



# DOWNTOWN ACTION PLAN

## Terms of Reference

### INTRODUCTION

The Town of Ponoka wishes to further revitalize the downtown/core area. Past efforts have included participation in the Main Street Program with a key focus on Chipman Avenue and the 2007 Retooling Downtown Ponoka Study. The 2012 Municipal Development Plan also articulates key objectives for the downtown area and seeks to build on the work completed since the Main Street Program.

The Downtown Action Plan is a set of planning activities meant to update the existing information where needed and move forward with the implementation of key suggestions from the previous planning efforts. The purpose of the project is to:

1. Reaffirm and, where needed, update the vision for Downtown Ponoka expressed in the Retooling Downtown Ponoka Study and the Municipal Development Plan and the key actions that will implement the vision
2. Implement the suggestions of the past studies to build a strong sense of place that contributes to a positive atmosphere and overall strong sense of community identity
3. Provide more specific direction for the redevelopment, infill and intensification of private properties through changes in Town regulations
4. Identify and resolve any land use and related issues, including plans for future public facilities that may be suitably located in the area
5. Provide broad conceptual guidance for streetscape improvements including facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and motor vehicles, boulevard trees, street lighting, standards or poles for banners, planters and other decorations that enhance the overall appearance and attractiveness of the area and create a unified sense of character
6. Maintain and enhance environmental, historical and cultural features
7. Provide the framework for transportation routes and infrastructure investments
8. Establish a mandate and overall approach to implementation of further revitalization efforts

The study area for the project is shown on the accompanying map and includes:

- The area shown on Map 4 of the Town's Municipal Development Plan (generally the triangular area south of 57 Avenue, east of 54 Street, north of Highway 53); plus
- The abutting portion of the Battle River valley area between 57 Avenue and Highway 53.



## PROCESS OVERVIEW - HIGHLIGHTS

### Phase 1: Building Background

Late Summer/Fall 2016

- Background research and information collection
- Key stakeholder interviews
- Field survey



### Phase 2: Process Formalization

Early Winter 2017

- Assemble steering committee (Downtown Revitalization Committee) and process confirmation
- Review of background materials
- Engagement and communications framework



### Phase 3: Vision and Ideas

Late Winter 2017

- Open houses for vision confirmation and collecting suggestions
- Summary and review of input



### Phase 4: Draft Concepts and Plan

Late Spring 2017

- Prepare plan directions, strategies and LUB amendments
- Prepare public realm and streetscape concepts
- Review with steering committee



### Phase 5: Plan Review and Finalization

Summer 2017

- Public consultation on draft plans, strategies and streetscape concepts
- Review of feedback and revisions
- Public hearing and formal adoption

## DETAILED PROCESS

### Phase 1: Building Background

The key activity of this phase is the collection and analysis of background information. This includes information from relevant reports, studies and existing plans that relate to existing issues, strategies and policies affecting the downtown area. Documents to be used include the reports from the 2001 Ponoka Main Street Project, the 2007 Retooling Downtown Ponoka Study, the 2012 First Impressions Community Exchange Report and the Town's Municipal Development Plan.

Meetings and interviews will be held with Town staff and key stakeholders (e.g. commercial realtors) to assist in identifying a preliminary set of relevant issues, priorities and suggestions. Interviews will be in person and over the telephone.

A field survey will be undertaken by the consulting team to provide the needed background mapping and context of the area. It is anticipated that assessment of the municipal underground and road infrastructure will be underway and may be available some point part way through the process.

A Background Report will be created containing a synopsis of issues in text and graphics formats that can be reviewed and discussed. Topics to be addressed during the preparation of the Background Report include, but are not limited to:

- Existing features and current land use patterns;
- Development densities, building height and building mass, building placement;
- Inventory of streetscape elements and amenities (sidewalks, street furniture, light standards, landscaping);
- Architectural patterns and features;
- Open space areas and linkages;
- Pedestrian and vehicle circulation patterns and parking areas;
- Identification of redevelopment, infill and investment opportunities;
- Consideration of future public facilities located in the area (e.g. regional transit hub possibilities);
- General trends in downtown redevelopment;
- Existing and planned municipal servicing capacity improvements and upgrades (e.g. water and wastewater services, road surface rehabilitation);
- Identification of character areas and buildings including potential and identified heritage resources;
- Existing assessment base, lease rates and trends in development within the downtown area;
- Regional and community context such as population share and relative amount of retail/office floor space and residential development.

Following review with the Steering Committee (see next phase), the Background Report will be made available to the public. Key elements will also be used as resource material in the open houses to help generate ideas for downtown improvement.

*Key Output:    Background Report*



## Phase 2: Process Formalization

The key focus for this phase is to assemble the Steering Committee and prepare them for their role in the process. It is expected that the Downtown Revitalization Committee will form the core of the committee with additions from the Economic Development Board. The initial meeting of the group will include discussion of organization (e.g. chair, degree of formality) and logistics (e.g. schedule of meetings through process).

The Steering Committee will play a key role in the process. Their primary and broad responsibilities are to:

- Identify and discuss issues and opportunities that need to be addressed;
- Review and critique information gathered and produced by the consulting team;
- Help with community engagement and participation, including keeping their host organization apprised of progress and key events;
- Comment and discussion on development concepts and plan ideas to achieve consensus and shape the overall direction of the plan; and
- Provide recommendations to the community and Town Council through the final plan document and other items requiring Council adoption.

At their initial meeting, the Committee will be given a copy of the Background Report for their review and discussion at a follow up meeting. The intent of the review is to provide feedback on the contents and develop common understanding about the downtown area among the committee members.

