

# **What's Up With the Downtown?**

by

**Mitchell David James Martyn**

A thesis  
presented to the University of Waterloo  
in fulfillment of the  
thesis requirement for the degree of  
Master of Architecture

Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 2021

©Mitchell David James Martyn 2021

## **Authors Declaration**

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

## **Abstract**

*What's Up with the Downtown?* uses North Bay, Ontario to examine issues of downtown core usage and design in rural North American cities. As malls and box retail have moved to the forefront of physical spaces catering to consumer demand, the contemporary downtown cannot hope to compete at the same level in its current state and must adapt and progress the user experience to regain consistent usage. Past revitalization efforts in North American downtowns have focused on the retail experience, like that of the mall, as opposed to community-based design. In this thesis, the proposed design will focus on three areas of intervention in North Bay's downtown: wayfinding, pedestrian experience, and community-oriented programming. The proposal will draw information from previously completed master planning exercises by the city and other contemporary pedestrianization and revitalization efforts. The proposal presented in this thesis will challenge the existing ideas of how North Bay's downtown can be effectively designed to re-establish the space as the city's core.

# Acknowledgements

First, I would like to thank my thesis supervisor John McMinn. You have always supported the ideas presented in my thesis through its up and downs and have helped me find ways to stay motivated when I felt the ideas had run out. Your guidance helped me bring the final product to a cohesive whole by keeping me excited with your constant enthusiasm for my thesis.

My TRD1 professor and committee member, Marie-Paule, your guidance has helped direct this thesis along the whole way and your added insight has been vital to distilling the ideas that were finally presented. Thank you for the continued support from the very start right to the finish.

Thank you to Jonathan Enns, Mark Sterling, and Maya Desai for the participation in my final design review. You all presented fantastic ideas and ways to round out my thesis in the final hours. An additional thank you to Jonathan for reviewing my final document.

Thank you to my parents and my sister, for being able to contribute to the creation of my thesis in your own ways and pushing me to always do the best possible. Inside and out of school, you have always been there to support me in anything I undertake, and there is no real way to summarize my appreciation in so few words.

Winston, Steven, and Peter, from the beginning of undergrad until the bitter final hours of masters, you have all helped me strive to excel whether through school or our mutual hobbies. I could not have made it to the end without your unwavering friendships.

Molly, thanks for sharing this wild ride to the finish line. I owe you for when it's your turn!

# Table of Contents

ii	<i>Authors Declaration</i>
iii	<i>Abstract</i>
iv	<i>Acknowledgements</i>
viii	<i>List of Figures</i>
<b>01</b>	<b>Introduction</b>
03	<i>0.1   Rationale for Exploration</i>
06	<i>0.2   Document Outline</i>
<b>07</b>	<b>Literature Review</b>
09	<i>1.1   Postwar Retail and its Effect on the Downtown</i>
26	<i>1.2   Proposed Interventions</i>
<b>33</b>	<b>Local Context</b>
35	<i>2.1   The City of North Bay</i>
57	<i>2.2   Outline of the North Bay Downtown Waterfront Master Plan</i>
<b>67</b>	<b>Design Proposal</b>
69	<i>3.1   Proposal Introduction</i>
70	<i>3.2   Wayfinding</i>
75	<i>3.3   Pedestrian Experience</i>
83	<i>3.4   Community Programming</i>
107	<i>3.5   Conclusion</i>
109	<i>Endnotes</i>
115	<i>Bibliography</i>
121	<i>Appendix</i>
127	<i>Appendix Endnotes</i>



