



Plan 20Thirty – Action Plan for Continued Downtown Revitalization

Introduction

Plan 20Thirty comes at a critical time in Downtown Oshawa’s recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. At the time of this report, a return to ‘normal’ activities is underway because nearly all governmental bodies removed the mandates that restricted business operations and public gatherings. The items included within the Plan 20Thirty are extensive and support the revitalization of Downtown Oshawa while enhancing business friendly environments that promote further investment, expansion and retention of commercial entities in Downtown Oshawa.

Twelve individuals comprised the Plan 20Thirty Committee, representing the following sectors:

- Retail
- Cultural
- Culinary
- Professional Services
- Personal Services
- Downtown Resident
- Downtown Development Industry Representative
- Downtown Institutional Sector Representatives
 - Ontario Tech University
- Social Services sector

This committee worked from Fall 2021 to Spring 2022 to determine a series of downtown action items, some which build upon the efforts of Plan 20Twenty. Other action items are additions that

reflect the continued growth and evolution of Downtown Oshawa and its importance to our community.

As part of the early work of the Plan 20Thirty Committee undertook a visioning exercise to establish a unifying vision statement for Downtown Oshawa, for use between now and 2030. As a result, action items included in Plan 20Thirty provide the foundation for operationalizing Downtown Oshawa's new vision statement: A Lively and Modern Urban Centre Where All Thrive.

Considering this vision statement, and the experience of people and businesses as being core to the principles of this vision, the committee summarized action items into the following pillars:

- Business Growth, Expansion and Retention
- Residential Growth
- Physical Environment
- Social Experience
- Communication
- Modernization and Innovation
- Customer Service and Red Tape Reduction

The formal committee-led community engagement process validated and prioritized all the action items enclosed in this report.. Community engagement efforts took place over a four week period, resulting in 165 unique responses.

A consistent theme that emerged in the community engagement feedback was the ongoing concern for, and challenges relating to, the unsheltered population in Downtown Oshawa. The Plan 20Thirty Committee acknowledges that although particular recommendations regarding social services and community safety, security and well-being were outside of the terms of reference for the work of the committee, the continued focus by all levels of government is required for the City of Oshawa to achieve meaningful balance and revitalization in Downtown Oshawa. Furthermore, the Plan 20Thirty Committee acknowledges that the concentration of social causes in Downtown Oshawa, particularly on the Simcoe Street South Corridor poses a challenge for business growth, business retention and people attraction. It is the opinion of the Plan 20Thirty Committee that the City should continue to work with external stakeholders, other organizations and the post-secondary institutions to develop innovative approaches to understand the social issues facing Downtown Oshawa and implement effective solutions to support balance and revitalization efforts. The Plan 20Thirty action items complement the efforts of other groups and Task Forces across the City, Region and beyond to ensure that the community is one that is safe, accessible and thriving, as without continued collaboration and focused efforts, there is a risk that the action items included in this plan will not have a substantial impact.

Overall, the action items included in the plan present opportunities that the City of Oshawa can address, and that will span over the coming years. The committee emphasized that, to continue in a fulsome and transformational recovery and revitalization, that an exercise be undertaken to explore a strategic vision that guides development opportunities in Downtown Oshawa and builds upon the work that was completed as part of Vision 2000. To achieve the goals laid out in the plan, and to assert Downtown Oshawa as a thriving urban centre and the Eastern GTA anchor for culture, business and innovation, there is a strong need for collaboration, support and investment across all levels of government.



Pillar One: Business Growth, Expansion and Retention

The business community in Downtown Oshawa is critical to the continued revitalization of this area. The action items included will attract new businesses, support existing business services and incentives. The action items also seek ways to ensure lower vacancy levels in the main street area. The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic encouraged communities to support local businesses and services and to recognize the vibrancy that is achieved in downtown neighbourhoods with diverse and independent businesses. Focusing on recovery and continued revitalization, and continuing to grow supports for these businesses will assert Downtown Oshawa as a unique business destination for owners/operators and visitors.