At their second meeting the Committee will also be presented with an engagement and communications framework. This document will lay out the various tools and techniques to be used in the plan process to obtain community participation and keep all interested parties informed about the project. This is expected to include use of the Town website, online surveys, displays, and open houses.

Key Output:    Revised Background Report  
                          Engagement and Communications Framework

## Phase 3: Vision and Ideas

Given the previous work around the downtown area it is expected that the broad vision for Downtown Ponoka requires re-affirmation rather than starting anew. The vision and objectives described through the Municipal Development Plan and the ideas of the Retooling Downtown Ponoka study will be used. A set of open house sessions will be held to enable community members to find out about the plan process and provide their thoughts on any additions or changes to the vision. Participants will also be encouraged to share their specific thoughts about future action items and policy directions such as "how we should get there" types of ideas and possible streetscaping concepts and themes.

The set of open houses will be hosted by the Steering Committee over a two day/two evening period to enable as many participants as possible to attend around their normal schedules. Town staff and consulting team members will be in attendance to help with the open houses.

The format of each open house will allow for review of background material, including the vision established to date, discussion of future directions and improvement scenarios for the area. Scheduled small group discussions will take place during each open house to allow for dialogue and sharing of thoughts and suggestions amongst participants. One-to-one discussions will also be facilitated.

Ideas, suggestions and input offered through the open houses will be collected in several ways. These include comment forms, flip chart notes, drawings and sketches and mark ups on maps and exhibits. An online survey will also be used. The results of the open house sessions will be documented and summarized. This will then be reviewed with the Steering Committee along with any proposed changes to the vision.

Key Output: Open House Summary of Input

#### **Phase 4: Draft Concepts and Plan**

The draft action plan will be prepared based on the information and input received from the previous phases. It is anticipated that the draft plan will contain a combination of text, maps, pictures and computer generated graphics to assist in communicating the intent and direction of the plan and its policies. It will replace chapter 3 of the Retooling Downtown Ponoka study.

To complete a conceptual design for the area's various streetscapes; up to three options relating to the appearance of the streetscape will be explored and evaluated. This will include possible types of street furniture and general appearance of the streetscape. The ideas, options and criteria to assess the options will be described in both text and map and graphic formats. Coloured computer generated graphics will be used to show the general character proposed based on sample blocks for each theme/option. General cost estimates to allow for evaluation of options is expected to form part of the conceptual design.

Amendments to the Land Use Bylaw for the C-1 District, creation of an historical site overlay and creation of a residential overlay and/or amendments for the residential area surrounding downtown will be prepared.

A downtown parking strategy will be created to link with any proposed changes to the parking requirements of the Land Use Bylaw. This will also provide information for ongoing marketing.

A marketing strategy will be created for use by the Town, Economic Development Board and Downtown Revitalization Committee in promoting increased visitation and investment in the downtown area.

A Steering Committee meeting will be held for review and revisions prior to presenting the draft action plan, Land Use Bylaw amendments, streetscape options and strategies to the public.

Key Output: Draft Action Plan for public review  
Streetscape Design Options for public review  
Land Use Bylaw Amendments for public review  
Parking Strategy for public review  
Marketing Strategy for public review

## Phase 5: Plan Review and Finalization

The draft action plan, streetscape design options, LUB amendments and strategies will be made available for review and comments. This will involve input from referral agencies, residents and the general public. It is expected that materials will be available for viewing through the Town web site, social and digital media and through hardcopies available at the Town Office.

An open house will provide attendees the opportunity to become more familiar with the major directions of the draft action plan, designs and strategies. It is expected that static displays will be used to communicate and collect information.

The input received through the open house and referral process will be summarized, presented and discussed with the Steering Committee. Based on their comments and suggested responses to the input received, revisions to each plan will be made.

The proposed action plan, designs, strategies and LUB amendments will be submitted to Council for consideration in the form of adopting resolutions and first reading. An overview of the proposed plans, strategies and planning process will be provided and any questions Council may have will be addressed. The public hearing for the LUB amendments will be the final formal opportunity for input into the plan. Copies will be broadly available and advertised through the local news media.

While the recommended streetscape design, strategies, and action plan do not require formal bylaw approval, they will be presented to Council at the same time and follow the same general process for consideration as the LUB amendments.

Key Output:    Open House Summary of Input  
                  Proposed Action Plan  
                  Proposed Streetscape Concept  
                  Land Use Bylaw Amendments  
                  Parking Strategy  
                  Marketing Strategy

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Town of Ponoka staff will:

- Recruit the Steering Committee membership;
- Provide relevant background information on activities and functions relating to the area being covered by the plan to the consulting team;
- Provide timely review and comments on draft materials;
- Provide contact information landowners, business owners and organizations for review of project materials
- Help with community engagement and public input activities as a resource for open houses and committee meetings;
- Assist with ideas and assessing options for possible policies and plan/design content;
- Provide input into the draft plans and designs as well as consider operational, maintenance and programming potential;

- Act as spokesperson for the project for the purposes of media relations and public communications; and
- Provide direct assistance with the preparation and distribution of communications materials relating to the project and the plan process.

Parkland Community Planning Services (PCPS) will be consulting team lead and will:

- Guide the consulting team, including sub-contracted disciplines, in undertaking its various tasks described in the terms of reference;
- Prepare all materials for distribution to the Steering Committee and assist with all committee meetings;
- Provide email project updates as requested by the Town;
- Assist with communications materials to be published about the project and plan; and
- Communicate with Town staff in a timely manner as the project progresses.