# List of Figures

- 05      **Figure 0.01: Downtown North Bay, 1930**  
*Retrieved from: [http://northbayhistory.homestead.com/Postcards/\\_192\\_-\\_Main\\_St.\\_-Liggett\\_s\\_Drug\\_Store\\_\\_800x600\\_.jpg](http://northbayhistory.homestead.com/Postcards/_192_-_Main_St._-Liggett_s_Drug_Store__800x600_.jpg)*
- 05      **Figure 0.02: Downtown North Bay, 2020**  
*Figure by author*
- 08      **Figure 1.01: Northland Shopping Center**  
*Retrieved from: <http://www.gruenassociates.com/project/northland-shopping-center/>*
- 14      **Figure 1.02: Southdale Shopping Center**  
*Hibbard, C. J. Norton & Peel photograph collection / photographed by Norton & Peel and C.J. Hibbard., 1915*
- 14      **Figure 1.03: Southdale Shopping Center Interior**  
*Retrieved from: <https://media.mnhs.org/things/cms/10408/015/10408015.640x640.jpg>. Accessed December 16, 2020*
- 21      **Figure 1.04: Kalamazoo Pedestrian Mall, 1959**  
*Kalamazoo Mall, ca. 1959 / Kalamazoo Valley Museum photo 94.5.36. Accessed December 16, 2020.*
- 21      **Figure 1.05: Kalamazoo Pedestrian Mall, Present**  
*Google Maps. “Kalamazoo Pedestrian Mall Street View”, Accessed December 16, 2020.*
- 24      **Figure 1.06: Downtown Halifax, Nova Scotia**  
*Thorfinn Stainforth / CC-BY-CA-3.0*
- 24      **Figure 1.07: Downtown Kingston, Ontario**  
*Retrieved from: [https://www.queensu.ca/research/sites/default/files/assets/news\\_story/kingston-view-bg%201000-compress.jpg](https://www.queensu.ca/research/sites/default/files/assets/news_story/kingston-view-bg%201000-compress.jpg). Accessed April 8, 2020.*
- 28      **Figure 1.08: City of Victoria Wayfinding**  
*City of Victoria. “City of Victoria Wayfinding Strategy,” 2017.*
- 28      **Figure 1.09: City of Lunenburg Wayfinding**  
*Figure by author*
- 30      **Figure 1.10: Downtown Boyne City, Michigan**  
*Retrieved from: <http://placemaking.mml.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/boyne-banner1.jpg>. Accessed April 7, 2021*

- 30 **Figure 1.11: Argyle Street, Halifax**  
*Tony Webster / CC-BY-CA-2.0*
- 32 **Figure 1.12: IDEA Exchange, Cambridge**  
*Retrieved from: <https://architizer.com/idea/2748336/>  
Accessed April 8, 2021*
- 32 **Figure 1.13: Toronto Tool Library, Toronto**  
*Retrieved from: [https://torontoist.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/20131016-Toronto-Tool-Library-East-2885-Photo\\_by\\_Corbin\\_Smith-640x426.jpg](https://torontoist.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/20131016-Toronto-Tool-Library-East-2885-Photo_by_Corbin_Smith-640x426.jpg). Accessed April 8, 2021*
- 36 **Figure 2.01: Aerial Image of North Bay**  
*P199. "Aerial view of North Bay and Lake Nipissing, Ontario, Canada" / Public Domain*
- 38 **Figure 2.02: Satellite Image of North Bay**  
*Google Maps. "Satellite Image of North Bay", Accessed November 5, 2019*
- 39 **Figure 2.03: Connections to the Downtown**  
*Figure by author*
- 41 **Figure 2.04: Education and Retail Centres in North Bay**  
*Figure by author*
- 43 **Figure 2.05: Downtown Overview**  
*Figure by author*
- 45 **Figure 2.06: Downtown/Waterfront Section**  
*Figure by author*
- 47 **Figure 2.07: Urban Fabric**  
*Figure by author*
- 49 **Figure 2.08: Downtown North Bay Program Breakdown**  
*Figure by author*
- 51 **Figure 2.09: Program Breakdown**  
*Figure by author*
- 53 **Figure 2.10: Main Street Elevation**  
*Figure by author*
- 61 **Figure 2.11: Proposed Street Section from the Downtown Waterfront Master Plan**  
*City of North Bay. "North Bay Downtown Waterfront Master Plan," 2017.*

- 65      **Figure 2.12: Description of new programming from the Downtown Waterfront Master Plan**  
*City of North Bay. “North Bay Downtown Waterfront Master Plan,” 2017.*
- 73      **Figure 3.01: Information Signage Detail**  
*Figure by author*
- 74      **Figure 3.02: Information Signage Perspective**  
*Figure by author*
- 75      **Figure 3.03: Historic Signage Detail**  
*Figure by author*
- 76      **Figure 3.04: Historic Signage Perspective**  
*Figure by author*
- 79      **Figure 3.05: Overall Plan of New Pedestrian Streetscape**  
*Figure by author*
- 81      **Figure 3.06 Area A of New Pedestrian Streetscape**  
*Figure by author*
- 82      **Figure 3.07: Perspective of Area A of New Pedestrian Streetscape**  
*Figure by author*
- 83      **Figure 3.08: Area B of New Pedestrian Streetscape**  
*Figure by author*
- 84      **Figure 3.09: Area C of New Pedestrian Streetscape**  
*Figure by author*
- 87      **Figure 3.10: Site Options**  
*Figure by author*
- 89      **Figure 3.11: Site Location**  
*Figure by author*
- 91      **Figure 3.12: Existing Site Plan**  
*Figure by author*
- 93      **Figure 3.13: Ground Floor Plan**  
*Figure by author*
- 95      **Figure 3.14: Second Floor Plan**  
*Figure by author*
- 97      **Figure 3.15: Third Floor Plan**  
*Figure by author*