	Initiative	Timing
1	Building upon the review completed as part of the My Main Street Local Accelerator program, complete an updated retail gap analysis which studies similar communities and inventory of the retail mix and compare/contrast to Downtown Oshawa. Develop a recruitment strategy based on the findings	2023
2	Focus on establishing a shoppable downtown that possesses diverse retail offerings, accessible locations, public washrooms and promotion of the area as a shopping district	2023
3	Address deficiencies and promote better business façade appearance and signage in Downtown Oshawa which may include investigating revisions to the Sign By-Law and associated procedures, reducing fees for Downtown Oshawa sign variances, develop a guide for good sign design and provide technical, prevent installation of sign boxes, accessible and artistic resources to facilitate more attractive facades in the Urban Growth Centre	Short Term (1 – 3 years)
4	Review and recommend adaptations to the Community Improvement Plan Programs which could include additional supportive funding for digital infrastructure, interest free loans and revamping application deadlines to eliminate barriers to funding year round	2023
5	Explore the opportunity for the Region of Durham to match funding to the Urban Growth Centre Community Improvement Plan Program	2024
6	Explore the opportunity to introduce new programming that would deter Downtown Oshawa property owners from allowing long-term vacancies in the Urban Growth Centre	Short Term (1 – 3 years)
7	Continuation of a vacant space database categorized into retail, culinary and office categories to support proactive outreach to generate new business openings or office relocations in Downtown Oshawa. Explore opportunities to make this information publicly available to actively market space opportunities in Downtown Oshawa	Ongoing
8	Review of particular properties and parcels in the Urban Growth Centre to introduce indicators to the market that the City is focused on highest and best use developments in these areas (this could include recommendations of temporary zoning and/or interim control by-laws)	Medium Term (3-5 years)
9	Work with Invest Durham to review office space trends and produce a strategy to deal with office space vacancy and recommendations for potential redevelopment of spaces based on a transition to remote or hybrid work post-pandemic	2023
10	Development of an overview to actively predict ongoing residential growth in Downtown Oshawa, including demographics, to support targeted retail growth and ensuring the amenities needed for a growing residential population are located in Downtown Oshawa	Ongoing

11	Work with property owners to provide spaces for pop-up shops and cultural enterprises to test the market	Ongoing
12	Conduct an upper story inventory	2024
13	Ensure adequate time in Downtown Oshawa is spent by Economic Development staff which could include the equivalent of one full business day per week conducting business visits and one formal office hours drop-in per month	Ongoing



Pillar Two: Residential Growth

A key component of Downtown Oshawa's growth is the rapid increase in residential developments that have taken place – bringing more individuals into Downtown Oshawa and growing the population of this area. The action items build on the continuation of a development friendly environment to support the continued revitalization of the neighbourhood while also ensuring the amenities required for a growing residential population are in place.

	Initiative	Timing
1	Continued advocacy for the Lakeshore East GO Train Extension to Bowmanville and construction of the Oshawa Central Station to support the growing residential, education and professional base in Downtown Oshawa	Ongoing
2	Exploring the opportunity to introduce a unified development charge between the City of Oshawa, Region of Durham and local schoolboards to support development in Downtown Oshawa	Short Term (1 – 3 years)
3	Develop a cross-departmental strategy to manage inadequate housing in Downtown Oshawa area which might include routine inspections, enhanced fines and proactive incentives to support redevelopment	Short Term (1 – 3 years)
4	Explore opportunities to evaluate the concept of allocation of affordable units within new condo/rental developments that would also include programming and oversight to support transitions	Short Term (1 – 3 years)
5	Advocate to the Region of Durham to develop a housing affordability strategy to promote development across the entire Region	2023
6	Develop strategies with external partners to aid in international attraction for both housing and employment to Downtown Oshawa	2024
7	Work with Post-Secondary institutions to connect the student population to housing opportunities in Downtown Oshawa	Ongoing



Pillar Three: Physical Environment

The ways visitors and residents experience the physical aspects of Downtown Oshawa infrastructure, visual appearance and functional usability significantly impacts the overall experience of the area. The action items included consider how pedestrians and vehicles engage with and use spaces that ensure services to the area are prioritized by enhancing beautification through new installations and directing revenues to aid in the budgetary needs for these enhancements.

	Initiative	Timing
1	Recommend that parking revenue and administrative monetary penalties (A.M.P.) collected in Downtown Oshawa are directed to the Downtown Oshawa Revitalization Fund to directly support initiatives and enhancements within this area	2023
2	Undertake an exercise to develop a fulsome Parking Solutions strategy to address the following in Downtown Oshawa: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private/public partnerships for additional parking infrastructure • Integration of EV charging stations to public parking areas • Enhanced oversight and management of free parking during the holiday season to ensure businesses and their clients are directly benefitting from the program • Continuation of the 15 minute parking zones for curbside pickup and delivery services in Downtown Oshawa • Enhanced parking signage to support wayfinding to public parking in Downtown Oshawa • Exploration of digital tools to support parking wayfinding 	2024
3	Establishment of gateway features in Downtown Oshawa to mark the area boundaries. Recommendations to be developed regarding suitable locations (South/North/East and West) aligned with the Urban Growth Centre boundaries with the appropriate community engagement on the features. Further, work with other City committees and groups to integrate planning and ideas such as the Centennial Committee, Cultural Leadership Council and Horticulture society.	Short Term (1 – 3 years)
4	Develop a directory of property owners in Downtown Oshawa that are willing to have public art installations/murals placed on their buildings and/or property	2023
5	Support Recreation and Culture at the City of Oshawa in developing a renewed plan for murals in Downtown Oshawa that balances the preservation of historic murals and ensures suitable budget allocation for new murals and their ongoing maintenance	Ongoing
6	Develop a fulsome education and communication campaign for property owners regarding the benefits of the UGC CIP	2023
7	Establish a strategy to promote architectural appeal for existing building improvements which may include: scalable monetary value through the Urban Growth Centre CIP program for high quality finishes and products; Tax incentive programs for façade enhancements; City managed loan programs to support enhanced property standards and a City commissioned vision for recommendations on façade improvements to show scope of possibilities	2024

