



# City of Greater Sudbury Downtown Master Plan Update Background Report

FINAL – February 2025

## Land Acknowledgement

We would like to acknowledge that the City of Greater Sudbury is located within the territory of the Robinson Huron Treaty of 1850. This land is the Traditional lands of Atikameksheng Anishnawbek and Wahnapiatae First Nation. We honour and respect the Indigenous people of the area for their past and continued stewardship of these lands on which we are privileged to work and live. May our relationships with the land teach us to be humble and think of the next seven generations as we work together building healthy communities with sustainable futures.



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A photograph of a building with a colorful mural and a purple overlay. The mural features a large, stylized face with a wide, open mouth, rendered in shades of blue, purple, and yellow. The building's facade is light-colored with a grid pattern. A utility pole is visible on the right side of the building. The sky is clear and blue. A purple overlay covers the left and top portions of the image, with the text '1.0 Introduction' in white.

# 1.0 Introduction

## 1.1 Our Downtown Still Matters!

Downtowns are still important as the economic, cultural, and social hub of the city - a vibrant urban landscape that enhances the quality of life for all. They are the historic and symbolic heart of a community, the reflection of a city's evolving identity, pride, and prosperity. They are the meeting place for the entire city, where the diverse make-up of the community come together to celebrate and share common experiences. A holistically healthy, vibrant, authentic, green, supportive, and economically successful downtown provides a resilient and prosperous city for current and future residents, businesses, and investors. The reverse is also true, which is why a multi-faceted, actionable, and community-led vision for Downtown Sudbury is so critical. Today, we are updating the Greater Sudbury Downtown Master Plan and refreshing the vision for **Our Downtown!**



## 1.2 What is a Master Plan?

A downtown master plan provides a strategic vision designed to guide the long-term development, revitalization, and management of a city's downtown area. The plan typically encompasses a wide range of elements, including land use, transportation, infrastructure, economic development, housing, public spaces, and community services. The goal of a downtown master plan is to create a cohesive vision that balances growth and sustainability while addressing the needs and aspirations of residents, businesses, and visitors.

## 1.3 2012 Greater Sudbury Downtown Master Plan (DMP)

In 2012, the City of Greater Sudbury (City) Council unanimously approved the Vision, Plan, and Action Strategy for Downtown Sudbury through the Greater Sudbury Downtown Master Plan (DMP) – the first Master Plan for the heart of the amalgamated city. The DMP was the result of a 2-year long planning and community engagement exercise that resulted in a common understanding of the importance of Downtown Sudbury, and a common blueprint for change.

The DMP set a vision for the creation of the biggest, brightest, and best downtown in Northern Ontario and distinct 'Capital of the North'. The vision set three key directions for '**Activity and Growth**', '**Access and Connections**' and '**Beauty and Pride**' with 52 actionable recommendations, as per **Figure 1**.

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Figure 1: Downtown Sudbury Master Plan 10+ Year Plan & Projects

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**1.0 Introduction**

The DMP and DMP Implementation Plan were a partnership between the City, Greater Sudbury Economic Development Corporation, Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario (FedNor), Northern Ontario Heritage Fund Corporation (NOHFC), Réseau de développement économique et d’employabilité (RDEE) and the Community Liaison Group (a coalition of partners and stakeholders representing various facets of Downtown Sudbury including the Indigenous community, business owners, arts and culture, the environment, active transportation and community safety, to name a few).

Since 2012, the City and its partners have significantly advanced the DMP Implementation Plan, solidifying Downtown Sudbury’s reputation as the North’s Downtown. Remaining true to the original ‘opportunity-based intent’ of the plan, the City and its partners have also completed or initiated other projects that align with the DMP vision and directives. Over the last 12 years,

nearly \$400,000,000 was invested into public projects in Downtown Sudbury as per **Figure 2**, and over 10 projects are underway (e.g., Event Centre, Cultural Hub etc.), in addition to private investments.



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PROJECT COMPLETED

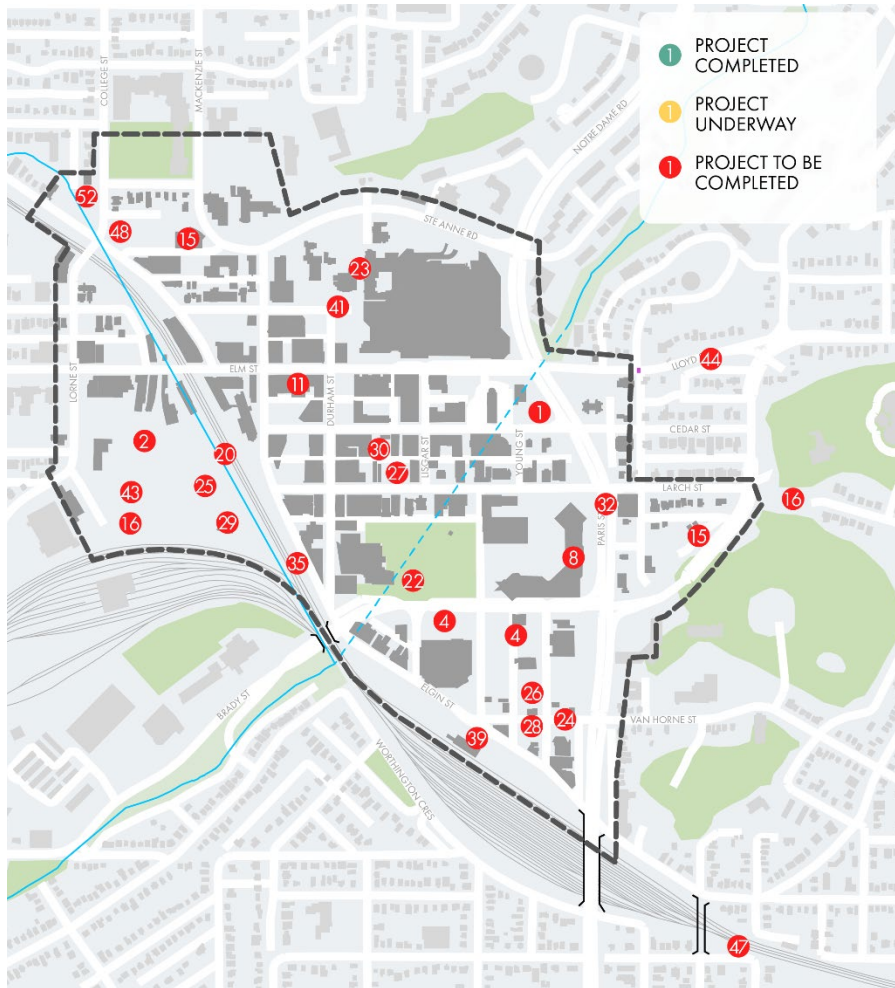
- 3 Rainbow Centre Improvements
- 6 N'Swakamok Friendship Centre Upgrade / Expansion
- 9 Farmers' Market
- 10 Laurentian School of Architecture
- 18 Riverside Pedestrian Tunnel Upgrade
- 19 Nelson Bridge Upgrade
- 31 Elm Street Rebuild
- 37 Tom Davies Square Upgrade
- 38 Minto Civic Corridor / Shared Street
- 40 Brady Green Stair
- 46 Larch Street Plaza
- 49 Public Art Strategy

PROJECTS UNDERWAY

- 5 Mixed-Use Infill Opportunity Site
- 7 Downtown Art Gallery
- 12 Contemporary Central Library
- 13 Residential Incentive Program
- 17 Expansion of Cycle Network
- 21 Ste. Anne Extension and Cycle Route
- 33 Durham Street Upgrade / Shared Street
- 34 Brady Street Calming
- 36 Memorial Park Expansion
- 42 Downtown Greening Strategy
- 45 Carleton Street Park
- 50 Heritage Strategy
- 51 Historic Downtown Core Preservation

Figure 2: Diagram Depicting Completed and Underway Projects

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- 1 Prestige Office Sites
- 2 Innovation - Technology Park
- 4 Multi-Use Recreation & Conference Complex / Hotel
- 8 City of Sudbury Visitor Centre
- 11 Expansion of College Presence
- 14 Mixed-Use Infill Opportunity Sites
- 15 Residential Opportunity Sites
- 16 Larch Street Extension
- 20 Cedar Street Pedestrian Bridge
- 22 Grey Street Pedestrian Connection
- 23 Beech Street Mews
- 24 Van Horne Street Realignment
- 25 West District Parkade
- 26 South District Parkade
- 27 Central District Parkade
- 28 Transit Terminal Relocation
- 29 District Energy Expansion
- 30 Laneway Upgrade Strategy
- 32 Paris Street Beautification
- 35 Elgin Greenway
- 39 Station Plaza
- 41 Parc des Pins
- 43 Inno-Tech Common
- 44 Gateway Treatment
- 47 Nelson Street Park
- 48 Monck Community Park
- 52 Celebrate the Creek Water Features

Figure 3: Diagram Depicting Projects To Be Completed

**Key achievements of the DMP include:**

- Activity and growth increased with the McEwen School of Architecture, Place des Arts, relocated Farmer’s Market, and historic investments through the updated Downtown Community Improvement Plan and Strategic Core Areas Community Improvement Plan;
- Riverside pedestrian tunnel and Nelson Street bridge upgrades improve access and connectivity with surrounding residential neighbourhoods;
- Downtown Sudbury’s public realm has been strengthened through the Tom Davies Square Upgrade, Brady Green Stair, and Elm Street Parking projects demonstrating a strong and unparalleled public and private sector commitment to core rejuvenation;
- Library, Art Gallery and Sudbury Multicultural Folk Arts Association (Cultural Hub) project is underway, reinforcing the Downtown’s role as the centre for learning, arts, and culture; and,
- Development of the Event Centre signals that the core will remain the regional designation for sports and entertainment.



## 1.4 Background Report Purpose

This Background Report provides an overview and update of the 2012 DMP background research and analysis, including a Strengths, Challenges, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) analysis to identify key directions for the DMP update. This includes the public realm, social trends, economic trends, market analysis, land use, infrastructure, transportation, and active transportation.





# 2.0 Why Update the Master Plan?

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2.0 Why Update the Master Plan?

The City is updating the DMP to ensure the strategic directions, recommendations and vision remain relevant, effective, and responsive to the evolving downtown conditions and community needs. The DMP update provides an important opportunity for the community to **celebrate** its successes over the last decade, **reflect** on the challenges and lessons learned, and **consider** how new strategic directions and community vision can be **integrated** and shape the next 10 years of investment into Sudbury Downtown. Key motivations and analysis through the Background Report for updating the DMP are outlined below.

**Changing Demographics** | Similar to other communities across Canada, Greater Sudbury’s population is aging. About 20 percent of the city’s population in 2021 was 65 years of age or older, and Downtown Sudbury has several high-density senior oriented facilities. This proportion of the population is expected to grow substantially in the future, and so are aspirations for universal accessibility and inclusion. Modest population and housing growth, shifts in age distribution, and evolving community needs necessitate updates to ensure that the downtown area can accommodate and serve its residents effectively.

**Post-Pandemic Economic Development** | The COVID-19 Global Pandemic (pandemic) and associated

lockdowns disrupted traditional work patterns, reducing the daytime office population in Downtown Sudbury that sustained the restaurants and shops. The economy and population have grown and there is a renewed sense of optimism - core activity is slowly returning and will continue to increase as inflation, interest rates, and real estate costs decline, and more people return to work as labour force availability improves. Downtown Sudbury continues to also compete with other Regional Centres in Greater Sudbury for investment and retail draw. As economic conditions and market trends change, municipalities need to adapt their strategies to attract new businesses, support existing ones, and stimulate economic activity.

**Environmental Sustainability** | Historic and ongoing greening and rehabilitation of lands, recent City Council’s Climate Change Emergency Declaration, Community Energy and Emissions Plan (CEEP), Climate Change Adaptation Plan (CCAP), and the Mayor’s Task Force on 30x30, a worldwide initiative by governments to protect 30 per cent of lands and waters globally by 2030, have brought climate change mitigation and adaptation, and biodiversity conservation, into the forefront of community revitalization. Increasing awareness of environmental issues and the need for sustainable practices drive updates to incorporate green infrastructure, energy-efficient buildings, and climate resilience measures.

**Planning Context Changes** | There have been many changes in the local and provincial policy context, including the 2017-2019 City of Greater Sudbury Strategic Plan, the Official Plan update, the Community Energy and Emissions Plan, the Biodiversity Action Plan for Greater Sudbury, Transportation Master Plan, Nodes and Corridors Strategy, the Complete Streets Policy, the Transit Action Plan, and the Water/ Wastewater Master Plan, and the Provincial Planning Statement, as outlined further in **Section 3.2**. Additionally, new ideas for Downtown Sudbury emerged from the Sudbury 2050 Urban Design Ideas Competition initiated by the McEwen School of Architecture. The DMP update will also consider how to maximize the potential of the South District and its connections to the rest of the downtown, to leverage Council’s investment in the new downtown arena/event centre.

**Infrastructure Needs** | Downtown businesses, residents and visitors have been requesting an increase in municipal service delivery (e.g., waste disposal, snow clearance, public washrooms, lighting, shelters, security, etc.) and infrastructure capacity (e.g., water and

wastewater servicing capacity, power/hydro). Aging infrastructure and the need for modernization or expansion of transportation, utilities, and public facilities require updates to the master plan to prioritize and guide these investments.

**Public Health and Safety** | Like many communities, many Greater Sudburians struggle with mental health issues, substance abuse/addiction and housing/homelessness. While these are community-wide issues, they are more visible in areas of Downtown Sudbury, which can erode the sense of safety and security. The City and its partners are working on a variety of initiatives to alleviate these issues. City Council’s recent approval of the *Roadmap to End Homelessness* by 2030 is one example. The DMP update will be informed by and complement these larger, community wide plans.

**Housing Demand** | The number of people living unsheltered in Downtown Sudbury increased during the pandemic. This was impacted by the closure of in person public services, loss of affordable housing, and the opioid crisis<sup>1</sup>. While Downtown Sudbury continues to see some

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<sup>1</sup> “Canada has seen substantially elevated numbers of opioid-related deaths and other harms since national surveillance began in 2016 by the Public Health Agency of Canada. This public health crisis is having a tragic impact on people who use substances, their families,

and communities across the country, and is shaped by a wide range of factors. The COVID-19 pandemic may have exacerbated the crisis, as several jurisdictions reported higher rates of fatal

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2.0 Why Update the Master Plan?

growth in the housing stock within the downtown core, there is greater housing activity in the neighbourhoods surrounding the downtown. There is a continued desire to see new housing in Downtown Sudbury, either through new construction or adaptive reuse. This housing would be targeted towards various markets and is a key to the community's poverty reduction strategy. Fluctuations in housing demand and affordability issues prompt updates to address the need for diverse and accessible housing options, ensuring that the downtown area remains inclusive.

**Public Realm, Cultural and Social Dynamics |**

Streetscape revitalizations, new built form, civic spaces, connections, and public art has improved segments and nodes of Downtown Sudbury – they provide pockets of organized cultural and social exchange by the community. To many residents the downtown feels disconnected, unsafe and empty outside of business hours. There is also a perceived shortage of parking that continues to be a community concern, and lack of unified identity for the downtown. Changes in cultural trends, social behaviors, and community values influence the

design and functionality of public spaces, amenities, and services, necessitating updates to the master plan.

**Truth and Reconciliation |** Greater Sudbury is on a path towards Truth and Reconciliation and is growing its understanding of the history and relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in Canada. There will be opportunities through this plan to connect more strongly with local Indigenous communities.

These factors for the DMP update will be considered through further analysis, and an open and engaging community consultation process to establish a refined vision for the future - one with fresh opportunities and priorities for change to ensure that Downtown Sudbury remains on its path to becoming the biggest, brightest, and best downtown in Northern Ontario.

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overdoses and other harms following the onset of the pandemic - Government of Canada, 2024. <https://health-infobase.canada.ca/substance-related-harms/opioids-stimulants/>

## 2.1 Project Process and Community Engagement

The update to the DMP will entail four strategic phases commencing with project initiation and reconnaissance, development of the vision and strategies for Downtown Sudbury, preparing the downtown master plan concept, and updating the DMP report, as per **Figure 3**.

A Sudbury-specific engagement plan was developed across all four phases of the project to provide opportunities for shared learning, enthusiasm, information-sharing, and feedback on the DMP update.

The engagement tools include: Over to You / A toi la parole project website, eight pre-engagement interviews with stakeholders and dedicated working meetings with Indigenous rights holders and organizations, five Steering Committee meetings; six Community Liaison Group (CLG) meetings; six City Staff Working Group meetings; and, four Community Workshops. All learnings and feedback from various engagement formats and project phases will be summarized, informing the DMP update. For this Background Report, key findings and themes from Phase 1 consultation are integrated into the SWOT analysis.



**Figure 4: DTMP Update Planning Process**



# 3.0 What Has Changed?

### 3.0 What Has Changed?

The Downtown Sudbury boundary for the DMP update remains the same. The core downtown area is triangular and bounded by Ste. Anne Road to the north, Paris Street to the west, and the rail corridor to the west. The influence of the DMP update will extend beyond these boundaries into the neighbouring ‘areas of influence’, including the mixed-use Cedar-Larch neighbourhood to the east, rail lands to the south, and residential and institutional neighbourhoods to the north. Downtown Sudbury’s gateways of Notre Dame Ave, Lloyd Street, Elm Street, Brady Street, Paris Street, and Van Horne Street are also linked to the downtown.