- 98      **Figure 3.16: Fourth Floor Plan**  
*Figure by author*
- 99      **Figure 3.17: Overall Building Section**  
*Figure by author*
- 101     **Figure 3.18: Workshop Detailed Section**  
*Figure by author*
- 102     **Figure 3.19: Workshop Exterior Perspective**  
*Figure by author*
- 103     **Figure 3.20: Bike Parking Detail Section**  
*Figure by author*
- 104     **Figure 3.21: Bike Parking Exterior Perspective**  
*Figure by author*
- 105     **Figure 3.22: Interior Circulation Space**  
*Figure by author*
- 107     **Figure 3.23: New Streetscape Perspective**  
*Figure by author*



*“The downtown is the only part of the city that belongs to everybody. It doesn’t matter where you may find your home; the downtown is yours, too.”*

**Jeff Speck, Walkable City**

# **Introduction**

## **0.1 Rationale for Exploration**

## **0.2 Document Outline**



## 0.1 | Rationale for Exploration

Initially, the interest in a project focused on the city of North Bay existed out of a personal attachment to the city itself. Through personal experience and knowledge of the city, the issue of the downtown arose as a primary source for exploration in this thesis. In addition to personal interest, the city of North Bay has been undergoing investigation of master planning strategies for the downtown and waterfront areas, with several proposals being completed throughout the past five years. This thesis will provide a proposal for the city of North Bay as a case study for smaller communities across Canada and North America and the decline of the downtown as a retail centre and the ensuing erasure of the space as a viable public space in the city.

Since the second world war, the retail landscape has been constantly shifting, starting with the rise of the downtown-oriented department store, which was then forced to adapt as the post-war shopping centre rose to the forefront of retail consumption. The post-war economic boom and associated urban planning strategies caused a major decline in downtown usage as a retail centre.<sup>1</sup> Many attempts at reinvigorating downtown retail centres across North America have since been unsuccessful, leading to a requisite for innovative solutions to supplement and surpass the offerings of these retail oriented public spaces.

Providing new concepts and ideas for the continued use of North Bay's downtown will address these problems with current urban solutions in small city downtowns across Canada and North America. Few downtowns have been able to stay relevant through addressing the retail scape without shifting to address access and social factors through a reinvention as the leisure centre of the city.<sup>2</sup> In many cases, the complete pedestrianization of downtown space to promote retail has been unsuccessful. The local condition present in North Bay, a downtown dominated by retail program and an unconventional street section, provides a prime opportunity to generate a contemporary proposal for the continued usage of the downtown.

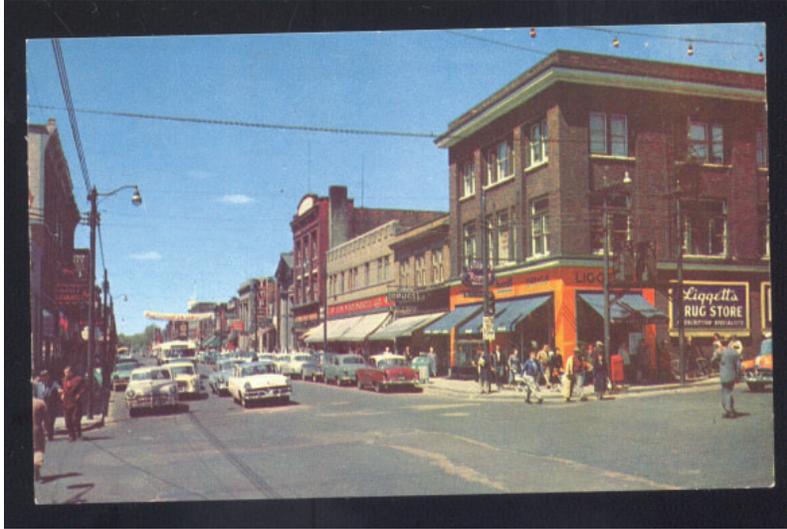


Figure 0.01: Downtown North Bay, 1930



Figure 0.02: Downtown North Bay, 2020

## 0.2 | Document Structure

**Chapter 1: Literature Review** draws from the historic context of postwar retail and the ensuing evacuation of downtown retail to these spaces, forcing downtowns to adapt out of necessity as opposed to a successful future, setting up the basis for the final design proposal.