8	Develop a plan to bring seasonal features to Downtown Oshawa. This could include: Ambient and interactive lighting features all year round that are representative of all demographics and cultural celebrations of City residents; joint initiatives between Downtown businesses and the City to maximize impact; seasonal 'bucket lists' to explore different displays or spaces based on the time of year in the Downtown Oshawa; lighting opportunities at Memorial Park; other visual elements that signal to tourists the areas where there are events and locations that should be visited/accessed	2023
9	Explore opportunities to develop photographic spaces in Downtown Oshawa to drive engagement on both a permanent and rotating installation basis	2024
10	Review the snow removal prioritization in the Urban Growth Centre to ensure on-street parking and sidewalks are quickly accessible to ensure minimal impact to Downtown Oshawa businesses	2023
11	Develop a plan that focuses on first/last mile access to public transportation hubs and active transportation connections from the proposed Oshawa Central GO Station and Durham-Scarborough Bus Rapid Transit project. This may include planning for bike share programs and e-mobility options in the Downtown area	Medium Term (3-5 years)
12	Continue promoting and seeking opportunities to enhance accessible infrastructure to Downtown Businesses and through the public realm	Ongoing
13	Explore opportunities to mitigate noise volumes in Downtown Oshawa, particularly around areas that have undergone streetscaping to enhance the pedestrian experience	Short Term (1 – 3 years)



Pillar Four: Social Experience

Important assets of Downtown Oshawa include the diversity of businesses – from retail to culinary sectors – and the wide-range of arts, culture and entertainment opportunities for visitors. To fully embrace these assets and transfer an individual’s Downtown Oshawa experience into a connected journey, actions to establish effective connections and opportunities must be considered. An exciting opportunity exists for the City to adopt culture as an industry which aids in job growth, positions Oshawa as a destination city, and establishes connections between arts and business that revive urban areas and can build new creative businesses. These actions are integral pieces of the revitalization of Downtown Oshawa.

	Initiative	Timing
1	Enhanced Festivals and Events, that are both City led and externally led but City supported, in Downtown Oshawa to drive new and returning visitors. Suggested events could include: Farmer's Market, Street Festivals, Buskerfest, Culture crawl, coffee tours, culinary passports. Explore the opportunity for the City to lead 1 landmark event per season in Downtown Oshawa	2023
2	Explore the potential to extend a master event permit and blanket fee to organizations that are hosting multiple events in Downtown Oshawa to support visitor attraction and tourism	2023
3	Develop a plan to bundle events and services to promote connection to multiple services and assets in Downtown Oshawa in one visit (Culinary – Accommodations – Entertainment)	2023
4	Develop social venues to enhance positive activity in public spaces. Consider the underused City Hall Square, Memorial Park, Victoria Street Plaza and Outdoor Space at the Robert McLaughlin Gallery as priority areas	Short Term (1 – 3 years)
5	Support the continued efforts that form the City's Downtown Area Action Plan and encourage continual evaluation and adaptations to the plan to ensure progress as it is related to Downtown Oshawa's overall safety, security and well-being	Ongoing
6	Explore opportunities for social engagement and wellness programming offered during daytime hours with reduced barriers and inclusive access	Short Term (1 – 3 years)
7	Continue to advocate for a Housing First Approach which could include: Housing and Tenant Rights education; support the housing first approach in social service outreach as a path forward to address chronic homelessness; explore opportunities for Region of Durham incentives for developments to allocate units for affordable housing and evaluation of the micro-home pilot project to expand the program to other communities in the Durham Region	Short Term (1 – 3 years)
8	Support the outcomes of the Arts Resource Centre (ARC) feasibility study to effectively position the proposed Culture Hub as an asset in Downtown Oshawa	Ongoing
9	Establish effective information sharing and calendars across internal City departments and external stakeholders to maximize existing events and drive connections to other opportunities in Downtown Oshawa (for example, culinary options Downtown for those visiting the peony festival)	2023
10	Support both private and public legacy arts and culture establishments in Downtown Oshawa with exploring adaptations to space and service delivery models to ensure ongoing operations and remain an asset in the area	Ongoing



Pillar Five: Communications

A long standing challenge for Downtown Oshawa has been to effectively communicate the experiences, assets and opportunities to different stakeholder organizations and their diverse audiences. The action items included in the Communications pillar introduce ways to remove silos, build connectivity between groups and uncover strategic ways of ensuring the right message, to the right audience, at the right time.