The downtown is designated “Downtown” in the City’s Official Plan which was amended in 2019 to incorporate the DMP into policy direction. The downtown is located within the City’s Settlement Area and is fully serviced with municipal water and sewer, though site development is based on available sewer and water capacity. Section 4.2.1 of the Official Plan outlines the policies related to the Downtown. A wide variety of uses are permitted in the Downtown, consistent with its function as the most diversified commercial Centre in the City.

Many of the policies for new non-residential development and residential development ‘encourage’ these types of development at various scales, densities, and heights in particular locations in line with the recommendations of the DMP. Office, retail, arts and entertainment uses are encouraged to locate downtown. Residential development is identified as a key priority in the downtown to stimulate increased investment and business activity, with a goal to double the number of people living downtown. The Official Plan provides for reductions or elimination of parking requirements and requirements for minimum building heights in the downtown. Many of the programs identified in the plan involve the City working with partners to move initiatives forward and stimulate development.

In addition, policies on the urban environment aim to preserve those aspects of the downtown that contribute to the image, character, and quality of life in the city, including natural features, landmarks, design attributes, heritage resources, linkages to existing trails, pedestrian walkways, and other desirable elements of the built environment.

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Downtown Sudbury falls within the bounds of different Community Improvement Plans (CIPs) including but not limited to the Strategic Core Areas CIP and the Affordable Housing CIP. Official Plan policies on public transportation (11.3), built heritage and natural environment (13.0 and 14.6), design features, views, and corridors (14.7), winter livability (14.8), aging population (16.2), and housing (17.2.2) also reference the downtown.

Downtown Sudbury’s seven-character districts from the DMP, as well as planning and land use, infrastructure, movement, public realm, economic trends, and the impact of existing CIPs are explored in the following sections and diagrams depicting some changes which have occurred between the 2012 DMP and the Update are outlined in the figures below.



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Figure 5: Opportunities and Completed Projects

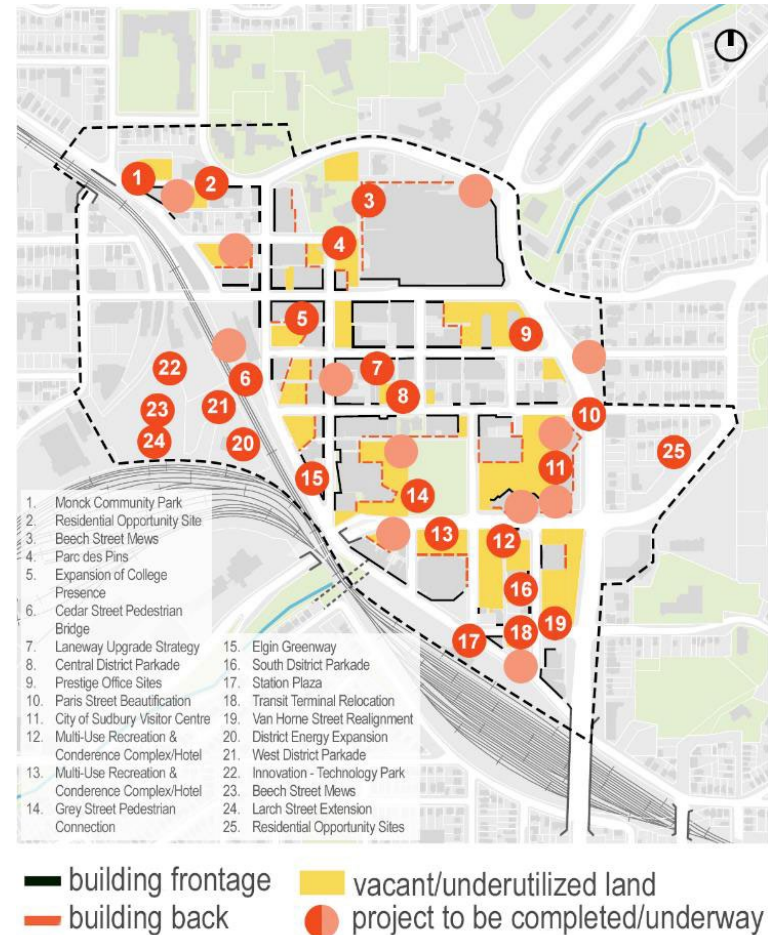
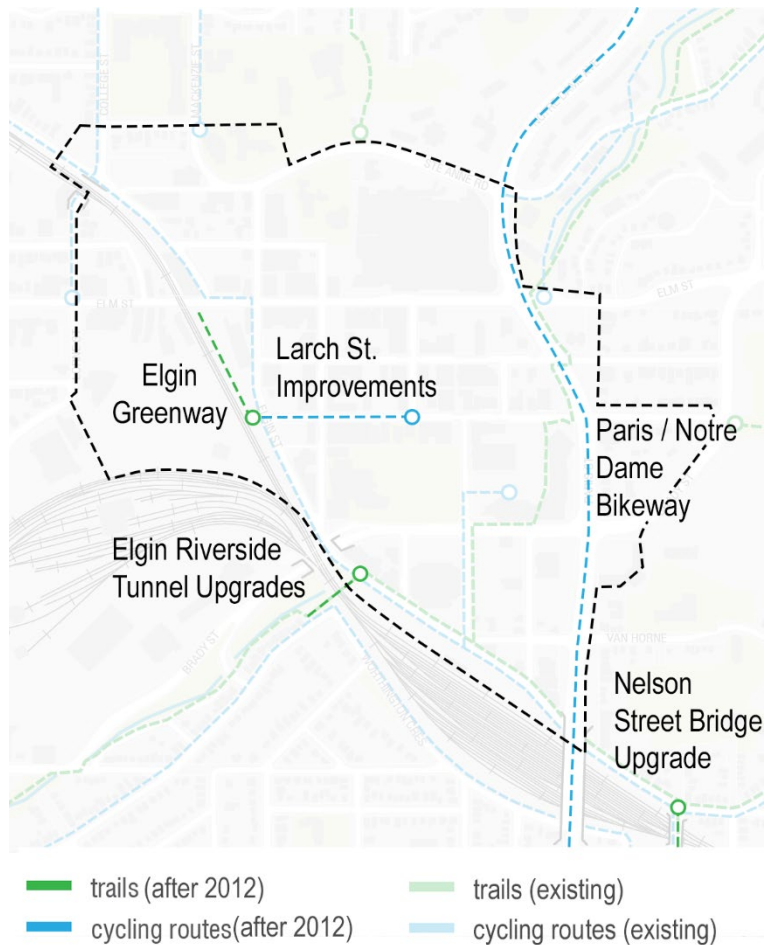


Figure 6: Opportunities and To Be Completed or Projects Underway

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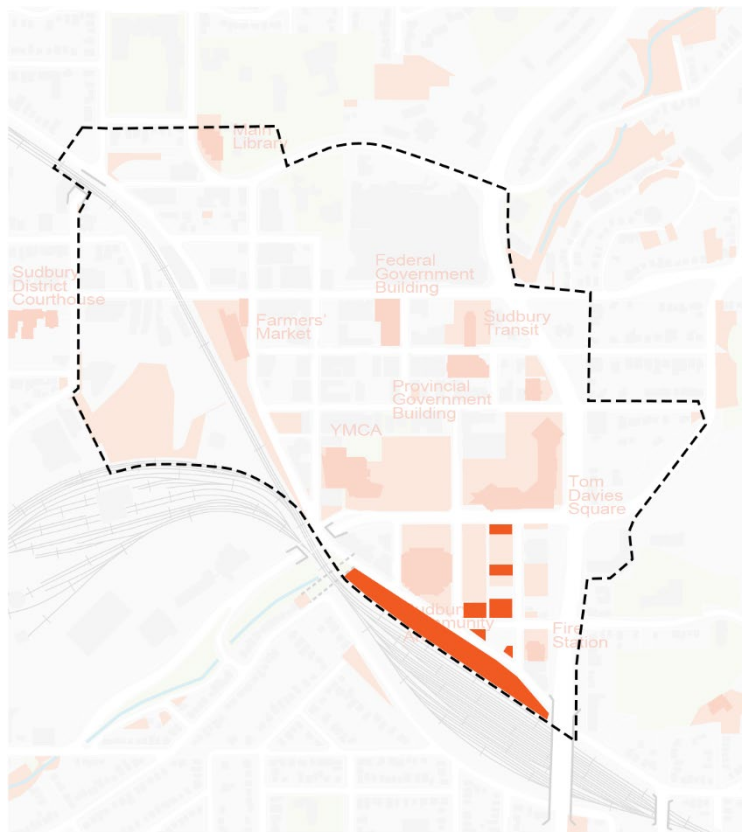


**Figure 7: Improvements in Trails and Cycling**

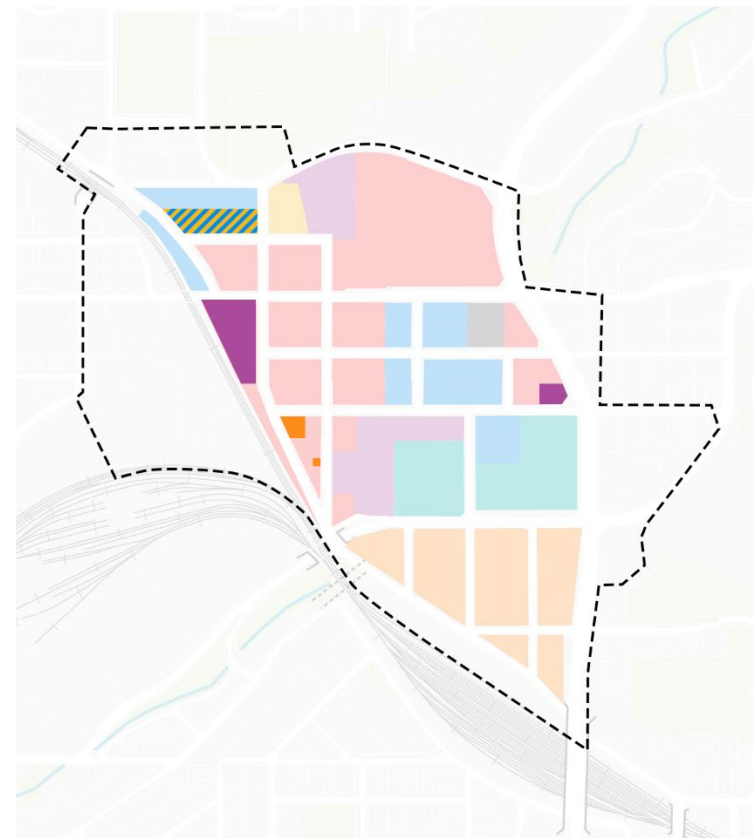


**Figure 8: Improvements in Parks and Open Spaces**

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**Figure 9: Additional Public Lands**



**Figure 10: Changes in Land Use**

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3.0 What Has Changed?**



- █ collector road (proposed after 2012)
- █ major road (existing)      █ local road (existing)
- █ collector road (existing)      █ laneway (existing)

**Figure 11: Improvements in Road Network**



**Figure 12: Current Transit – No Change**

### 3.1 Downtown Districts

There were seven districts outlined in the 2012 DMP, including the railway lands, each with their own highly diverse functions and characters. Based on their mix of uses and location, each district plays a role in supporting the Downtown in its character and function. Overall, the downtown is a mix of land uses, and residential uses remain limited, primarily located above ground floor retail with a few units per building. Vulnerable and unhoused populations are spread out around downtown and services are in a variety of locations. Housing is of a particular need.

Office vacancies remain due to the Covid-19 pandemic, work from home policies, and the perception of security. Major employers such as the City of Greater Sudbury and Provincial Governments have not returned fully to the downtown and several businesses have relocated permanently out of the downtown.

The Downtown is primarily zoned Downtown Commercial (C6) Zone which permits a mix of uses including residential development, and a variety of retail, service, office commercial uses, institutional uses, and parking lots. The downtown C6 Zone does not require on-site parking for commercial uses but does require 1 parking space/dwelling unit for residential uses, with the exception that parking spaces are not required for residential conversions of buildings older than 5 years of age. The C4 and M1-1 zones do not have similar parking reductions. The districts are illustrated in **Figure 12**.

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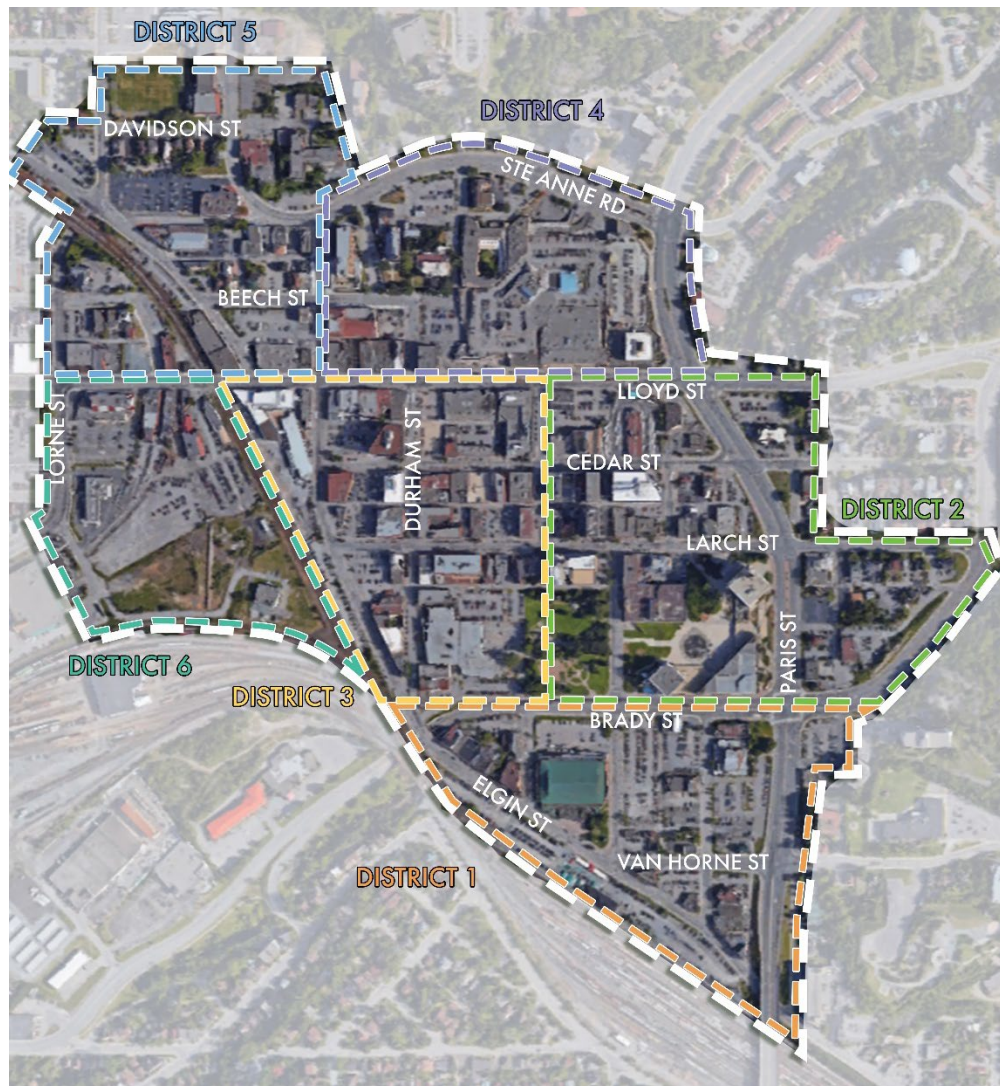


Figure 13: Downtown Character Districts from 2012 DMP

### 3.1.1 South District (District 1)

The South District is predominantly arts and entertainment uses. Sudbury has established itself in the film industry, and the South District has been used recently by major productions such as *Shoresy*, *Zombie Town*, and *Resident Evil: Welcome to Raccoon City*. Sporting and cultural assets remain in the form of the Sudbury Arena and Sudbury Theatre Centre, as well as popular local restaurants and shop establishments which are dispersed on Elgin Street. The fire hall and Samaritan Centre providing social services remain in the southwest corner of the district.

The South District continues to provide significant surface parking areas for downtown offices, establishments, and events; however, the expanse of surface parking areas and Brady Street continue to isolate this area from the rest of the downtown to the north. Construction of the Paris-Notre Dame Bikeway, including active transportation improvements to the Bridge of Nations entering the downtown in the South District, have recently been completed by the City.

