



Plan20Twenty

DOWNTOWN OSHAWA

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Introduction

As with many neighbourhoods, Downtown Oshawa has changed over time, adapting to the needs and demands of people visiting, working and living there. Behind each adaptation is a support system of institutions, laws, advocates, physical and social infrastructure and guiding principles; many of these supports are reactive, as an evolving neighbourhood is unpredictable and dynamic.

The Downtown Oshawa of today looks very different from when the Downtown Action Plan was approved in 2005. Major brownfield sites have become home to newly constructed facilities, including the Durham Region Courthouse and the General Motors Centre. Prominent vacant buildings are now revitalized and occupied, such as the Regent Theatre, the Alger Press, the Sallie Shop, former Scotia Bank and the Honest Way. Major renovations have occurred to the City Hall Complex and to many storefronts.

Over 2,600 university students are now downtown full-time for classes. The government office sector has retracted in size over the last few years, leaving office vacancies in its wake. The retail sector has evolved and cuisine-oriented establishments have stepped to the forefront. Nightlife is re-emerging. Investments in living spaces appear the most financially rewarded development. Arts, culture and entrepreneurship have captured the imagination of many as a path forward.

In late 2013, City staff and a few community leaders began meeting to discuss the current challenges and opportunities facing Downtown Oshawa.

By early 2014 a core group over 40 stakeholders were coming together regularly to have a discussion about the future of downtown; these stakeholders included property and business owners, developers, and representatives of UOIT, the Downtown BIA, the Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce and the City of Oshawa.

By the fourth stakeholders meeting Plan 20Twenty was substantially complete. The plan is broadly divided into five areas: (1) Business Growth; (2) Residential Growth; (3) Physical Environment; (4) Social Experience; and (5) Communications.

Within each area appears the vision, a statement about the challenge facing the Downtown today, the opportunity and a series of recommended explorations and/or proposed actions.

Overall the plan is simple and realistic, with room for modification and expansion between now and 2020.

The implementation of the plan will be equally shared between public and private partners. "Group 20Twenty" intends to meet quarterly to review progress, make recommendations and offer guidance. An annual report will be presented to Council and the public as a testament to progress and a rally for more support.





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Business Growth

Vision

Downtown Oshawa is a vibrant community for entrepreneurs, family-owned businesses, retail chains, office and cultural enterprise. It is a culinary and entertainment destination and a great place for people to work.



Retail Sector

Challenge

“The traditional retail sector is evolving. There is a need for more diversity to enliven the Downtown district.”

Opportunity

“There is an opportunity to build upon the success of restaurants and cafes and attract unique retailers that address current demographics and markets and complement existing businesses.”

Retail Sector Strategies & Actions

Timing

1	Develop and maintain a regular inventory and map of vacant retail spaces so that they can be marketed.	2014
2	Conduct a retail gap analysis. Study six similar communities; inventory the retail mix, compare and contrast to Downtown Oshawa and interview business owners.	2014
3	Based on the GAP analysis, develop a recruitment strategy to fill vacant spaces with complementary retail establishments; include marketing Downtown as a destination for family-owned businesses.	2015
4	Work with property owners to provide space for pop-up shops and cultural enterprise (galleries/studios) to test the market – these can improve vitality, increase consumer confidence, and make space more attractive for long-term users.	Short Term (1–3 years)



Culinary Sector

Challenge

“The Downtown needs more unique culinary experiences to make it a true social experience; restaurants need a support system that can lead to more marketing strength; restaurant opportunities are available.”

Opportunity

“There is an opportunity to enhance collaboration and attract more unique establishments that will lead to downtown being recognized as a preferred culinary and social destination.”



