and success stories to enhance the image of the Plan Area;
- D. Increased tourist visitation within the Downtown area;
- E. Attract businesses and business development to the Downtown;
- F. Encourage families to relocate to the Downtown area.

## Target Audience

Through discussion with the Committee and Public, two target audience groups were identified, local residents and regional consumers. The success of the Downtown Action Plan will depend on investment from within the Plan Area (existing business and property owners) and outside of the Plan Area. It will be important to market to both of these target audiences, however the best ambassadors for the Plan Area are the business and property owners located within the Plan Area. The stories and message that the business owners and property owners tell potential investors and business owners can have the greatest impact. It is very important that the Town and Heritage and Downtown Revitalization Committee regularly reach out to these groups using the marketing tools and inform them about the planned public improvements and any revitalization and development projects.

The Marketing Strategy should be targeted to:

- A. Existing property owners and business owners in the Downtown Plan Area;
- B. Residents within the Downtown Plan Area;
- C. Business owners and residents outside of the Downtown Plan Area;
- D. Business Associations outside of the Plan Area and regionally;
- E. Visitors and tourists;
- F. Potential new residents;
- G. Support Professionals, including real estate professionals, lending institutions, planning consultants and others.

## Marketing Tools

The marketing of the Downtown Ponoka Action Plan should be a comprehensive multi-media campaign containing information, education and advertising components. The following key marketing tools are recommended to implement the overall Marketing Strategy:

- TOOL A.** Create a brand for the Downtown building on the logo developed for the planning project, this includes a community identity and the experience and atmosphere that visitors can expect when they enter Downtown.
- TOOL B.** Create an Asset Inventory, in order to attract new investment the Town must be able to articulate what assets are available and the competitive position, this includes land availability for development, housing statistics, tourism assets, and vacancies within the downtown including size, purpose and rent.
- TOOL C.** Social Media marketing, using Facebook, Twitter and Instagram to reach as broad of an audience as possible, this includes developing and using hashtags that can be linked to the Downtown Brand and can be used to promote sectors through weekly giveaways or competitions;
- TOOL D.** Develop a YouTube channel to create short videos promoting events, businesses or unique experiences within the Downtown.
- TOOL E.** Transition the Downtown Ponoka Action Plan website into a one-stop shop website for the Marketing of Downtown, create a page for the asset inventory so the information is easily accessible to potential investors and developers; a directory page of every business located within the Downtown and links to their webpages if available and contact information, this includes home occupations; an events page calendar showcasing every event within the Downtown area and enable anyone to submit events to the page; create an interactive

page displaying all available parking with the Downtown and any restrictions if applicable; create a page to display all social media posts that have been directed to the Downtown Ponoka or have used marketing hashtags; and a page to display the Downtown Ponoka Action Plan and achievements/successes in the community.

- TOOL F.** Continue “My Downtown Ponoka” multi-media campaign initiated for the public engagement aspect of the planning project, transition the content and purpose to promoting the Action Plan improvements and successes, this includes posters in public places, signs on businesses or in windows, create a poster campaign of phrases from local residents or visitors of what “we love” about Downtown Ponoka that can easily be incorporated into public elements; this includes a radio campaign on stations within the region to promote the Downtown Ponoka experience.
- TOOL G.** Create promotional material such as brochures created from the Downtown Ponoka website material, and pursue partner publications with other Town of Ponoka, County of Ponoka or Regional tourism promotions.
- TOOL H.** Develop themed walking tours of the Downtown (i.e. historical, Battle River Valley, Boomtown etc.) that can be delivered on branded Downtown Ponoka maps that easily accessible to the public and easy to navigate., these can be used as promotional material in visitor kiosks.
- TOOL I.** Publicize the Opportunities, Successes and Attractions happening in the Downtown through social media, local newspaper and Town publications.

## Performance Measures

Performance measures are crucial to being able to determine how effective your marketing campaign has been. The following methods have been identified as performance measures for determining the effectiveness of the Downtown Ponoka Marketing Strategy:

- A.** Website Visitation Traffic, this can be used to determine the number of unique visitors to the website and number of page views; the conversion rate of visitors, being the percentage of visitors who come to your site and take a specific action that your content encourages; the bounce rate of visitors who come the site and the immediately leave or “bounce”.
- B.** The Social media reach of the marketing campaign, (i.e Facebook insights); this can tell you how many people were reached, the number of post clicks, reactions, total views and viewing behaviour.
- C.** Pre and Post-campaign surveys to determine consumer awareness, likelihood of returning or recommending to friends and family.
- D.** Sales tracking from Downtown businesses, this can determine the direct economic impact that marketing campaigns are having within the community.

- E.** Determining the amount and type of coverage in different media (broadcast, newspapers, special interest publications, websites, blogs, etc.)
- F.** Email newsletters, number of newsletters sent out, the open rate of emails, click through rates, what links are clicked on and number of forwards.
- G.** Attendee counts at community events, such as open houses, and the number of new attendees at each subsequent event.