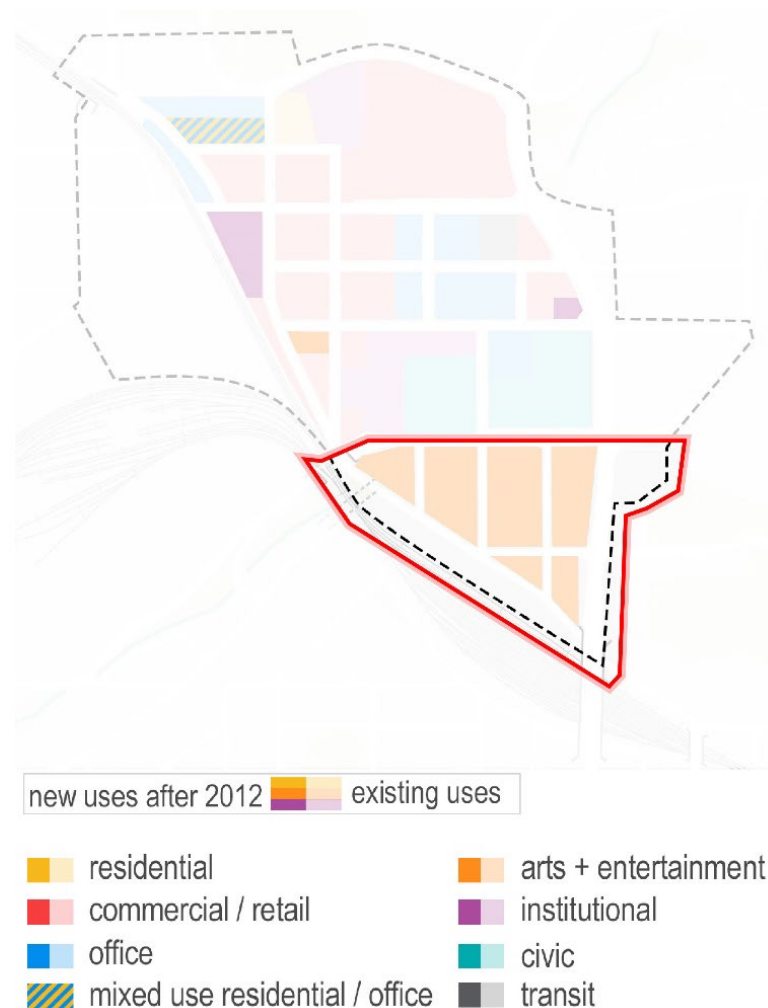


Figure 14: South District Uses

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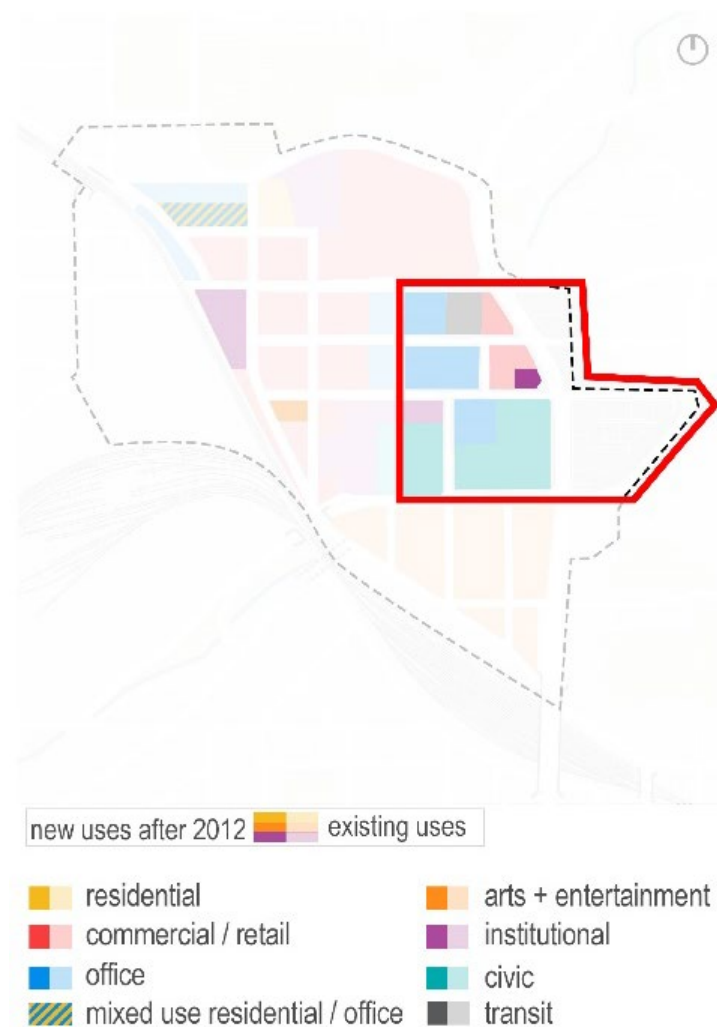
In April 2024, City Council approved a plan to build a new \$200 million arena/events centre downtown in the South District and made large investments to acquire properties in this area to facilitate this redevelopment. Over the course of several months in 2024, several properties were acquired by the City and have since been demolished. The design of the Arena/Events Centre will commence in 2025 and is scheduled for opening by 2028. The City is desirous of a parking structure and hotel in this location as well.

The City's decision to locate the Cultural Hub in Tom Davies Square and recent openings of spaces in nearby districts like Place des Arts on Elgin Street and YES Theatre's Refettorio on Durham Street further the arts, culture, and entertainment trend for the downtown.

### 3.1.2 East District (District 2)

The East District is predominantly civic uses and proposed new arts and entertainment uses with the Cultural Hub. It continues to include a variety of office, institutional, and commercial space, as well as some limited residential use with a 12-unit residential condo on Larch Street which opened in 2014, which was not followed up by similar projects. The major offices of the City and various Provincial Government departments, while still located in this District have seen major changes in the amount of employees coming to the downtown office locations due to the pandemic shutdown in 2020 and flexible work-from-home options since 2021. As such, the amount of office space required has declined in this area, and some provincial offices have downsized/relocated. Additionally, there has been great flux in the dining establishments since the pandemic with the lack of downtown office workers to support the lunchtime and afterwork business. The eastern side of Paris Street continues to provide a variety of underutilized sites for a mix of office and residential uses. Areas east of Paris Street, between Lloyd and Brady Street are zoned Office Commercial Exception (C4(1)) which permits a variety of office and residential uses but prohibits drive-thrus.

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**Figure 15: East District Uses**

Memorial Park and Tom Davies Square continue to provide large open and park spaces, and investment has been made into the Tom Davies Square Courtyard (Spring 2019), but programming of the space has been lacking. The City is also investing \$65 million in a redevelopment of Tom Davies Square for the Cultural Hub to house the main branch of the public library, the Art Gallery of Sudbury, and the Sudbury Multicultural and Folk Arts Association. The proposed design interacts on the Tom Davies Square Courtyard and on the Paris Street façade as well. A feasibility study is currently reviewing options for the Police Headquarters on Brady Street. The City will also be relocating its office from Tom Davies Square to the former Provincial Building on Larch Street.

The Canadian Mental Health Association’s 200 Larch Street building opened in November 2019. It is an integrated health services hub established by community partners with the goal to address issues related to mental health, addictions, and homelessness in Sudbury Downtown that provides shelter, mental health and addiction services, and primary care. The Transit Centre is currently located adjacent to the Tim Horton’s and LCBO, across from Elm Place, but is planned to be

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relocated. This creates an opportunity area within the East District.

### 3.1.3 Central District (District 3)

Office uses between Larch and Elm Streets and commercial and retail uses dominate the Central District.

The Central District remains downtown’s main shopping and dining destination with many establishments on Durham Street, Elgin Street, Larch Street, Cedar Street, and Elm Street. There has been some changeover and decrease in overall occupancy and activity in this area since the pandemic with reduced day-time office workers to frequent establishments at noontime and afterwork. Central District is largely characterized by ground floor commercial uses (primarily retail, service, restaurant), and upper floors a variety of residential and/or office space. It continues to be bordered by the rail yards on the western edge, although some improvements in planting and pathways have been made at the northern end with the McEwen School of Architecture and preliminary work on the Elgin Greenway, but much remains the same. In addition, many large surface parking lots remain scattered through the district.

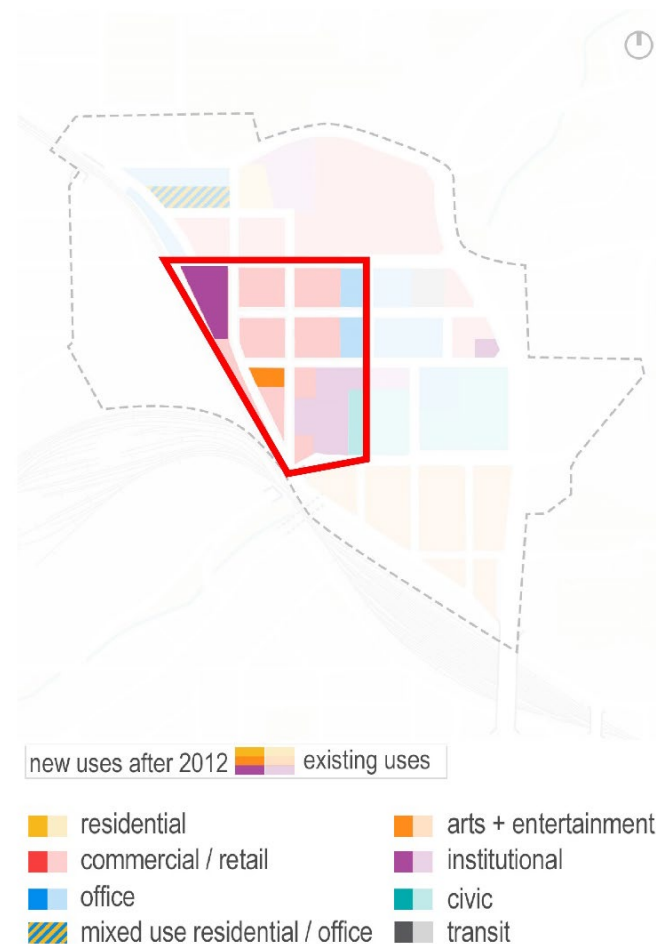


Figure 16: Central District Uses

### 3.0 What Has Changed?

The McEwen School of Architecture as part of Laurentian University opened officially in downtown on Elm Street, west of Elgin Street in 2017, completing its \$45 million 72,000 square foot state-of-the-art facility, that adaptively reused some existing buildings in this location. This represented the first new school of architecture in Canada in 45 years and admits approximately 70 new students each year to the Bachelor of Architecture program and has a master's program as well. The establishment of the School of Architecture increased educational institutional use in the downtown area.

The City's Innovation Quarters Downtown Business Incubator was established in 2022 and is located on Elm Street.

Durham Street remains the most active with a variety of restaurants, boutiques, cafes, bars, and nightclubs. The YMCA remains a key figure on the street and attracting visitors from all over the city and every demographic for various activities. Since a pilot established in 2014 and made permanent in 2016, the Business Improvement Association (BIA) in conjunction with the City launched a patio program to permit seasonal outdoor seating areas taking up various sections of travel and parking lanes on Durham Street, and lending to traffic calming and a more pedestrian-friendly environment. Also on Durham Street, YES Theatre opened the Refettorio in 2023, an open-air

theatre space including a simple, wooden stage with a seating capacity of 175 people. Up Here Festival is a weekend-long summer festival centered around Durham Street focused on urban art and emerging music that has been held since 2012 and contributes significantly to permanent installation of murals within the downtown core and throughout the City.

Place des Arts, a multidisciplinary arts and cultural centre, located on the corner of Elgin Street and Cedar Street, opened in 2022 and includes an early childhood arts centre, several creative spaces for youth, 10,000 square feet of office space, a black-box style multipurpose studio for 120 people, a concert hall with 299 seats, a contemporary art gallery, bistro, and gift and book shop.

Scotia Tower, an office building on the corner of Cedar and Durham Street is currently proposed by a development company to be renovated to create 83 residential units. They recently received approval from Council for a \$1.7million municipal grant to assist with the \$19.8 million renovation.

### 3.1.4 North District (District 4)

Offices, commercial and retail uses comprise the majority of the uses in the North District. Elm Place, formerly the Rainbow Centre mall, still dominates the area north of Elm Street as a super block. The mall contains a variety of retail, office, restaurant, entertainment, medical and service uses, though most recently a large multinational engineering firm relocated out of the mall and out of downtown. Elm Place is zoned C6(4) as the result of a zoning by-law amendment application approved in 2024 which also permits warehouse and commercial self-storage facility in the main floor of the mall to provide greater flexibility for use of the space in an attempt to make more use of space in the building. Entrances to the building for foot traffic and vehicles and interaction with Elm Street remain largely unchanged.

The Greater Sudbury Market relocated to Elm Place in September 2023 to have a permanent indoor location for stalls year-round, and a hybrid indoor/outdoor space in the summer. The Radisson Hotel and a large parking structure remain connected directly to Elm Place.

The context surrounding Elm Place to the west of two churches and a mix of residential and commercial buildings on Durham Street, Elm Street, and Beech Street remain largely the same.

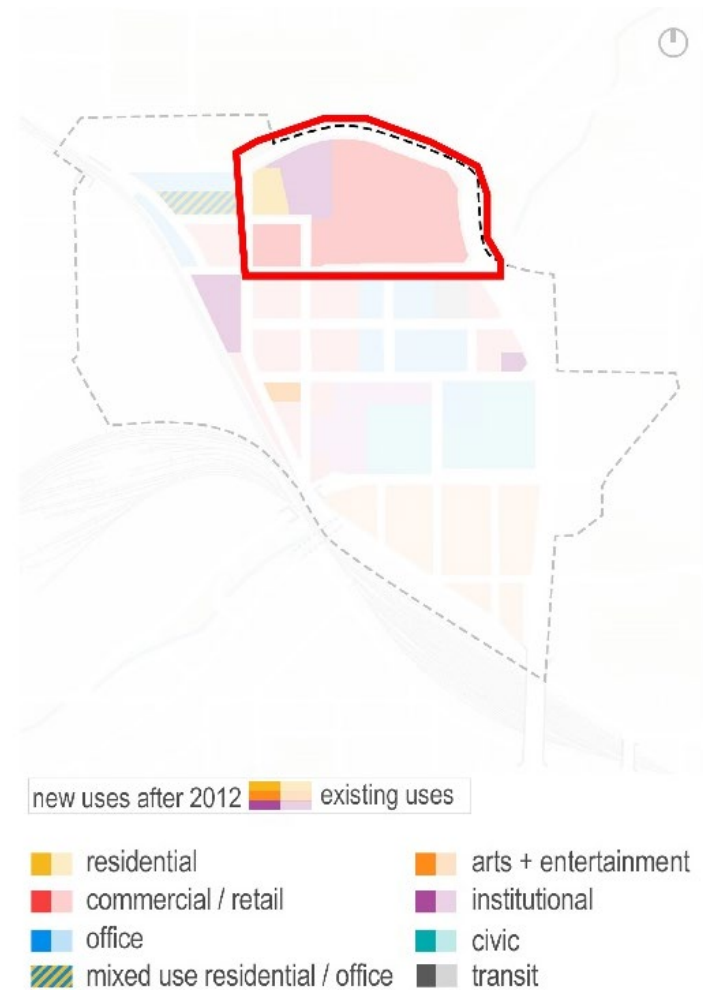


Figure 17: North District Uses

### 3.1.5 North-West District (District 5)

This area continues to be a mix-use transition from the traditional downtown area to the residential area to the north. However, where the DMP identified underutilized sites on Beech Street, Evergreen Street, and Fir Lane, these areas have been redeveloped recently for a number of different office buildings, primarily engineering, legal and financial services. In 2011 Shopper’s Drug Mart opened on Elm Street, oriented towards the Elm Street façade, and with parking located at the back of the building. There is a new financial management building on Beech Street.

There has been some redevelopment activity further to the north on Ste Anne Road and Mackenzie Street with an expansion to Red Oak Villa, an assisted living seniors’ residence doubling with the addition of more than 120 units opening in 2023.

Sudbury’s main library is currently located in this area but is planned to relocate to the City’s Cultural Hub in Tom Davies Square.

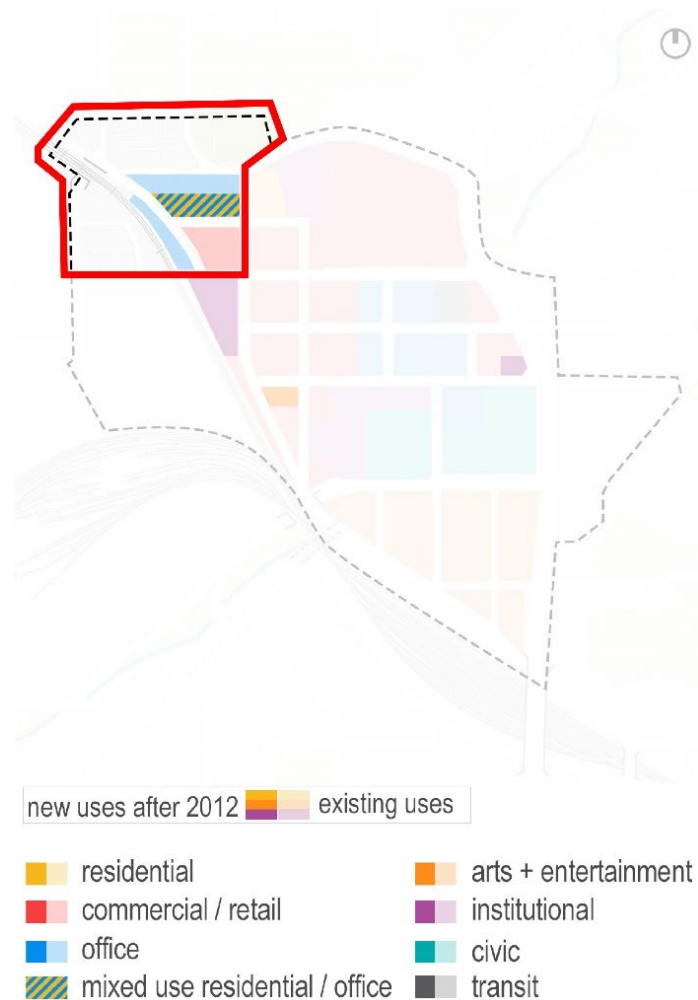


Figure 18: North-West District Uses

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The western edge of the district remains defined by the rail corridor, and access from the west is via the College Street underpass. The City is planning on repairing the underpass and upgrading the College/Frood intersection to a roundabout.