	Initiative	Timing
1	Develop a Downtown Committee that has cross-department City representation and external stakeholder representation to support the continual adaptation and improvements as it relates to Downtown Oshawa, while also monitoring and supporting the implementation of Plan 20Thirty actions	2022
2	Work in collaboration with stakeholders to establish a robust and effective Tourism strategy for Downtown Oshawa to enhance visitor attraction and promotion of the area and its experiences	2022-2023
3	Consult with the City's Indigenous Relations Coordinator to develop initiatives and outcomes that support the Truth and Reconciliation Commission actions in Downtown Oshawa	Ongoing
4	Building upon the Downtown Visual Brand Identity processes to develop an on-going marketing campaign to the GTA development community that demonstrates the value and quality product Downtown	2022-2023
5	Develop a comprehensive communications plan that explores the different audiences that require outreach for Downtown Oshawa (businesses versus public versus investment opportunities) and adjust social media and communications tactics accordingly within Economic Development Services and other branches within the City	2022-2023



Pillar Six: Modernization and Innovation

The City of Oshawa is experiencing rapid growth in innovation and technology, with thanks to the strong post-secondary education presence, Spark Centre and businesses that continue to advance work in diverse fields. Downtown Oshawa is well poised to attract more businesses and opportunities to demonstrate our strength in this area, and the action items included support bringing forward the Downtown infrastructure needed to effectively position the area as a thriving and modern urban centre.

	Initiative	Timing
1	Undertake an exercise to update the Downtown Master Plan (Vision 2000) and conduct a visual planning exercise that can be used to communicate the City's vision for a revitalized and renewed Downtown	Short Term (1 – 3 years)
2	Research and recommend policy adaptations to promote enhanced opportunities for Private/Public partnerships that could support events, redevelopments, infrastructure and beautification in the Urban Growth Centre	2024
3	Conduct external research on success metrics and investigate an organizational review that would integrate the City's Economic Development Branch and Culture Branch initiatives to effectively coordinate the efforts between place making, experience and economic output and strategic alignment	2024
4	Undertake a review and introduce a plan that includes prioritization as it relates to electrification in Downtown Oshawa which could include: EV charging infrastructure, e-mobility and other areas as needed	2023
5	Undertake a by-law, licensing and permitting review to introduce a procedure that could position Downtown Oshawa as a Living Lab for innovation to allow sandboxing and tests beds to enhance the opportunity to attract new businesses and start-ups to the Downtown	Short Term (1 – 3 years)
6	Undertake research and external stakeholder consultation to develop a Downtown Broadband Action Plan that would include enhanced infrastructure accessible to businesses and the exploration of a public Wi-Fi program in the Downtown area	2022 - 2023
7	Within the Economic Development Strategic Plan, investigate the development of a Technology Cluster in Downtown Oshawa which would build on the presence of Spark Centre and Ontario Tech University	2023
8	Explore the opportunity to introduce digital signage and digital wayfinding infrastructure to key locations in Downtown Oshawa	Short Term (1 – 3 years)
9	Conduct research and review the opportunity for the City to explore Geo-Thermal installations on City sidewalks, surface level parking lots and streets	Medium Term (3 – 5 years)



Pillar Seven: Customer Service and Red Tape Reduction

Since the introduction of Plan 20Twenty, Downtown Oshawa saw the formal disbandment of the O.D.B.I.A. As a result ensuring that there is consistent, thorough and accessible engagement and service extended to Downtown Oshawa businesses and developers should be viewed as a priority of the City. The action items included introduce opportunities to consult with Downtown Stakeholders and explore meaningful changes that will advance Downtown Oshawa as an extraordinary place to invest and do business.

	Initiative	Timing
1	Undertake a fulsome review of business licensing, event and building permitting and development procedures and review policies and approval processes for redundancies and recommend adjustments that are considered through a Red Tape Committee	2023-2024
2	Assign a staff liaison (Manager, Downtown and Business Development) that will act as a concierge to facilitate every downtown prospect involved in a development project, business need or technical concerns	Ongoing
3	Develop a Digital Business Portal for Small Business which could include direct access to City applications, by-laws and policies while also providing business development tools and trainings	Short Term (1 – 3 years)