Culinary Sector Strategies & Actions

Timing

1	Conduct a culinary gap analysis. Study six similar communities; inventory the restaurant/ cafe mix, compare and contrast to Downtown Oshawa and interview business owners.	2014
2	Based on the GAP analysis, develop a recruitment strategy to fill vacant spaces with complementary restaurants; attract destination franchises; market to site selectors/ real estate professionals that represent restaurant chains; attend appropriate franchise shows.	2015
3	Produce a lecture series and other educational business support systems that can help culinary businesses to become more dynamic and sustainable.	2015
4	Advocate the development of a downtown culinary association.	Short Term (1–3 years)
5	Strengthen connections to the GM Centre, the Regent Theatre and Municipal Parking System as marketing opportunities for cafes/restaurants.	Short Term (1–3 years)
6	Develop a plan to “bundle” events and services (i.e. restaurants-hotels-GM Centre tickets).	Short Term (1–3 years)
7	Support the Sidewalk Cafe Pilot Program.	Ongoing



Office Sector



Challenge

“The traditional office sector is evolving. Innovative space that meets the needs of the next generation should be created.”

Opportunity

“The creative economy is growing and replacing traditional office jobs. There is an opportunity to accelerate entrepreneurship and start-up companies by ensuring the provision of technology and support services.”

Office Sector Strategies & Actions

Timing

1	Conduct a labour study regarding commuters. Consider matching clusters of skill with an employer recruitment campaign.	Short Term (1–3 years)
2	Attract entrepreneurs and start-up companies; support Spark Centre; address unemployment through entrepreneurship; investigate a start-up financial assistance program or provide business incubation space.	2015
3	Investigate pilot project for Downtown broadband connectivity.	2015



Business Friendliness



Challenge

“Municipal policies and procedures that impact the business and visitor experience could be more user friendly. A customer-first service approach should be a priority to foster economic growth.”

Opportunity

“City processes and policies should be reviewed to insure that the services and programs are meaningful, yet effective and streamlined as much as possible.”

Business Friendliness Strategies & Actions

Timing

1	Review policies and approval processes for redundancies to streamline service through a "Red Tape Committee".	2015
2	Study municipal liquor licensing procedures; remove any unnecessary requirements.	2015
3	Investigate expansion of the BIA boundaries.	2014
4	Undertake an update of the Downtown Community Improvement Plans. Target programs in areas that will provide the greatest contribution to the downtown.	2015







Residential Growth

Vision

Downtown Oshawa is a unique urban destination for residents who desire a safe and high quality neighbourhood to live.



The Development Process

Challenge

“Navigating City Hall and code requirements can be daunting for a new developer. The City should help applicants be better prepared.”

Opportunity

“The City needs to raise awareness about the development process. The creation of information tools and the dedication of a staff liaison for development projects will help simplify the process and encourage creative solutions.”

The Development Process Strategies & Actions

Timing

1	Assign a staff liaison to facilitate every downtown prospect involved in a development project. This officer will act as a guide to municipal procedures and requirements.	2014
2	When technical issues arise in the planning or construction of a small development project, the staff liaison will call a collaborative meeting between the staff team and the applicant team to find a solution.	Ongoing
3	Produce pamphlets and checklists that can aid in the preparation of a development project.	Short Term (1–3 years)
4	Examine parking requirements for small residential development (“flats”) to establish whether these projects should be exempt from parking requirements; support the findings.	2014



Residential Incentives



Challenge

“Community Improvement programs (CIP) are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis to projects that qualify, but do not necessarily produce the greatest return on investment.”

Opportunity

“The City has a well-established CIP. The program needs to be reviewed to identify inducements that encourage high quality development that in turn results in positive economic growth.”

Residential Incentives Strategies & Actions

Timing

1	Review residential CIP programs Downtown; ensure they encourage high quality development.	2015
2	Ensure/recommend that the CIP budget is adequately funded.	Ongoing
3	Award incentives on a more competitive basis with a focus on economic spin-off.	Ongoing
4	Continue Downtown Development Charge exemptions.	2014
5	Work to find private partners and potential funding tools and incentives to encourage the creation of housing in higher-density apartment buildings or townhouses/flats Downtown.	Short Term (1–3 years) Ongoing
6	Work with the private sector to build purpose-built student housing in the Downtown.	Short Term (1–3 years) Ongoing
7	Revise the Upper Storey Conversion to Residential Loan program to provide further incentive to upgrade the upper floors above commercial frontages.	2015



Advocacy



Challenge

“The evolution of residential development has changed and provides good investment opportunities. Some property owners are not aware of the benefits of having good residential property above the ground floor.”