### 3.1.6 West District (District 6)

The West District is located west of Elgin Street and across the rail corridor and remains cut off from the rest of downtown, except via Elm Street. This area remains a mix of retail, office, hotel, warehouse, and utility uses. Innotech Park to the west of downtown and the railyards is zoned Business Industrial Exception (M1-1(10)), permitting a variety of commercial and light industrial uses, but also prohibiting drive thrus.

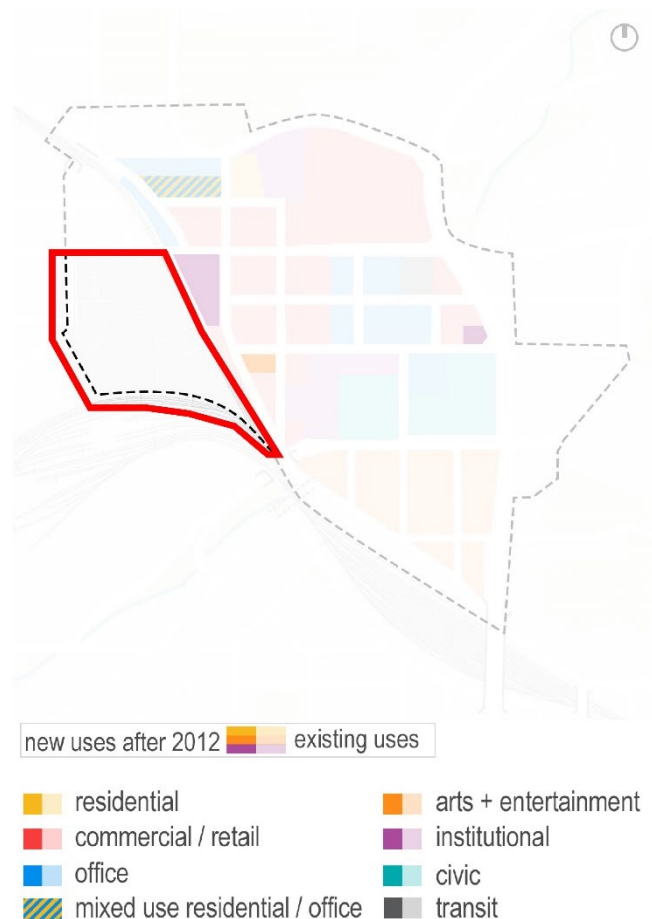


Figure 19: West District Uses

The Beer Store on Lorne Street was redeveloped in a new building at the same location that opened in 2015 and includes space for other retail uses. Energy Court, located behind the Beer Store, has been home to a large homeless encampment since at least 2021 and has grown since removal of tents from Memorial Park in April 2022.

The 52-acre Canada Pacific (CP) Rail Yard (including tracks and rail yards) continues to border the southern and western portions of Downtown adjacent to Elgin Street. These yards, which are located at the junction of CP’s national main line and the Copper Cliff spur, provided the initial impetus for the community’s location, and are still actively used. It remains that these tracks occupy significant real estate proximate to downtown that could be re-purposed in the longer term for more contemporary uses that are more compatible with an active and vibrant downtown location.

### 3.2 Planning and Policy Directions for the Downtown

Since 2012, many City Council-approved plans and studies have been completed providing important supporting information and direction for Downtown Sudbury. **Table 1** below summarizes the specific policies and recommendations that inform the DMP update.

**Table 1: Summary of Planning and Policy Direction post 2012**

Document / Plan Name	Year	Why is it Relevant?
<b>City of Greater Sudbury Strategic Plan</b>	2019-2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presents Greater Sudbury’s comprehensive mission, vision, and values for social, economic, and environmental prosperity.</li> <li>• Mission is to fulfill the needs of all those who work, live, visit, invest and play in our city.</li> <li>• Vision to be a Centre of excellence and opportunity – a vibrant community of communities living together.</li> <li>• Values include innovation, integrity, respect, foresight, trust, and compassion.</li> <li>• Focus on revitalizing downtown through public and private investment (example of business incubator) and target downtown for mixed-income housing</li> </ul>
<b>City of Greater Sudbury Official Plan</b>	2006, amendments in effect up to 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The principal land use planning policy document for the City of Greater Sudbury and provides overall vision.</li> <li>• States that Downtown Sudbury is the heart of Greater Sudbury and a strategic core area in northern Ontario and that it will continue to function as the local and regional centre for government services, business services, retail, sports and entertainment, arts and culture, and community and institutional uses.</li> <li>• Vision for Downtown “Downtown Sudbury is the biggest, brightest and best downtown in northern Ontario.”</li> <li>• Also states the importance of providing a range of housing needs in the revitalized downtown.</li> </ul>

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Document / Plan Name	Year	Why is it Relevant?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Downtown is expected to see higher rates of intensification and change.</li> <li>• Density in the downtown may exceed maximums as outlined in the Zoning-By-law.</li> <li>• Both residential and non-residential development are key priorities for the downtown.</li> </ul>
<b>Community Energy and Emissions Plan (CEEP)</b>	2021	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a climate change mitigation plan, it parallels the City’s climate change adaptation planning efforts.</li> <li>• Respond to City Council’s Climate Emergency declaration in May 2019, working towards 2050 net-zero emissions target.</li> <li>• 18 goals established, pertaining to downtown includes: Goal 1 is to create compact, complete communities through infill developments, and multi-unit and mixed-use buildings; Goal 10 is that 100% of new vehicles are electric by 2030. They will require EV charging infrastructure in the downtown, and the CEEP notes the DMP should be updated to include special provisions for infrastructure, fees, and preferred parking areas; Goal 15 is to expand the downtown district energy system to 23 MW capacity.</li> </ul>
<b>Biodiversity Action Plan for Greater Sudbury</b>	2009, revised 2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It provides a comprehensive way to address risks to plant communities and wildlife habitat.</li> <li>• While considering the mining heritage which provided Greater Sudbury with its prosperity, the primary focus is on ecological recovery.</li> <li>• Process includes spreading lime to make soils less acidic, adding fertilizer to the soil when metal levels are lower in plants,</li> </ul>

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Document / Plan Name	Year	Why is it Relevant?
		<p>applying grass and legume seed mix to create more suitable environment, eventually planting tree seedlings (pines, spruce, oaks, maples, birch, and poplars); and when forest established adding shrubs and wildflowers to attract insect communities and help healthy soil to develop.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Importance of increasing the urban tree canopy cover, which provides shade in summer, provides habitat for birds, lessens rainfall runoff, and helps clean the air we breathe.</li> <li>• Council appointed Green Space Advisory Panel’s final report (2010) identifies priorities for the ecological recovery of certain green spaces.</li> </ul>
<b>Nodes and Corridors Strategy</b>	2016	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritizes study areas to help guide investment and intensification within the community.</li> <li>• Nodes include Downtown, Town Centres, and the three Regional Centres.</li> <li>• Provides content that informs City policy, bylaws, and guidelines.</li> <li>• The Nodes and Corridors Strategy is an action in which to implement the 2012 Downtown Master Plan, it also promotes increasing densification by conversion from commercial to residential.</li> </ul>
<b>Complete Streets Policy</b>	2018	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Policy ensures linear infrastructure projects planned and designed to inclusively meet needs of community.</li> <li>• Outlines social, economic, environmental, health related benefits of Complete Streets.</li> </ul>

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Document / Plan Name	Year	Why is it Relevant?
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Principles align with the downtown masterplan goals improved quality of life, attractiveness of community, connectiveness and public health.</li> </ul>
<b>Parks, Open Space &amp; Leisure Master Plan Review</b>	2014	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Downtown Sudbury has gaps in providing the following leisure activities: Basketball, skate parks.</li> <li>Parkland gaps identified in the downtown, as an underservices area.</li> <li>Provision of parkland in intensifying areas will become increasingly important to urban residents.</li> </ul>
<b>Transit Action Plan</b>	2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Designates key corridors and connections to focus development, investment, and service improvement to maximize long-term efficiency, connectedness, and community prosperity.</li> <li>Recommend supporting higher frequency routes in the urban core through fixed routes.</li> <li>Improved rerouting towards South End will alleviate transit stress on Downtown Terminal.</li> </ul>
<b>Population Projection</b>	2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides potential growth scenarios for the City.</li> <li>Key findings: Greater Sudbury is the Northern Ontario growth leader; greater growth is anticipated; employment lands to be situated relatively close to where residents live; migration an increasingly important role in growing Greater Sudbury’s economy; Regional Services Centre; shifting patterns and age structure; demand for different forms of housing (35 to 40 percent of all housing growth projected as demands for apartments).</li> </ul>

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Document / Plan Name	Year	Why is it Relevant?
<b>Public Art Master Plan</b>	2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greater Sudbury is a Northern cultural capital celebrated from coast to coast to coast for its artistic excellence, vibrancy, and creativity.</li> <li>City’s public art helps breathe life into our entire community, showcases the immense talent of its artists, draws inspiration from the land, and builds on the city’s rich multicultural heritage.</li> <li>Downtown Sudbury was identified as one priority area for public art.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Public Realm Improvements</b>	2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Areas addressed within downtown, including Brady Street, Carlton Street Park, Durham Street, Old City Hall Lane, Medina Lane, Massachusetts Lane, Memorial Park, Paris Street, have been considered, many of which have been implemented since 2012.</li> </ul>
<b>Strategic Core Areas Community Improvement Plan</b>	2022, updated 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>One of the Strategic Core Areas is found within the Downtown.</li> <li>A variety of financial incentives are available to approved and eligible properties within the Downtown: Tax Increment Equivalent Grant Programs (Standard, Superstack, and Parking Structure); Facade Improvement programs, Planning and Building Fee Rebate Program; Residential Incentive Program; Commercial Vacancy Leasehold Program; Feasibility Study Grant Program.</li> </ul>
<b>City of Greater Sudbury Housing and Homelessness Plan</b>	2019	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stronger demand for affordable rental housing within Downtown Sudbury.</li> <li>General guidelines for annual housing targets including Mix of housing should be 50 to 60 percent single detached, 15 percent semi-detached/row housing, and 25 to 35 percent should be</li> </ul>

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Document / Plan Name	Year	Why is it Relevant?
		<p>apartment dwellings. Also, there should be 70 percent ownership and 30 percent rental rates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ideally, 25 percent of all new dwellings should meet the definition of affordable housing.</li> </ul>
<b>Water/Wastewater Masterplan</b>	2017	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presents safety, growth, performance, and legal considerations from a water / wastewater management perspective.</li> <li>• Focuses on growth outlined in City’s Official Plan, but no other special considerations regarding the downtown.</li> </ul>
<b>Transportation Master Plan</b>	2015	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Incorporating more active transportation facilities and expanding the transportation network will dramatically increase the range and usability of downtown Sudbury to the rest of the Greater Sudbury area.</li> <li>• Downtown as core with 2 central axes north/south along Paris and Regent Streets, and east/west along the Kingsway and Lasalle Boulevard</li> <li>• Recommendations to monitor traffic volumes at major downtown intersections to better understand transportation needs.</li> <li>• Road widening/extensions, which can also coincide with Complete Streets Policy and support active transportation in Downtown.</li> </ul>

### 3.3 Infrastructure

It is of utmost importance to understand the servicing status and needs for evolving downtowns. Especially when physical changes are proposed including intensification and redevelopment. The following sections provide a pulse check on the status of infrastructure, servicing, and utilities for the downtown.

#### 3.3.1 Municipal Water

Based on the City’s 2017 Water/Wastewater Master Plan, there is sufficient water supply and no additional storage required to service population growth in Downtown Sudbury to 2041. Reservoirs, tanks, and watermains are sufficiently sized. Specific recommended upgrades are provided for the downtown related to improvements to fire flow, pressure, and condition of older mains. Upgrades are required on Minto Street in front of the current arena, and Elm Street in front of the Shopper’s Drug Mart. In addition, in areas adjacent to the downtown (e.g., Spruce, Ethelbert, St. Nicholas, Mont Adam, Leslie) – upgrades are called for in these areas, some of which have been completed.

#### 3.3.2 Sanitary Sewers

There are a number of capacity and condition issues related to sanitary sewers in the downtown. Capacity issues have been identified in particular on: Elm Street; Paris Street between Elm Street and Larch Street; Larch Street; Medina Lane; the east end of Beech Street; north end of Durham Street; Brady at Lloyd; and the east end of Cedar Street.

The City continues to have recognized issues with Inflow and Infiltration (I&I) relating to rainwater getting into the sanitary sewers, which has the effect of increasing flows at wastewater treatment plants. The difference in flow between dry weather and wet weather is significant. In particular, Downtown Sudbury has a number of “direct connections” – this happens when roof leaders are connected directly to the sewers, which is not legal. Typically, with redevelopment projects and opportunities these flows would be directed properly to the stormsewer and away from the sanitary system.

The Downtown area is known to experience flooding. Sewers in older neighbourhoods tend to be in poor condition, have cracks, root intrusion, or are made of clay (which no longer meets standard). Access to many sewers in Downtown Sudbury is limited, making addressing these issues difficult.

### 3.3.3 Stormwater Management

The City reviewed the downtown’s stormwater system in the Junction Creek Subwatershed Study and Stormwater Master Plan by WSP (formerly Wood) from December, 2019. Storm sewer infrastructure includes the minor system (storm sewers), and the major system via overland drainage (ditches, roads, major ditches, and watercourses) including Junction Creek.

All storm sewer drainage through Downtown Sudbury is located in the Main Branch of the Junction Creek Watershed. Junction Creek is routed through a long, buried box culvert and piped under the built-up area. Box Culvert DW-2 conveys the creek through the downtown, and all storm sewer collection systems connect to it.

Based on modeling of five-year peak flows, many minor system sewers surcharged or flooded in Downtown Sudbury. Based on modeling of 100-year peak flows, some major system components (e.g., roads) exhibit flooding up to 250mm. All systems are susceptible to some surface flooding, and majority of road networks susceptible to flooding higher than curb line (flood extends beyond road ROW).

A number of alternatives to address flooding were assessed, including storm sewer upgrades – increase size of affected storm sewers/twinning (40 pipes identified in study, cost \$14.5M); implement off-line storage within available public spaces; Low Impact Development measures for stormwater management (SWM) where pervious soils exist; and re-greening existing developed areas. However, the best options seem to be increasing storage and addressing flooding upstream.

Recommendations for new development and re-development (intensification) include: recommend holistic or centralized SWM strategies where possible; responsibility on landowners to implement effective source controls; improve function of storm sewer networks and outfalls, site by site basis; any road reconstruction project should implement water quality treatment for runoff; education and outreach, so public knows where the storm water goes (e.g., to Junction Creek); and promote good practices for winter maintenance (e.g., reduced use of salt).

### 3.3.5 Utilities

Downtown Sudbury is served by an extensive network of utilities including hydro, natural gas, and telecommunications infrastructure. The Sudbury District Energy Corporation (SEDC) is operated by Toromont Power Systems in partnership with the City and Greater Sudbury Utilities. The facility provides combined heat and power, and currently serves seven major buildings Downtown. It is understood that this district energy facility has capacity for expansion and could serve new developments in the downtown.

## 3.4 Movement

If the buildings and the uses are the heart of the downtown, then the streets, sidewalks and laneways are the arteries which provide life and dynamism to the downtown. Downtowns are rarely simple in their modal makeup and include a variety of modes of transportation. The following sections describe the current state of movement in Downtown.

### 3.4.1 Conventional Vehicular Traffic

Downtown Sudbury continues to be a key destination for employment and recreation within the City. The downtown interior road network is well defined, with one-way, low-traffic streets paving the way for improved transit, walking, and bicycling connections. This road network identity of the downtown core must be maintained, while future projects aim to connect the area to the surrounding neighbourhoods, with one planned project being the College Street Underpass / Ste Anne Road extension.

The Downtown loop, which consists of major arterials, has faced traffic issues including collisions and congestion. There may be opportunities to prioritize improvements at critical intersections for active and public transportation. Further, these major arterials isolate the Downtown core from the surrounding area, limiting its potential and creating mobility issues for active transportation options.

### 3.4.2 Transit

Downtown Sudbury is generally well served by bus transit, namely GOVA (formerly Greater Sudbury Transit) which in 2024 carried approximately 6.2 million riders. The downtown core has the highest stop activity in the entire system, driven by the Downtown Transit Hub, which brings in over 2.1 million boardings per year across 18 different routes. Per the priorities set in the 2019 Transit Action Plan, the system was restructured in 2019 and the routes 1 Main Line followed by the 2 Barry Downe showcase the largest ridership in the system and are slated to continue evolving into the Bus Rapid Transit spine of the system. The City's Major Mobility Hubs Feasibility study currently underway has been examining options to relocate and expand the Downtown terminal required to support these future changes and other frequency improvements to the network. Additional strategies for future transit improvements include bus electrification, additional Bus Rapid Transit infrastructure, and improving bus stop amenities.

Rail travel to Greater Sudbury is challenging. The main Via station is located outside of the downtown on LaSalle Boulevard. A small station is located within the downtown on Elgin Street. This station provides infrequent service on the Sudbury-White River line. Rail lines in the downtown are heavily used by CP for freight.



### 3.4.3 Active Transportation

Downtown Sudbury has traditionally been difficult to access by foot or by bike. Recent projects such as the Paris/Notre Dame Bikeway and Larch Street Active Transportation improvements have continued the process of connecting the downtown to surrounding dedicated cycling routes such as the Trans-Canada Trail. Upgrades to the Elgin-Riverside Tunnel and the Nelson Street Pedestrian Bridge have contributed to improving walking connections to and from the area. However, several barriers continue to hinder the introduction of a more complete network, including oversized roads, rail corridors, pedestrian subways, and the City's topography. There are opportunities to build high-quality, safe active transportation routes through the Downtown core, creating a more connected and attractive network throughout the City, with one example being the upcoming Elgin Street Greenway. Since 2017, the City has installed over 115 km of bicycling infrastructure around Greater Sudbury, demonstrating a commitment to providing a sustainable and accessible city.

### 3.4.4 Parking

There are fourteen surface parking areas and one underground lot totaling approximately 1,852 off-street public parking spaces in the downtown. On-street parking is permitted on Elgin Street, Durham Street, Elm Street, Lisgar Street, Larch Street, Cedar Street, Grey Street, and Shaughnessy Street, which is an additional 330 parking spaces, for a total of 2,182 public parking spaces available within the downtown. Including private parking spaces there are a total of 3,648 parking spaces. The total amount of parking varies within the Downtown as efficiency can be gained or lost when parking stalls are not delineated (e.g., on-street parking and gravel lots).

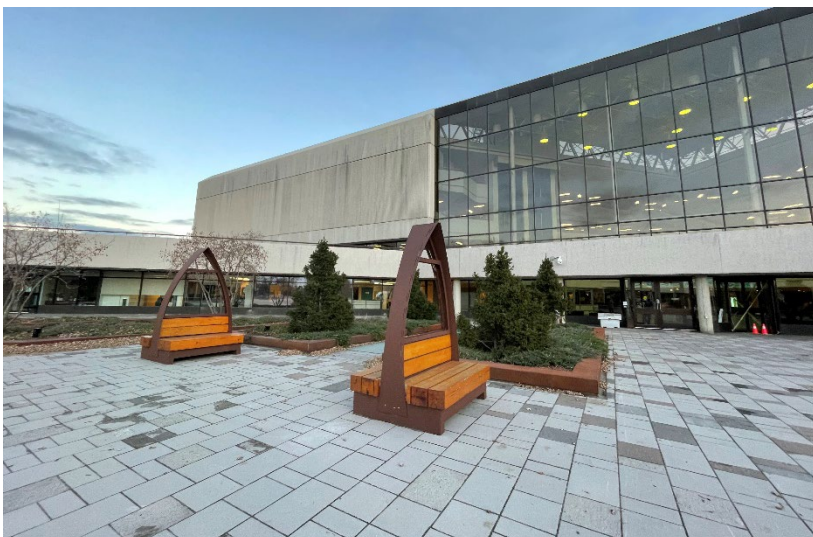
A recent (2024) study revealed that only 25 percent of public parking spaces are utilized during normal business hours, 17 percent of parking spaces are utilized during Friday evening activities, 14 percent of parking spaces are utilized during Saturday afternoon activities, and 41 percent of parking spaces are utilized on special event days. This shows that overall parking utilization within the downtown does not reach the ideal 85 to 90 percent threshold, indicating that the Downtown Sudbury parking system is sufficient to accommodate the existing and future parking demand.

Future growth within Downtown Sudbury can be accommodated with deliberate parking management and Transportation Demand Management (TDM) strategies including formalizing existing gravel parking lots with delineated spaces, integrating variable wayfinding message signs to balance parking lot usage, increasing parking connectivity to transit and active mode facilities, implementing shared parking policies and incentive programs, determining the feasibility of public electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and implementing carpool incentive programs.

That said, the overwhelming perception by Sudburians remains that parking supply downtown is an issue for daytime traffic, evening traffic, and events, namely in that parking spaces are not located in close/direct proximity to desired destinations. In addition to the above-mentioned strategies, education and/or communication on parking and other transportation options may also be required.

### 3.5 Public Realm

Downtowns are inherently vibrant urban areas characterized by lively streets that accommodate a diverse mix of uses and housing types. Typically, the downtown represents the most densely populated sections of a city, and therefore the public realm plays a crucial role in enhancing the quality of life in these areas due to the lack of immediate access to private open and/or green space. However, in Downtown Sudbury, there is a significant lack of parks and open space, with only three percent of the downtown area designated for this purpose. Parks, open spaces, streetscapes, and other publicly accessible spaces comprise the public realm and this is where residents and visitors experience the downtown firsthand.



### 3.5.2 Parks & Open Space

Memorial Park and the recently upgraded Tom Davies Square Courtyard comprise most of the parks / open spaces in the downtown. There have been some recently completed DMP projects to improve the public realm in the downtown, as well as several that are underway or pending approval.

As noted, Tom Davies Square Courtyard has been redesigned and upgraded. The new design included rock outcroppings and plantings which were inspired by the Northern Ontario landscape. Stages and boardwalk seating provide areas for performance and gathering, and open lawns allow for more passive, flexible and spontaneous use.

The Brady Green Stairs project has also been completed. The purpose of this project was to create a visual and physical connection from Durham Street to Memorial Park. The Durham Street Parkette was slated for structural repairs, allowing for this particular project to be completed. The major design elements include unit paving, landscaping, lighting, seating, public art and ramp improvements to allow for improved access and movement through the area.

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Memorial Park is the largest and most important open space in the downtown. It is slated to be expanded and conceptual plans have been prepared. The proposed changes to the park are relatively minor but instead suggest redesigning portions of the components of the park.

These elements include expanding the park to the west and introducing new pedestrian and cycling connections on the edge of the park to create a better park boundary. This would help to frame the adjacent buildings and give them additional frontage. Refer to Figure for the concept from the 2012 DMP.



The Carleton Street Park also has a conceptual plan completed, but detailed work has not yet begun. It is envisioned to be a new community park that is proposed to front onto Paris Street between Cedar and Larch streets. The location of this new park provides a view terminus for visitors arriving at downtown from the south. The triangular shaped park will function as the only green space serving the Carleton Street neighbourhood east of Paris Street and will also increase the open space percentage.

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Figure 20 - 2012 Memorial Park Concept

### 3.0 What Has Changed?

The first phase of the Elgin Greenway Project is complete and the second phase has been approved. It will form part of the Elgin Street reconstruction project and will connect to the existing portion of the Greenway built by the School of Architecture. Phase 2 will be built from Larch Street to the Brady Street Underpass. The project in its entirety will be a linear park and multi-use pathway which will form the southwestern edge of the downtown. It will run the length of Elgin Street and will provide a new facade for the area and provide a buffer from the railway lands and revitalize the Trans Canada Trail which runs through the downtown to create an extensive network of trails that connect down to Ramsey Lake, the hospital, Laurentian University, etc. It will form a linear park and connect several attractions throughout the downtown. The landscape design is intended to reflect Sudbury's northern landscape with trees, rock outcroppings and water features and will also feature public art installations.

### 3.5.3 Streetscapes and Streetwalls

Streetscapes and streetwalls also contribute to the public realm. There have been a few projects since 2012 that have been completed.

The Elm Street Parking project has been completed and it entails 18 metered short-term parking spaces between Lisgar and Elgin Street on Elm Street. The parking spaces have improved interest in businesses along Elm Street.

The north Minto Civic Corridor project has also been successfully completed. This shared use street provides a seamless connection between Memorial Park and Tom Davies Square Courtyard that is pedestrian and cyclist friendly with special paving treatments that identify it as a special corridor. It allows for two lanes and wide sidewalks and street trees.

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The Durham Shared Street Streetscaping project is not yet underway, but a conceptual plan has been prepared. This particular project involves improvements to the pedestrian zone with shared space for parking and spill-out, removable lit bollards to help delineate the space, reducing the speed limit to avoid pedestrian conflict, additional pedestrian crosswalks connecting laneways, public art, lighting and signage improvements.

**3.5.4 Public Art & Placemaking**

Public art and placemaking are also important contributors to the public realm. In terms of changes since 2012, the City of Greater Sudbury adopted the 2024 Public Art Master Plan (PAMP). The PAMP was approved by the Council on February 27, 2024, and is designed to streamline decision-making, management, and acquisition processes for public art in Greater Sudbury. It also clearly outlines the roles and responsibilities involved in the provision and support of public art, ensuring a more organized and effective approach for the city.



## 3.6 Market Analysis

It is important to understand the market needs, considerations and trends when considering changes within a downtown. The following sections provide a commentary on the current residential and commercial market conditions for Downtown Sudbury.

### 3.6.1 Commercial Markets – Office

The office market in Greater Sudbury consists of about 1.2 million square feet of commercial space, across 53 office properties as of a survey conducted in October 2024<sup>2</sup>. About a third of this local commercial inventory is in Downtown Sudbury.

Most properties in Downtown Sudbury can be characterized as low-rise mixed-use office buildings, of two- to eight-storeys and 4,200 square feet to 60,000 square feet of gross leasable area, often with retail at street level. Outside of this downtown context, most office properties are single-use buildings that are one- to two-storeys and surrounded by affordable (free) surface parking.

Collectively, the Sudbury office market is primarily Class B (40%) and Class C (60%) office properties. Class B buildings offer utilitarian spaces with average features and amenities, attracting a broad range of tenants. In contrast, Class C office properties typically have limited amenities and basic finishes, with lower market rents to drive demand. Net asking rents range widely from as little as \$8.00 to \$15.00 per square foot, per annum. According to local landlords, additional incentives of up to one-year of free rent are also often provided to encourage uptake of available space in the downtown.

The vacancy and availability rates of offices in the downtown appears low, however this may be for a variety of factors:

- Many buildings in the downtown are occupied by government and institutional tenants, such as: Greater Sudbury City Hall (200 Brady Street), providing municipal services and access to council meetings; Service Ontario (40 Elm Street) and Service Canada (19 Lisgar Street), offering services like driver's license issuance, employment insurance, and social insurance number applications; Provincial Offences Office

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<sup>2</sup> Costar. Custom Data Run for N. Barry Lyon Consultants Limited

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(199 Larch Street) including courts as well as various legal services; as well as other government services such as healthcare and other ministries.

- While the above tenants have not vacated their space, the occupancy of many of these uses is well below pre-pandemic norms. While data is not available, interviews with various stakeholders suggest that the above sectors might only be in-office 20 to 30 percent relative to historical trends.
- Another reason for the low number of listings at the time of survey is that many office properties have been taken off the market, advertising the sale of these properties and/or the conversion to residential uses. For example, this includes notable buildings in the downtown such as the Scotia Tower (an 86,225-square foot building at 30 Cedar Street that is proposed to be converted to residential uses), as well as the proposed sale of 93 Cedar Street (29,000 square feet) and 2 Lisgar Street (the old National Bank building, at 10,600 square feet). As property owners allow leases to run out, many of these buildings sit anywhere from 50 to 100 percent vacant.
- Some major office tenants have also recently left the downtown (e.g., Hatch Consulting), shifting

employment to other areas of the city while leaving vacant space behind.

Therefore, while much of this space is not actively advertised as vacant or available, that does not indicate a healthy office market. Rather, the office market in Downtown Sudbury is experiencing significant challenges with many spaces vacant, advertised for sale, and/or experiencing significantly less occupancy despite active lease arrangements. As a result, there are significant headwinds impacting the ability for groups to advance major investments in current buildings and develop new space.

Given these conditions, Downtown Sudbury has not experienced any significant new investments in office space, particularly the creation of new office buildings. Where there has been new office investment in Greater Sudbury, it has been concentrated in the South End/Four Corners and New Sudbury, outside of the downtown. Examples of new development and adaptive reuse in these areas include a 125,00 square foot commercial property for a new-single tenant, a new multi-tenant office property that is an 8,800 square foot commercial space, and 35,000 square feet adaptive reuse office space.

It is important to note that the entire office market in Sudbury, but particularly the downtown, has faced major

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impacts from the pandemic. Many employees have not returned to fixed office settings or have adopted hybrid work models. This includes public sector employers occupying most commercial properties in the downtown. This means the presence of workers during the daytime and into the evening has largely disappeared. This not only challenges the business model of many retail establishments in the downtown, but also has the long-term effect of reducing demand for office space on a per worker basis, resulting in slower absorption of existing commercial space, and exacerbating oversupply conditions. Collectively, this puts downward pressure on effective office rents if office space is not removed in lieu of other uses, likely residential, institutional, entertainment-type and more retail uses. At the same time, the modest amount of office demand that does exist in the city has favoured locations outside of the downtown, with the factors underpinning this market preference explored further to follow.

#### 3.6.2 Commercial Markets – Retail

Downtown Sudbury also serves as the region’s primary commercial and cultural hub. The retail environment includes boutique stores, clothing shops, local artisans, and specialty food markets. Dining options range from cafes and casual eateries. Several bars, pubs, and entertainment venues also cater to the city's nightlife. As alluded to above, the downtown area is also home to health services, legal offices, financial institutions, and government offices. Many of these and others uses in the downtown (e.g., School Architecture, YMCA, and Community Arena – home to the local OHL team) are destinations in the city and trip generators to the downtown.

Downtown Sudbury hosts several annual and seasonal events, drawing locals and visitors. Key events include Up Here festival, downtown markets and cultural celebrations. These events enhance the vibrancy of the downtown core, supporting the downtown as a place for community gathering space.

While historical data is not available, occupancy of establishments in the retail sector within Downtown Sudbury are believed to be less of an issue than the office sector. Notwithstanding this, vacancy remains elevated with specific pockets of particular concern, such as the over 20 percent vacancy currently in Elm Place.

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Commentary from interviews with stakeholders indicate the following key challenges:

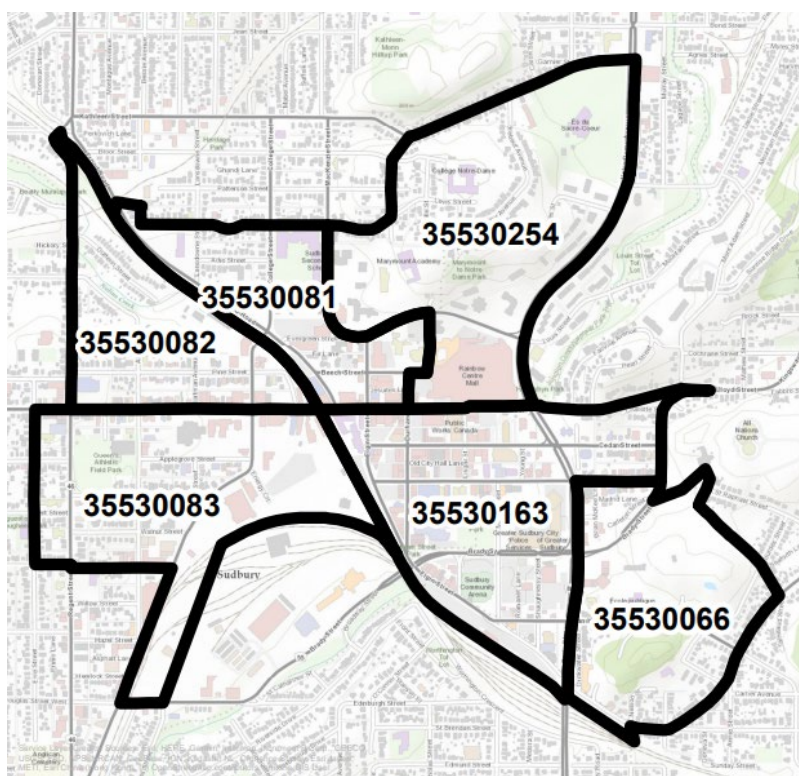
- A lack of occupancy in the office market since the onset of the pandemic has significantly reduced the population downtown during business hours.
- The lack of new residential development and population growth downtown, in addition to the relatively small population living downtown, creates a challenging environment for retail tenants and landlords. This is exacerbated by the reduced office occupancy levels.
- Vacancy has remained around pre-pandemic levels; however most tenants have secured rent reductions from landlords to remain in operation, which is likely not a long-term solution that is feasible for these properties to remain viable.
- While the availability of free and visible parking is noted a key enabling element of a healthy downtown, the current design and layout of the downtown's many surfaces lots creates a challenge generating consistent foot traffic and sales in retail and service business establishments. Many have also noted that the significant gap in the built environment creates perceptions of feeling unsafe (see notes to follow).
- Many stakeholders also identified the current social issues in the downtown as a major obstacle affecting the retail and office markets. Increased homelessness, drug use, vandalism, and other issues were identified as detracting people from wanting to visit, live, or work in the downtown.
- Reduced residents and employees downtown, combined with increased social issues (real or perceived) and continued office and retail investments in other areas of the city, is viewed as the major challenge affecting the future of Sudbury's Downtown commercial market.
- Some stakeholders identified the lack of programming and events in the downtown, including major parks, as an issue the City could pursue to increase trip generation.