Opportunity

“Introduce property owners to the advantages of upper storey residential development; this in turn will help create diverse housing options, produce a vibrant neighbourhood and return on investment.”

Advocacy Strategies & Actions

Timing

1	Conduct an upper storey inventory. Learn what is there; contemplate what could be there.	2015
2	Develop an education campaign for property owners about the benefits of converting or improving upper storey residential.	Short Term (1–3 years)
3	Develop a program of pre-development tours with Fire, Building and Inspection Services to identify issues to streamline development.	Ongoing
4	Market the Genosha Hotel to potential investors and developers.	Ongoing
5	Support owners of The Fittings Site for appropriate redevelopment of the land. Advance discussions for the John Street/Eulalie connection prior to development.	Ongoing





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The Physical Environment

Vision

The downtown community is a safe, appealing, accessible environment, conducive to vibrant business and residential growth.

Downtown Appeal



Challenge

“People are attracted to beautiful and attractive spaces. The overall appeal of the downtown needs to improve. Creating vibrant, creative, cultural experiences will benefit residents and businesses alike.”

Opportunity

“There is an opportunity to create unique and appealing spaces that contribute to a high quality urban destination.”

Downtown Appeal Strategies & Actions

Timing

1	Reassess the street tree planting program and develop ways to ensure tree survival in the long-run.	2015
2	Investigate updating the Downtown streetscape, including light standards, opportunities for sidewalk widening, benches and trash receptacles. Focus on modernizing what exists. Introduce 3-way recycle refuse containers.	2015
3	Replace the bus shelter at King and Simcoe Streets . Remove asphalt sidewalk patches and repair these areas appropriately.	2015
4	Ensure that the Downtown mural program is being reviewed and refreshed.	Medium Term (3–5 years)
5	Reduce fees for Downtown sign variances.	2015
6	Develop a guide for good sign design and develop a streamlined process to facilitate good design, including encroachments, etc. Consider how these should be complemented by facade lighting and awning structures.	Short Term (1–3 years)
7	Identify substandard or aged commercial signage; provide technical, financial and artistic resources to facilitate better signage.	Short Term (1–3 years)
8	Investigate legalizing sandwich board signs.	2015
9	Make efforts to keep downtown clean, including sidewalks.	Ongoing
10	Investigate opportunities for acquisition of lands for public open space in the Downtown.	Medium Term (3–5 years)



Vibrancy

Challenge

“The Downtown needs to be more of an identifiable district including greenery, lighting, banners, public art and entryways.”

Opportunity

“Create a distinct downtown identity that is recognizable and welcoming to residents, visitors and businesses.”

Vibrancy Strategies & Actions

Timing

1	Support the BIA's year-round festive lighting program. Review the Downtown greenery program.	2015
2	Develop a plan for enhancing Downtown entranceways.	Short Term (1–3 years)
3	Adopt a public art policy, including funding that enriches the cultural life of residents and attracts visitors; advocate for an annual installation of public art Downtown.	2015



Inclusivity



Challenge

"The Downtown needs to be an accessible and healthy environment for cyclists, pedestrians and vehicles."

Opportunity

"Create a Downtown that is accessible, pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle friendly."

Inclusivity Strategies & Actions

Timing

1	Examine pedestrian crossing signalization Downtown to ensure that the safest methods are in place.	2015
2	Introduce bike lanes Downtown and provide supporting infrastructure including bike racks and signs.	2014 and Ongoing
3	Study/inventory barriers to storefront entry Downtown. Develop potential solutions.	Medium Term (3–5 years)
4	Extend the Downtown floral program to all commercial areas Downtown, such as Celina, Charles and Albert Streets between Athol and Bruce Streets (one block), and around the Holiday Inn Express site - Richmond, William and Ontario Streets.	Short Term (1–3 years)
5	Investigate enhancements to the neighbourhoods of Celina and Albert Streets adjacent to the Downtown - enlarge boulevards, narrow streets and convert these from one-way to two-way.	Medium Term (3-5 Years)
6	Identify refuse collection issues such as frequency and service; correct any issues.	2015
7	Continue improving accessibility throughout the public realm.	Ongoing
8	Continue to advance appropriate Official Plan and Zoning By-law amendments as part of the municipal conformity exercise with Regional Official Plan Amendment 128/ Provincial Growth Plan and replace redundant industrial land use designations and zoning with more suitable provisions.	Ongoing
9	Develop a new Downtown parking strategy, examining the impact of consolidating or developing lots and encouraging parking standards based on urban conditions.	Medium Term (3-5 Years)
10	Review servicing requirements to ensure that infrastructure meets future demands.	Medium Term (3-5 Years)