While the commercial market downtown is experiencing significant challenges, there is a significant investment planned in the southern segment of the downtown to build a new home for the Sudbury Wolves Ontario Hockey League hockey team. This \$200-million investment will include a downtown arena/events centre that could also include a event and conference spaces and hotel, along with other supporting uses, which is planned to open in 2028. Looking forward, this major investment could stimulate additional spending in Downtown Sudbury, supporting existing businesses, as well as additional new investment in the surrounding area.

### 3.6.3 Residential Market

While there has been a moderate amount of population growth in the areas surrounding the downtown, growth has been stagnant within the Downtown core itself. As illustrated by **Figure 20** to follow, Dissemination Area 35530163, which most closely aligns with the Downtown core, has grown by only 8 people between the 2016 and 2021 census years. Notwithstanding this, the area including peripheral parts of Downtown and surrounding the Downtown core has grown by 426 people over the same period, an 11.3% increase.

**Figure 21: Dissemination Area Boundaries**



Dissemination Area	2021 Population	2016 Population	2011 Population	% Change (2016-2021)	2021 Total Private Dwellings*	2021 Dwellings occupied by usual residents**	2016 Total Private Dwellings*	2016 Dwellings occupied by usual residents**	Land Area (km2)
35530066	598	536	548	11.6%	458	410	453	386	0.3
35530081	562	456	545	23.2%	409	375	425	309	0.2
35530082	550	488	551	12.7%	342	294	325	274	0.23
35530083	712	587	618	21.3%	442	344	422	320	0.44
35530254	1,213	1,150	1,079	5.5%	485	377	712	625	0.48
35530163	566	558	502	1.4%	716	665	539	357	0.44
<b>Total</b>	<b>4,201</b>	<b>3,775</b>	<b>3,843</b>	<b>11.3%</b>	<b>2,852</b>	<b>2,465</b>	<b>2,876</b>	<b>2,271</b>	<b>2.09</b>

Further, there are no housing units currently under construction in the Downtown proper; however, it should be acknowledged that construction began in 2024 on the development of two residential towers with 476 units for seniors and 350 affordable units on the property bordered by Brady, Van Horne, St. Raphael and Lourdes streets, just east of the Downtown.

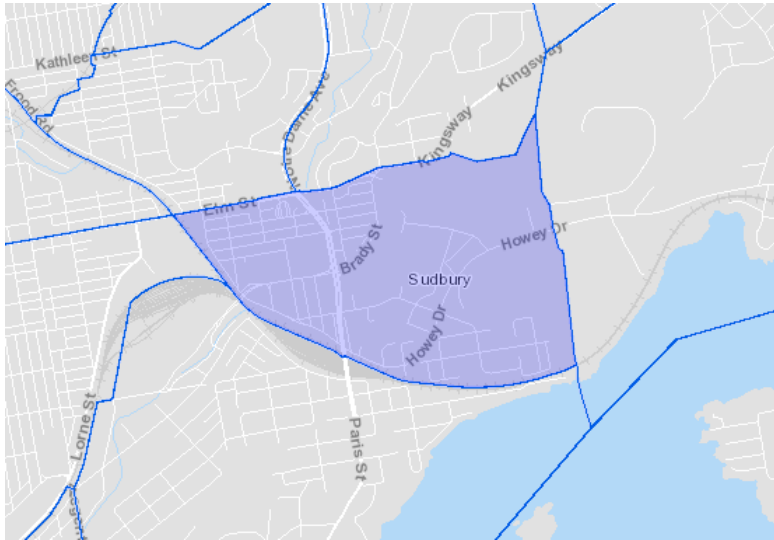
As a result of the lack of development, there has been virtually no population growth within the Downtown core, with more moderate growth occurring in the surrounding area as identified in **Figure 20**. This larger area has accommodated an increase of 180 private dwellings between 2016 and 2021.

The data and discussion to follow uses CMHC and census data for Census Tract 5800005.00 (**Figure 21**), which most closely aligns with the Downtown boundaries. Census tracts provide a larger geography than dissemination areas and are therefore used by CMHC to ensure adequate sample sizes and data surveys are accommodated.

Downtown Sudbury accommodates lower housing values and incomes relative to the rest of the city, with incomes increasing at a slower pace relative to the city at large. As illustrated in **Figure 22**, average household incomes in the downtown were just under \$48,900, up roughly 12 percent since 2011. This compares to an average income

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of over \$103,000 across the city, which is up roughly 35 percent since 2011. The average home price in the city is also roughly 30 percent higher than the downtown on average, though the rate of appreciation since 2011 has been higher in the downtown.



**Figure 21: Census Tract 5800005.0**

<b>Income and Home Values: City vs Downtown</b>	
<b>Downtown</b>	
Average Household Income 2021	\$48,960
Average Household Income 2011	\$43,805
% Change 2011 - 2021	12%
Average Value of Dwelling 2021	\$292,000
Average Value of Dwelling 2011	\$186,318
% Change 2011 - 2021	57%
<b>City-Wide</b>	
Average Household Income 2021	\$103,400
Average Household Income 2011	\$76,772
% Change 2011 - 2021	35%
Average Value of Dwelling 2021	\$379,600
Average Value of Dwelling 2011	\$250,513
% Change 2011 - 2021	52%
Source: Statistics Canada	

**Figure 22: Table Depicting Income and Home Values in City Vs. Downtown**

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CMHC also calculates Core Housing Need (CHN), which is defined as households who are living in conditions that are either unaffordable (e.g., spending more than 30 percent of income on housing costs), inadequate (e.g., housing requires major repairs) or unsuitable (e.g., household size does not match household characteristics). Approximately 23 percent of all renter households within the downtown are in CHN, compared to 18 percent city-wide. In total numbers, the downtown has 265 total households in core housing need, which is approximately 5 percent of the City’s entire population in CHN. It is important to acknowledge that these figures do not account for homelessness, which is largely concentrated within the downtown.

Looking to the rental apartment market, **Figure 22** illustrates that rental market conditions are currently very tight across the city. Vacancy is currently 1 percent and has been below balanced conditions (approximately 5 percent) since 2016. These conditions indicate a lack of availability in the market, with supply not meeting demand, which has allowed rapid rent escalation in the market. Overall, city-wide rents have increased 59 percent since 2010 (average of approximately 4.5 percent per year), with more rapid increases of over 10 percent observed in 2021 and 2023.

Vacancy data in the downtown is suppressed due to small sample size in most years, however the most recent year it was reported was 2022 when vacancies were below 1 percent. Rents have also increased considerably since 2010 (approximately 49 percent), though rent appreciation in recent years has been moderate.

Overall, the data and analysis in this section partly confirms and supports the challenges facing the commercial sector in Downtown Sudbury. Namely, there is a small and declining permanent population within the city’s downtown that is driven by demographic change and a lack of new development. Those who are living in the downtown tend to have lower incomes and more likely to experience CHN than other areas of the city. While the rental vacancy rate is currently low, and rents are rising, it is important to note that rents in the downtown are nearly 30 percent less than the city-wide average, indicating demand for more affordable rental apartments likely driven by a lack of choice rather than true demand.

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New housing development in a location like Downtown Sudbury will face significant challenges because there is no available greenfield land, and new opportunities will likely need to be in higher density forms of housing such as apartments. Since 2001, apartments have only accounted for 16 percent of the city’s housing developments. In speaking with developers and other stakeholders, most indicate that demand for new apartments in the downtown is weak and financial feasibility is poor. Most noted the current social issues in the downtown as the main factor influencing demand, however financial feasibility would be challenging even with improvements to the social problems. Despite these challenges, the City’s Building Permit data indicate that 80 new residential units have been created in the Downtown CIP/DC Exempt area between 2017-2024.

Looking to the City’s Housing and Homelessness Plan (2019), Housing Needs Assessment (2024), and Housing Accelerator Fund Application (2024), it is clear that the City will continue to grow and experience growth pressures. Currently, there are over 845 households in the Social Housing Waitlist, with a clear need to increase housing options across the housing continuum along with

social supports, homelessness support and shelter, and other similar considerations. Meeting these objectives can increase development within the downtown, while also providing housing and supports to homeless and other vulnerable populations that currently reside downtown.

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<b>Rental Vacancy and Average Rents in the City and Downtown</b>				
	<b>Vacancy - City</b>	<b>Vacancy - Downtown</b>	<b>Average Rent - City</b>	<b>Average Rent - Downtown</b>
2010 October	3%	-	\$785	\$616
2011 October	3%	6.50%	\$818	\$728
2012 October	3%	-	\$853	\$694
2013 October	3%	-	\$851	\$710
2014 October	4%	-	\$862	\$734
2015 October	4%	-	\$896	\$759
2016 October	5%	-	\$911	\$693
2017 October	4%	-	\$982	\$803
2018 October	3%	-	\$987	\$769
2019 October	2%	-	\$1,046	\$822
2020 October	2%	-	\$1,071	\$903
2021 October	2%	-	\$1,195	\$894
2022 October	2%	0.60%	\$1,145	\$917
2023 October	1%	-	\$1,251	\$917
<b>Change 2010-2023</b>			<b>59%</b>	<b>49%</b>
Source	CMHC Rental Market Survey			

**Figure 22: Rental Vacancy and Average Rents in the City vs. Downtown**

### 3.6.4 Impact of Existing CIPs

As of October 2024, Sudbury has implemented four Community Improvement Plans (“CIPs”) aimed at the development or redevelopment of key areas within Greater Sudbury; the Employment Land CIP, Strategic Core Area CIP, Affordable Housing CIP, and Brownfield Strategy CIP. The following explores the Strategic Core Areas CIP and Affordable Housing CIP, which are most relevant to development and investment in Downtown Sudbury.

#### Strategic Core Area CIP

Of particular relevance is the Strategic Core Areas CIP, which focuses on revitalizing Sudbury’s downtown. Launched two years ago, this CIP integrates the previous Downtown CIP and Town Centre CIP into one cohesive framework. The new CIP includes seven grants and loans designed to reduce the cost of development, which can be used in conjunction with other programs offered by the city or other levels of government.

Since inception, the Strategic Core Areas CIP has received 107 applications, of which 75 percent have been within the city’s downtown core. To date, the city has paid out over \$1 million dollars in grants and loans in the downtown, with the facade improvement program seeing the strongest adoption. In this regard, the program has been successful.

However, while residential and office incentives are available through the Tax Increment Equivalent Grant Program (TIEG), as well as the Residential Incentive Programs and Tenant Attraction Program, their utilization has been limited. Social challenges such as homelessness, mental health issues, and addiction represent significant barriers to revitalization efforts in the downtown core.

Additionally, awareness and understanding of the available incentives remain significant hurdles for developers, residents, and the Business Improvement Area (BIA) committee. Despite the city’s efforts to promote the new CIP, there is still a lack of clarity regarding the scope and applicability of these programs.

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While façade improvements can go a long way in improving the perception of the downtown, it will not result in major revitalization efforts on its own. Similarly, the key issue impacting the take-up of the other incentives based on discussions with stakeholders is the funding available is insufficient relative to the market challenges currently present. Some stakeholder participants stated that major investments in social housing, diversifying homeless shelters across the City, and investments in social supports would be a better use of funds to improve the downtown.

To ensure the long-term success of the Strategic Core Areas CIP and the broader revitalization efforts, it is essential to secure consistent funding, enhance service levels, and improve administrative oversight. The city is actively pursuing strategies to increase efficiency by exploring options to consolidate the Brownfield, Affordable Housing, and Heritage CIPs with the Strategic Core Areas CIP. This approach aims to broaden the geographic scope of existing CIPs and streamline the overall administrative process.

However, it is important to acknowledge the incentives can only do so much. Financial incentives do not impact demand for a particular outcome, and the current financial feasibility challenges affecting new development in the downtown are several orders of magnitude higher than what the City could likely afford to do within the current budget. A combination of strategies and a long-term outlook are needed to slowly improve the market appeal of living, working, and visiting the downtown.

### Affordable Housing CIP

The City launched the Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan (CIP) in August of 2018. The CIP seeks to encourage affordable housing creation through the offering of incentives as well as a land banking program. Incentives offered include:

- Second Units:
  - Rebate of planning and building fees
  - Second Unit Incentive Program (grant to cover 50 percent of project costs to a maximum of \$50,000).
- New Development:
  - Tax increment equivalent grant (scaling 5-year grant)
  - Rebate of planning and building fees
  - Feasibility grant (to offset feasibility studies up to \$5,000)
  - Residential Incentive Program (lesser of \$10 per square foot or \$20,000 per affordable unit, to a maximum of \$200,000).

Affordable rental is the target of the program, where rents must be at or below 100 percent of the CMHC Average Market Rent (AMR). The length of affordability is a minimum of 20 years and there are several location/project and design criteria required to be eligible for the program. The CIP is intended to be stacked with other sources of funding through Municipal, Provincial, and Federal sources.

Since inception, there has only been one project approved through the CIP, which was a non-profit project by Raising the Roof who is proposing to acquire five scattered units that are being sold by the City's Local Housing Corporation. These results are not surprising, given that the City's CIP is not providing enough funding on its own to create new affordable housing and requires coordination and approval of other funding sources through senior levels of government to result in a viable affordable housing project, particularly for projects at a larger scale.



# 4.0 What Do We Know?

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In 2012, the downtown was dissected and analyzed to understand all the forms and functions that make up its composition. There are many elements which have changed, but others which have also stayed the same. The same can be said of the previously identified Strengths and Challenges from the 2012 DMP. The following sections highlight which strengths and challenges ring true, and which ones were identified as needing to be added to each list. There was also an opportunities and threats exercise to complement the strengths and challenges.



## 4.1 Downtown Strengths

While there have been a few significant changes in the downtown over the last decade, many of the strengths remain the same as originally identified in the DMP. These can be found on **Figure 23** and include:

1. **Durham Street is Greater Sudbury’s ‘Main Street,’** and is a destination for the whole city. Parts of Larch, Cedar and Elgin Streets also help contribute to the ‘authentic’ feel of Downtown Sudbury.
2. **Downtown Sudbury acts as a hub of the First Nations and Franco-Ontarian cultural experience.** Both these groups have a strong presence in the downtown and have helped establish the city as a service and cultural hub.
3. **Downtown Sudbury is home to a vibrant cultural scene drawing thousands of visitors every year.** Creative places and festivals hosted in the core work to keep Greater Sudbury’s creative spirit strong.
4. **The Downtown is bounded by stable and healthy neighbourhoods.** These communities are within a walkable distance of the downtown and support many of the businesses and systems associated to the core.
5. **The City and its public partners are important landowners in the downtown.** High level public ownership means that the City can play an active role in the evolution of the downtown.
6. **Greater Sudbury is known for its rugged landscape.** This landscape reaches right into the Downtown and touches its edges, creating a beautiful backdrop that contains the Downtown. Other natural assets, such as Junction Creek and Nolin Creek, also help to make the downtown a unique mix of ‘city-life’ and ‘the natural environment’.
7. **Downtown Sudbury knows how to throw a party!** The Downtown is a main stage to nearly a dozen festivals, bringing a substantial amount of visitors into the downtown. These events generate excitement and bring renewed activity and fun to the city as a whole.
8. **The Downtown has a significant amount of available land in order to accommodate growth.** The Rail Yards and smaller in-fill sites are potential areas for accommodating contemporary new uses that will help to deliver the updated vision for the Downtown.

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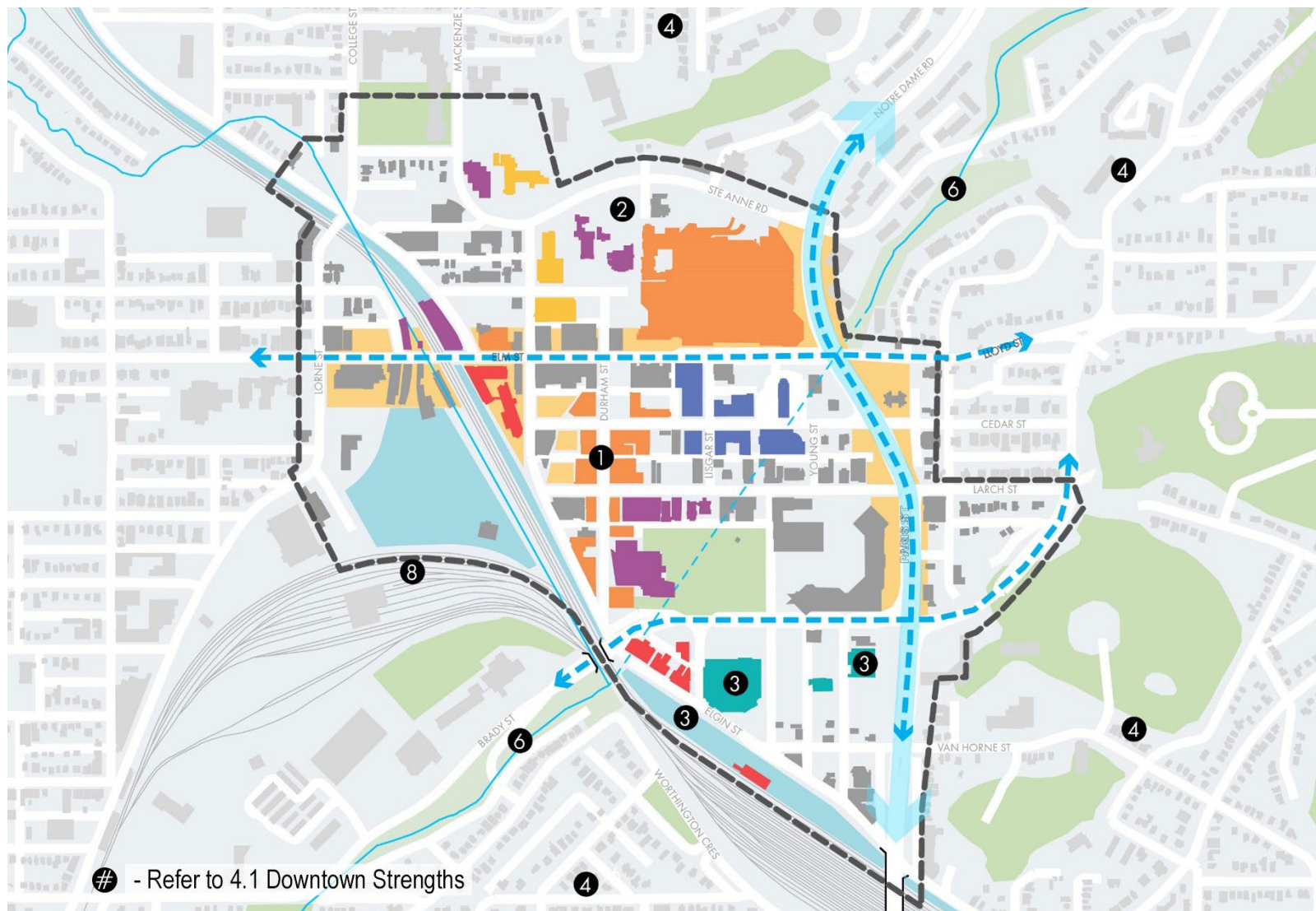


Figure 24: Downtown Strengths

#### 4.0 What Do We Know?

In addition to the strengths being carried forward, a number of other strengths were identified as important assets in the downtown. These are listed below:

- **Current Downtown Commercial Zoning provisions and permitted uses are quite flexible.** They permit a variety of uses including office, retail, entertainment, and institutional residential which would allow for a dynamic and vibrant downtown which extends past normal business hours.
- **Downtown Sudbury is reasonably compact and its historic grid network of roads was originally constructed on a pedestrian scale.** The internal network streets have a variety of pedestrian amenities. There is also a strong historic reference for streets running east to west in the central area named after trees, and streets running north to south named after Canadian governor-generals. Other streets are named for prominent Canadian Pacific Railway executives.
- **Downtown sits at the junction of the two primary arterial corridors in Sudbury (Paris/Notre Dame) and Elm Street.** As a result, there are a considerable number of annual average daily trips that go through or adjacent to the downtown bringing a dynamism into the area. The same two streets, and Lorne/Brady and Elm/The Kingsway, connect to the provincial highway system.
- **Sudbury's transit station is centrally located** with all routes leading into the downtown making it an exceptionally connected destination for the rest of Greater Sudbury.
- **Paris Street Bicycle Lane**, a previous Master Plan project/initiative has been successfully implemented.
- **New buildings in the Downtown have set a high-quality precedent** for development in the downtown.
- **Elm Place** is an example of one of the single largest adaptive re-use projects in Northern Ontario.
- **Creation of the Events Centre in the downtown** may act as a catalyst for the downtown with spin off opportunities in the public and private sector. Potential for renewed interest in already strong following for local sports, social and entertainment in the Downtown.

#### 4.0 What Do We Know?

- **Some key commercial buildings have been sold (e.g., Scotia Tower) and they represent opportunities for new commercial uses or adaptive reuse** to residential or mixed uses.
  - Although there had been a historic lack of funding for large scale development and revitalization in the downtown that would make an impactful and lasting change, **the City and its partners have completed a number of improvements to date** including the McEwen School of Architecture, Place des Arts, Tom Davies Square Redesign, Cultural Hub, and the planned Events Centre.
2. **Big roads like Elm, Brady and Ste. Anne move a lot of cars, but create tough environments for pedestrians and cyclists.** These big roads also work to dissect the downtown into three disjointed districts.
  3. People living downtown bring life to its streets and shops, creating activity and buzz. This level of activity makes people feel that downtown is a safe place to be. However, there is a limited number of people living in Downtown Sudbury, **the local residential population is under-represented** and insufficient to generate an urban buzz.
  4. Memorial Park is a wonderful green space in the very heart of the city. Since the last Master Plan, there have been upgrades to Tom Davies Square and the Brady Green stair project to help create a more interconnected series of public spaces. However, these open spaces are the only green space in the downtown, emphasizing **an under-provision of usable park space in the core.** Green spaces are critical components of urban centres, providing the setting for relaxation and active play. Parks also deliver important environmental benefits to urban centres, creating cleaner air, shady places, habitats and cooling the air.

## 4.2 Downtown Challenges

Similar to the strengths, many challenges identified in the DMP for the downtown still remain relevant to today's context and are illustrated in Figure 24. They are listed below:

1. **Social stigma of the Downtown has affected its perception from local Sudburians.** Homelessness, cleanliness, issues with drugs and crime are a few issues that are community wide. There is also a disconnect between those outside the core in Greater Sudbury vs. the Downtown and a lack of connection and interest.

#### 4.0 What Do We Know?

5. For a downtown to be well used by its residents, the downtown must feel safe. However, **at certain times of the day Downtown Sudbury may feel unsafe**. This results in the perception of crime and fear of crime negatively influencing the image of the Downtown - even if actual crime rates are quite low! Fear of crime is a particular concern in locations that are not well overlooked or are disconnected from the rest of the downtown.
6. Greater Sudbury has a deeply rich cultural offer located in the downtown, however, many of these important groups, such as the First Nations communities are situated on the periphery of the downtown. These groups would benefit from **higher profile, more accessible locations that are better integrated with the activities and action of the downtown**. Place des Arts has increased the francophone presence downtown.
7. Downtown Sudbury is geographically well defined. However, the **busy roads and rail corridors that create this definable centre also act as physical barriers to the Downtown**, resulting in a centre that feels disconnected from its immediate surroundings and isolated from the rest of the city.
8. Downtowns are typically the oldest part of a city. With a downtown that has been built over the past 125 years, Downtown Sudbury is no exception. Unfortunately, **many of the reminders of this history - such as the buildings and monuments - have been demolished over the years**. Historic buildings are an essential part of creating a downtown identity that helps distinguish the core from the rest of the city. The history and heritage of the Downtown is what makes it unique. There are a few great buildings remaining from various periods, representing different architectural styles. Everything needs to be done to protect these buildings, including protection from demolition through neglect.
9. **Over the years, there have been several previous attempts to revitalize the downtown**. These have often manifested themselves in large-scale projects, such as Elm Place, the civic office complex, and the YMCA. To accommodate these projects, land was consolidated, and streets closed. **This resulted in large scale 'mega-blocks' that turn their backs to surrounding areas**.

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10. The downtown identity is strong along streets like Durham, Larch, and Cedar. However, **around the edges of Downtown, its identity is not as positive.** Here, parking lots, vacant shops, busy rail lines and oversized streets present themselves to arriving visitors. Unfortunately, this is the first impression that people have of the Downtown when arriving from outside.
11. Bringing people into the downtown from across the city is important. However, **the transit station is at capacity and overflowing with big buses. Furthermore, there are personal safety concerns around the station, especially at nighttime.** The transit station is an important city asset that needs some help to overcome its operational challenges. The Transit Hub Mobility Study has recommended a number of site improvements.
12. The expansive **CP Rail corridor and related yards creates a barrier** when accessing the downtown from the south or the west. The presence of the tracks contributes to a poor image of the core and restricts its immediate growth opportunity.



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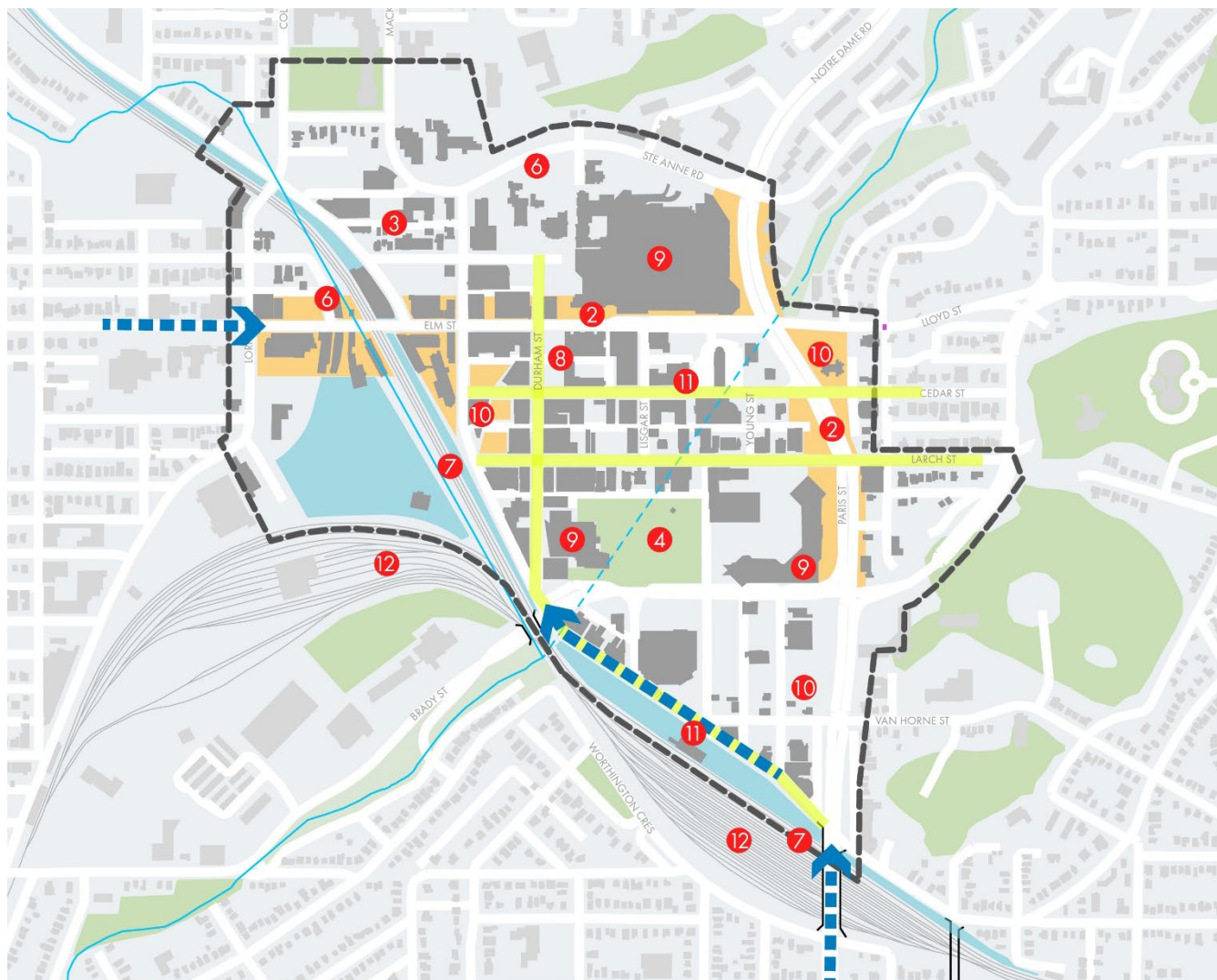


Figure 25: 2012 Downtown Challenges

Through review and engagement, the following additional challenges were also identified for Downtown:

- Despite having a walkable core, the challenge occurs in and around the edges. **Many of the connections into the downtown have poor and unfriendly pedestrian and bicycle facilities.** This is starting to change with recently completed projects such as the Brady Green Stairs upgrades and Paris Street Bikeway.
- The **safety and sense of security for pedestrians, cyclists and transit users** in the downtown is affected by the design of the infrastructure and social concerns.
- **The overall transportation infrastructure of the Downtown is beginning to show the signs of aging.** This is beginning to change through the various strategic public realm improvement projects that the City completed and planned.
- Many of the facades along Downtown streets have non-retail uses such as **banks or medical clinics.** These uses contribute to the downtown positively in the general sense; however they **do little to contribute to the street level animation that retail uses tend to do.**
- **Competing demands and priorities for parking in the downtown.** There are mixed messages in terms of parking in the downtown. The recent Downtown Parking

Strategy Update has demonstrated that there is sufficient parking (based on demand) in the downtown.

- **Pandemic has affected the downtown and has left in its wake many vacancies in office spaces.** An increase in working from home and remote / flexible work has taken people out of the downtown during working hours which in turn has had an effect on businesses during lunch and post work hours.
- **Infrastructure within the downtown is at or exceeding its design capacity which places strain on the system** and further requires repair or replacement in some parts. The effects of climate change such as extreme hot and cold have significant impacts on existing infrastructure. Lastly, some of the outdated infrastructure may no longer be in compliance with current design and safety standards, putting it at further risk.
- **As it is a historic area that has been redeveloped time and time again, there is very little soft surfacing in the downtown. Much of the surfaces are hard and/or impermeable.** This can have an effect on the downtown's microclimate, air quality, and ability to manage stormwater events. This also limits any potential for expanding natural environment boundaries.

4.0 What Do We Know?

- **The Downtown has limited parks and open space and leisure type activities.** The green network is experiencing challenges such as declined ecological/urban forest health, and soil health.
- **The population living downtown has been steadily decreasing** over the past two decades with virtually no new housing development over the same period. This population is also comprised of lower-income households relative to the rest of the City with housing values and rents also depressed relative to other areas.
- **There is a significant and concentrated homeless population in the Downtown,** which like many communities across North America, has worsened since the COVID-19 pandemic. Interviews with a wide range of stakeholders have pointed to this issue as a significant factor impacting the desirability of living, working, visiting, and continuing to invest in the Downtown.
- **Remote and hybrid work practices have resulted in significantly reduced occupancy in many office buildings Downtown.** Many office tenants have also vacated or relocated from the Downtown, with new investment favouring other areas of the City.
- **The combination of limited residents living Downtown and reduced employees working Downtown, has created significant challenges for the retail market.** Reduced foot traffic, consumer spending, and overall visitation is impacting the ability for tenants to operate and for landlords to lease space. The previously mentioned social issues affecting Downtown Sudbury are made more visible as daytime and permanent populations are reduced.
- **The built-form and urban fabric of the Downtown (e.g., large surface parking lots, disjointed built-form) creates perceptions of feeling unsafe,** exacerbated by the low population/employee density in the area.
- **Ability of landlords to improve and lease existing space are affected** by these challenges and also struggle to develop new commercial space.
- **The market appeal for new housing development downtown is low, with financial feasibility facing significant hurdles.**

### 4.3 Downtown Opportunities and Threats

In addition to the strengths and challenges a variety of opportunities and threats were also identified through the development of the DMP update. They are outlined in the sections below and are divided into the following categories: Planning & Transportation; Urban Design; Parks and Natural Environment; Economic Development and Infrastructure; and Social Issues.



### 4.3.1 Planning & Transportation

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Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Redevelopment of existing housing to provide a mix of unit types.</li><li>• Overall increase of connectivity between the Downtown and strategic commercial areas (vehicular, active transportation, transit).</li><li>• Future redevelopment opportunity in the CP Railyards.</li><li>• Intensification potential in existing nodes and corridors.</li><li>• Opportunity to create a central intensified parking location and consolidating multiple smaller surface lots.</li><li>• The City of Greater Sudbury is concluding work on a Transit Hub Feasibility Study to develop new Mobility Hubs, one of which in the Downtown. As part of that exercise, there is the opportunity to relocate the Downtown Transit Station.</li><li>• Provide traffic calming for areas of high pedestrian concentrations.</li><li>• Further public realm enhancements within road rights-of-ways.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Current reliance on personal vehicles in the Downtown.</li><li>• Not meeting intensification targets in the Downtown.</li><li>• Safety and sense of security of the streets associated with continued drug use, homelessness, crime, etc.</li><li>• Central Parking Locations necessitate longer commute times between origin and downtown destinations (deterrent from accessing downtown).</li><li>• Accommodating seasonal conditions (snow plowing and winter sanding) limit the extent of certain roadway modifications.</li><li>• Public perception to emerging technologies (autonomous vehicles and ride share programs).</li><li>• Although cycling and pedestrian routes are present, the network breaks down at the interface with major roads and the connections to the surrounding neighbourhoods. In these locations, it is difficult to access the downtown by foot – e.g., Brady underpass and crossing Paris Street.</li><li>• Access to and through the Downtown for those with mobility issues is challenging (due to pathways, paving methods, etc.).</li></ul>

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**Opportunities**

- Provide design accommodations for transportation innovations (for example curbside management to include charging stations for EVs), loading zones, car share or micromobility.
- Attract more ride share programs and companies.
- Provide online parking bookings (smart parking).
- Strategic bicycle parking at key destinations in the Downtown core should be explored to make biking a more attractive travel option. Given the recent rise in popularity of electric and cargo bikes, as well as other forms of micromobility, providing secure parking facilities has also become an essential consideration.