The Social Experience

Vision

The Downtown is a unique community alive with opportunities as a social and cultural destination, attracting diverse festivals and events.

Event Planning & Facilitation

Challenge

“Planning an event on municipal property or public right-of-ways can be arduous and daunting.”

Opportunity

“Review licensing and event policies and procedures that will streamline the process and facilitate the smooth operation of events.”



Event Planning & Facilitation Strategies & Actions

Timing

1	Develop a clear fee schedule, inter-agency checklist and resource guide for event planners. Include a "FAQ" section	2015
2	Review fee schedule for artists, performers and vendors participating in events. Examine licence requirements with the view of streamlining when required.	2015
3	Investigate and develop a busking program Downtown. Develop regulatory measures or bylaws if necessary.	2015
4	Assign a City facilitator to each event organizer; ensure that they are available during the event and event set-up.	Short Term (1–3 years)
5	Be proactive with City venues: make an effort to reduce fees, staff and public time by pre-packaging event areas and dates (e.g., "pre-closing" King Street six times during a summer with one process).	2015



Social Vibrancy



Challenge

"Downtown is attracting a greater diversity of people that desire a wider variety of events and experiences."

Opportunity

"Create a variety of events for all age groups. Better utilize public spaces for programming."

Social Vibrancy Strategies & Actions

Timing

1	Develop more events Downtown for children, seniors, students. Events should be creative. There should be more events that are focused on the artistic, musical and culinary realm.	Short Term (1–3 years)
2	Social Vibrancy 2: Develop social venues to enhance activity in public space like giant chessboards or skating rinks. Consider the underused City Hall Square a priority area.	Short Term (1–3 years)
3	Make better connections between the GM Centre, the Regent Theatre and Downtown. Promote services found Downtown to event venue patrons, and events to Downtown service providers.	Short Term (1–3 years)
4	Engage university and college students, especially the students Downtown, in cultural activity and event planning.	Ongoing



*Celebrating
35 Years*

STORE HOURS

MON-FRI 9:00-5:00

SAT 9:00-1:00

SUN





Communication

Vision

It is well known that Downtown Oshawa offers a unique experience of living, working, shopping, dining and entertainment.

Getting the Message Out



Challenge

“There should be a more targeted approach to our marketing efforts.”

Opportunity

“To increase awareness, attract people and investment by using a variety of marketing vehicles and partnerships.”

Getting the Message Out Strategies & Actions

Timing

1	Approach local business and landlords proactively to take advantage of the Community Improvement Program for revitalizing their properties.	2015
2	Investigate branding “districts” within the downtown ie: Innovation District, Education District.	Medium Term (3–5 years)
3	Meet quarterly with Group 20Twenty to monitor progress, develop a mechanism to communicate progress on Plan 20Twenty to Oshawa residents the development community and Council.	Ongoing
4	Develop an on-going marketing campaign to the GTA development community that demonstrates the value and quality product in the downtown.	2015
5	Provide communication vehicles/places for getting the word out about downtown events and activities, consider information kiosks downtown.	Short Term (1–3 years)



Oshawa's Economic Development Services

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Plan 20Twenty Team Members

Members of the public were: Alessandra Felicio, Alexis Ward, Andrew Davidson, Angela Mittoni, Dr. Barb Perry, Bob Malcolmson, Craig Mack, Dan Carter, Darryl Koster, Denis O'Connell, Dennis Croft, Donna Loback, Graham MacInnes, Julius Kedvessy, Kathy Cumming, Matt Bowles, Peter Traicus, Sarah Felgemacher, Sarah Groen, Tammy Gay, and Vince Vella.

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