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**Threats**

- While there is public perception of congestion day to day or during events and festivals; this may need to be managed or addressed through broader transportation network improvements

### 4.3.2 Urban Design

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Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Enhance landscape design in major corridors and upgrade streetscapes on local streets to improve the quality of the downtown user experience.</li><li>• Explore planning framework changes to introduce the concept of building podiums for new development and grade related uses that animate the public realm.</li><li>• Improve enhanced public mobility.</li><li>• The public realm condition along many pedestrian routes could be improved.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Public and political support for higher quality urban design and implications in terms of the ‘cost of development’.</li><li>• Aging buried linear infrastructure may limit the extent of intensification initiatives.</li></ul>

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### 4.3.3 Parks and Natural Environment

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Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Daylighting Junction and Nolin Creeks to help with microclimate / stormwater locally.</li><li>• Continue with the development of the Elgin Street Greenway or some version of it.</li><li>• Create another Memorial Park-type park in the northern end of the Downtown that would bring the Downtown and Uptown together.</li><li>• Extend the greening and urban tree canopy into the Downtown.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Investment costs and seasonal impacts to the natural environment (e.g., heat generated from hard surfaces, road salt etc.).</li><li>• Challenge to planting street trees because of the dense fabric of underground infrastructure.</li></ul>

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Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider using the CN Railyard as a large-scale bio-remediation test site (e.g., get the FCM/Canadian Brownfield Network involved)</li> </ul>	

### 4.3.4 Economic Development and Infrastructure

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Considerable opportunities to renovate existing building stock and reconstruct new facilities.</li> <li>Strong public sector interventions to improve urban design, building conditions, attractions.</li> <li>Incentives to encourage targeted outcomes.</li> <li>Working with private sector and landowners to achieve targeted outcomes.</li> <li>Assess adequacy of existing infrastructure to support new growth called for in DMP.</li> <li>Align updated DMP with City’s long term financial plan, asset management plan, infrastructure master plans, budget, strategic plan, Official Plan Review, and Community Improvement Plan Review.</li> <li>Assessing the demand of treatment facilities (sanitary and water) can meet the intensification demands called for in the 2012 DMP.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growth in Downtown’s assessment base and tax revenue likely continues to trail behind city-wide assessment/tax growth.</li> <li>Draws to the downtown are for one-off events, as opposed to a prolonged exposure.</li> <li>Perception of downtown as unsafe limits desire to locate downtown.</li> <li>Lack of demand / interest from private investors.</li> <li>Other competitive commercial nodes with traditional retail, restaurants and services (e.g., New Sudbury).</li> <li>Continued low-rise housing investment in the surrounding communities rather than intensification.</li> <li>Parking and auto-oriented market.</li> <li>Demolition of south district may not attract investment/development, lack of response to opportunity.</li> </ul>

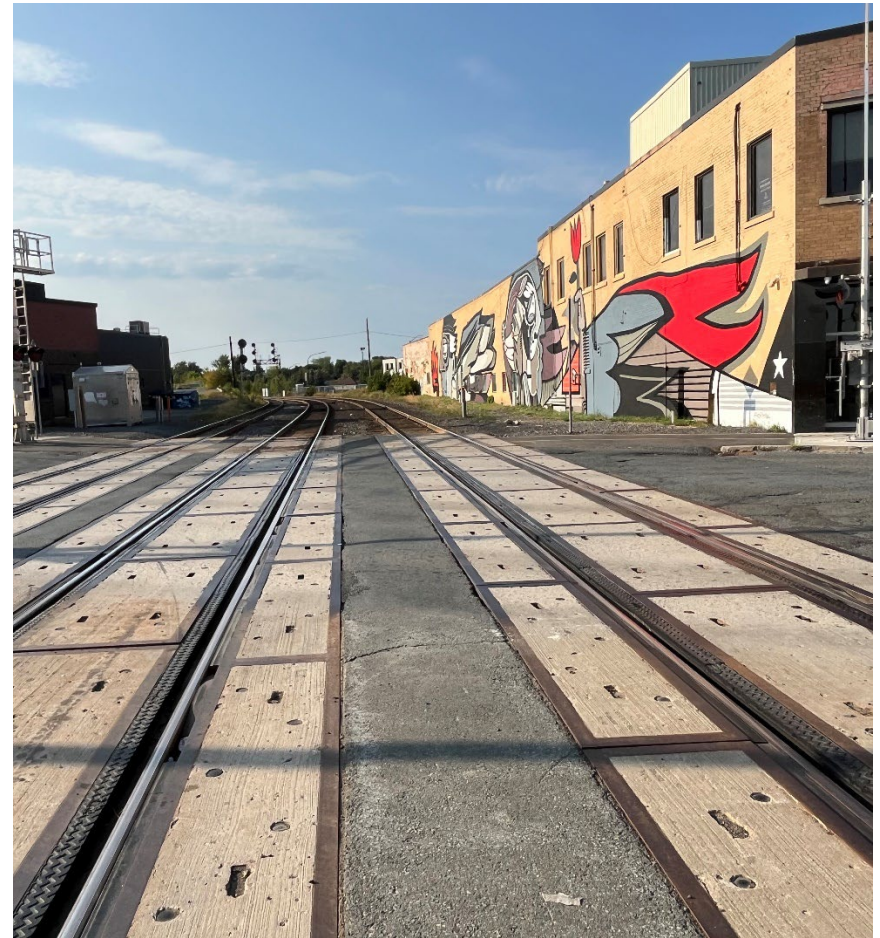
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demolition of the south district could make way for new investment and development.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost to upgrade existing infrastructure to service new development.</li> <li>• Limited to certain servicing alignments for existing portions of infrastructure.</li> <li>• Utility conflicts across private and public properties.</li> </ul>

### 4.3.5 Social Realm

Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential to strengthen Indigenous engagement.</li> <li>• Potential location for public sanitation facilities for unhoused population.</li> <li>• Improved public lighting in open spaces for aesthetics and safety.</li> <li>• Designated festival space for public events.</li> <li>• Opportunity to find alignment with City’s Roadmap to end Homelessness.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a need for the City to address social concerns at the municipal scale, including in the downtown to improve investment climate.</li> <li>• Changes to existing downtown conditions that may cause temporary adjustment impacts to residents and general public (e.g., changing roadway designation from two way to one way, implementing a new stop light, removing and off-ramp).</li> <li>• Increase in downtown violence, crime, and homelessness.</li> <li>• Lack of public maintenance and improvement initiatives (e.g., sidewalk cleaning, landscaping maintenance, etc.)</li> </ul>

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4.0 What Do We Know?

To build on the strengths with new opportunities and overcome the above noted challenges and threats, there is no “silver-bullet” solution. Sudbury needs to find ways to increase the population working, living, and visiting the downtown. Doing so will create a stronger market environment that is encouraging of new investment and enabling of existing businesses. Residential uses in particular will be vital to increase the resiliency of the downtown, improve the commercial market, and create a critical population density encouraging of a wide range of social and economic activities. However, demand and feasibility for new residential uses downtown are currently weak, partially due to market forces, but also due to the social issues present in the downtown and the high vacancies and lack of destinations in the commercial market.



A photograph of a modern building facade with a grid of windows and a large glass section on the right. A large, semi-transparent red triangle is overlaid on the left side of the image, pointing towards the right. The text '5.0 Future of Downtowns' is written in white on the red overlay.

# 5.0 Future of Downtowns

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The pandemic impacted cities worldwide, with downtown areas facing significant challenges. As office vacancy rates climbed and storefronts closed, many residents sought refuge in suburban environments<sup>3</sup>. The surge in e-commerce, combined with accessible shopping centers in suburban areas, further weakened the vitality of downtowns—a trend that is expected to persist in the coming years<sup>4</sup>.

The pandemic also highlighted vulnerabilities within the urban landscape, altering work dynamics. The widespread adoption of remote work has become a hallmark of the post-pandemic era, with employees increasingly valuing flexibility and reduced commuting times. Reports indicate that in Canada, the shift to remote work is projected to lead to a 10 percent to 20 percent decline in daily commuters to downtown areas, resulting in significant economic consequences across various sectors<sup>5</sup>. Compounding this issue, 55 percent of employees express a preference for working remotely at least three days a week<sup>6</sup>. As commercial and office users

return to downtowns, their spatial needs are evolving, often resulting in reduced footprints. This shift, coupled with the establishment of hybrid work environments, underscores the necessity of making downtowns appealing to both residents and visitors, ensuring their resilience in an evolving urban landscape.

Despite these challenges, the pandemic has also opened new avenues for cities to reimagine their downtowns. Historically, downtowns have undergone significant transformations, moving away from manufacturing in the early 1900s and adapting to the pressures of industrialization in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. They have consistently demonstrated resilience, responding to cultural and economic shifts. Urbanists and scholars view the post-pandemic era as an opportunity to redefine central business districts, emphasizing the need for innovation. This evolution calls for downtowns to become more than workplaces, fostering environments that embrace flexibility and multi-purpose utilization. Key themes identified by experts in both academia and

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<sup>3</sup> Ramani, Arjun and Bloom, Nicholas, The Donut Effect of Covid-19 on Cities (May 2021). NBER Working Paper No. w28876, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3856857>

<sup>4</sup> Pwc and Urban Land Institute, Emerging Trends in Real Estate (2023). Canada and United States.

<sup>5</sup> Pwc, The impact of the pandemic on the downtown areas of Canada's six major cities (March 2021).

<sup>6</sup> Pwc, US Remote Work Survey (2022).

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practice for downtown revitalization include the development of multi-use districts, effective placemaking, commercial activation, the integration of educational facilities and entertainment, and a built-in customer base through the addition of residential development.

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) undertook an 18-month project aimed at re-envisioning downtowns in eight U.S. cities. Their findings highlighted one crucial theme predictive of strong downtowns, regardless of geography or population size: a shift away from single-use districts. Monoculture neighborhoods are less likely to thrive compared to diverse areas that offer opportunities for work, living, and recreation<sup>7</sup>. Transforming downtowns into mixed-use environments generates sustained interest from a variety of users, thereby ensuring the vitality of downtown cores<sup>8</sup>. This diversity positions downtowns to weather future economic shifts more effectively. Supporting this notion, research from the

Downtown Recovery Project at the University of Toronto indicates that cities with varied land uses and less reliance on office space have rebounded more rapidly from the pandemic.

Integral to downtown success is placemaking through design. Such initiatives enhance vibrancy and inclusivity, encouraging hybrid workers to frequent downtowns for amenities and prompting locals to spend more time in the core. Placemaking significantly shapes the downtown experience, creating inviting spaces for visitors, residents, and workers<sup>9</sup>. Visible in the recovery efforts in Detroit, the diversity of space can lead to diversity of visitors, encouraging repeated and increased use of space<sup>10</sup>. This is further evidenced by the transformation of downtowns into pedestrian-oriented landscapes, as seen in Pittsburgh<sup>11</sup>. Placemaking also encompasses improvements in traffic flow, parking, and transit support systems that enable downtowns to function efficiently.

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<sup>7</sup> NAIOP, Commercial Real Estate Development Association, What's the Future of Cities? (September 2023).

<sup>8</sup> Richard Florida, University of Toronto's School of Cities and Rotman School of Management, CityLab.

<sup>9</sup> Gensler, Design Exchange Podcast, The Future of Downtown is the Lifestyle District (December 2023).

<sup>10</sup> Urban Land Institute, The Future of American Downtowns (September 2024).

<sup>11</sup> Urban Land Institute, The Future of American Downtowns (September 2024).

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Cities like Kingston, Ontario, have successfully repurposed streets and surface parking lots to enhance the pedestrian experience, thereby promoting retail establishments as well as transit services. These interventions have proven effective for medium-sized cities seeking to retain residents and commercial tenants throughout the pandemic<sup>12</sup>.

Research from the International Downtown Association (IDA) in Canada highlights the critical role of commercial activation in revitalizing downtowns. Ground and even second-floor spaces, visible from the sidewalk, serve as the first points of interaction for visitors. By filling these spaces with workshops, local artists, and artistic designs, cities can create inviting streetscapes. Detroit has effectively adopted this model, introducing retail attractions such as all-season markets and pop-up experiences that keep residents and visitors returning to the core<sup>13</sup>. In Hamilton, alongside their residential CIP's, the city has implemented a commercial façade program that matches funds up to \$10,000 for businesses incorporating artistic elements into their designs. Partnering with the local Business Improvement Area

(BIA) and municipal staff, Hamilton's beautification efforts have contributed to its downtown recovery efforts, with fewer instances of graffiti and vandalization. Together, these initiatives foster a strong sense of community in downtowns, attract visitors, and enhance the public realm, creating inviting spaces for all.

Notably, when discussing commercial activation, associations such as the IDA are calling on the federal and provincial governments to allocate funding not only for downtown businesses but also for mental health services. Addiction, mental health and homelessness pose significant barriers to downtown recovery efforts, intensified by the pandemic. Supporting this social infrastructure is essential for both the economic and social well-being of communities. Ongoing investment is necessary to enhance the resilience of downtown areas and sustain their commercial activities, while also eliminating negative market perceptions of a downtown and additional security and maintenance cost to private landowners that can hinder investment.

Furthermore, the presence of higher education institutions, such as universities, can significantly

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<sup>12</sup> Fisher, J., Winters, M., COVID-19 street reallocation in mid-sized Canadian cities; socio-spatial equity patterns. *Can J Public Health* 112, 376-390 (2021).

<sup>13</sup> Urban Land Institute, *The Future of American Downtowns* (September 2024).

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enhance downtown vitality. Universities bring together labour, education, and housing, all of which have significant impacts on downtown cores. Students interact with downtowns at all hours of the day, contributing to commercial storefront and dining establishment activity whilst increasing the pedestrian activity. High education institutions also play a prominent role in the “knowledge economy” best defined as economies dependent on highly skilled workers. Over 90% of new jobs in North America are expected to require higher education by 2040, with walkable, mixed-use cities expected to capture this talent pool. This talent pool in turn attracts other residents to the area, creating a larger labour pool for the city. This trend has been observed in cities like Buffalo and New York, where reports indicate that for every job generated in the knowledge sector, approximately five additional jobs are created for employees with a broader range of skills. Consequently, investment and economic growth are increasingly concentrated in these vibrant downtowns.

Entertainment plays a vital role in the vibrancy of a city too, and downtown areas can become magnets for diverse options. In cases where a downtown lacks a

strong residential base, establishing an entertainment district can attract users to the area. To do so cities leverage planning mechanisms such as zoning. Zoning is an effective tool for extending operational hours, broadening permitted activities, and facilitating special events, all of which contribute to the creation of a thriving entertainment district. Moreover, cities with a greater focus on entertainment, thereby giving people reasons to come to the downtown, have experienced quicker rebounds from the pandemic<sup>14</sup>.

Another essential element of downtown revitalization is the inclusion of residential housing. Research indicates that housing has a greater propensity to revitalize city centers than the influx of new office workers. Retail consultant Robert Gibbs found that each additional downtown resident supports approximately 100 square feet of retail and entertainment space, compared to just 25 square feet per additional worker. This is because it is the residents—and workers—within a five-minute walk (or 400 meters) who provide the critical market support that enlivens nearby streets<sup>15</sup>. Moreover, to counter the trend of residents migrating to the suburbs, cities like Hamilton, Ontario, have implemented incentives for

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<sup>14</sup> Kate Collignon, Managing Partner, HR&A, ULI ASP panelist in San Francisco, St. Louis, and Sacramento

<sup>15</sup> Dixon, David, Congress for the New Urbanism, A New era of downtown opportunity (April 2022)

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developers to build housing downtown as part of their rejuvenation strategies<sup>16</sup>. Through two community improvement plans (CIPs), Hamilton established the Downtown Multi-Residential Property Investment Program and the Commercial Corridor Housing Loan, offering up to \$4 million per project to finance the development and renovation of residential units. As a result, over 3,000 new residential units were constructed—more than double the city’s initial projections. Regarding housing, downtowns exhibiting strong leadership, a clear vision, and tailored incentives tend to have the most momentum in their revitalization efforts.

The research therefore indicates that despite new challenges, downtowns have not been left permanently obsolete by the pandemic. Rather, downtowns must find ways to reinvent themselves, with the introduction of residential uses and other strategies identified in this section as being key in achieving this objective.

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<sup>16</sup> Lam, Judy, Steps to revitalizing Hamilton’s Downtown, *Economic Development Journal* 20, 41-45 (2021)



# 6.0 DMP Update: Priorities

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6.0 DMP Update: Priorities

A number of initiatives have yet to be completed from the DMP, under the original directives of ‘**Activity and Growth**’, ‘**Access and Connectivity**’, and ‘**Beauty and Pride**’ – these three focus areas are still relevant to today’s state of Downtown Sudbury based on recent context, trends, influences, community insights and evolution of Sudbury Downtown. The advancement of these directives is still a priority to materialize the critical physical and place-making functions of the downtown.

Through the background review and initial community engagement, it was evident that the City, community partners and the residents had a compelling and compassionate motion for change for the most vulnerable populations in the city’s downtown. A new directive and priority emerged guiding the next 10 years of revitalization - livability.

‘**Livability and Well-being**’, responds to affordable housing mix, social health and well-being, green spaces, biodiversity, and safety. The advancement of this directive is a priority to materialize the critical physical and social function of the people living in and using the downtown.