Following this is an outline of the proposed interventions, providing reference to other built projects and urban interventions. This section gives reason to the design decisions being made, grounding them not only in theory, but also in a successful reality.

**Chapter 2: Local Context** explores downtown North Bay, providing insight through drawings, and on-site documentation. Additionally, a critique is offered on existing master-plan projects and design strategies proposed by the city. This acts as the basis with which to compare the research to on-site conditions, highlighting need for local applications in the final design proposal.

**Chapter 3: Proposal** provides a new urban strategy within North Bay's downtown, addressing levels of user experience and engagement through access and new community programming, promoting the continued usage of the downtown as a space of community and leisure in addition to the existing retail programming.

## **Part 01: Literature Review**

### **1.1 Postwar Retail and its Effects on the Downtown**

### **1.2 Introduction of Proposed Interventions**



Figure 1.01: Northland Shopping Center

## 1.1 | Postwar Retail and its Effects on the Downtown

Postwar economic boom and the ensuing urban planning strategies as related to retail are directly linked to the demise of the small city downtown, causing a shift in retail habits and community gathering, dooming the downtown in its existing prewar form. By the year 1971, 21 of Americas largest metropolitan areas had lost an overwhelming 50% of retail to the postwar shopping centre. Some of these communities had suffered even greater losses of up to 80%.<sup>3</sup> These impacts can be traced through the time-line of major retail to determine how they affected the downtown through economic, urban planning, and community focused strategies. Currently, the postwar style shopping centre dominates the consumer choice for the primary source of purchasing alongside e-commerce. In 2013, e-commerce came in at 6 percent of total sales worldwide.

For many in the North American population, travelling to the nearest conglomeration of big box retail makes up the remaining retail desire.<sup>4</sup> This dominant focus on shopping centre-based retail at its onset created a shift in urban planning and community programming strategies, removing what remaining draw the downtown had on consumers and the impact is still being faced today. By removing all the negative aspects of the small-town downtown, shopping centres created a utopic version of the downtown drawing consumers en-masse, completely subverting the role of the downtown as it existed.

These decisions lead to the decentralization of communities, causing and “facilitating suburban sprawl for better or for worse.”<sup>5</sup> From this, a spiral was created, forcing downtowns to adapt in a way that was later seen to be incorrect, drawing on a myriad of inspiration ranging from European pedestrianization precedents and the learnings of acclaimed postwar retail developers such as Victor Gruen. Can lessons be taken from the history of postwar retail and ensuing downtown revitalization attempts, to be assessed and brought to a contemporary setting as a case study of the continued existence of the rural downtown? Are these planning strategies able to be adapted to create renewed interest and stability in these downtowns when retail has been deemed to not be the only solution to a continued investment in the location?

## **The Buildup to Postwar Retail**

In their current form, planned shopping centres have existed since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the first example being Roland Park Shopping Center in Baltimore. <sup>6</sup> Developing one of the earliest examples of the garden city in America, Roland Park Company was progressive in many aspects of urban planning, one such way being the creation of a shopping centre that housed essential neighbourhood shops on the ground floor and doctor's and dentist offices above. <sup>7</sup> After the first example of the planned shopping centre, the concept did not take off at an accelerated rate, with only a few notable centres opening throughout the 1920s and 1930s to support existing communities. <sup>8</sup>

More notably during this time was the rise of the department store. Having been viewed as the origin of mass retail, the department store was an integral aspect of most downtowns, concentrated in many of the booming centres of North America, but also a familiar site in many smaller city centres and towns. In a census completed in 1927, the number of department stores had risen to 4,962, dominating the retail landscape of the Main Street. <sup>9</sup> It was at this time at the end of the 1920s that the department store is seen as the last stand for local retail, as even these department stores were becoming the epitome of capital gains that postwar shopping centres stand for. The ability to consume from a mass retailer enforced the consumption of mass-produced goods, causing a disturbing economic transformation. <sup>10</sup>

As the department store was typically located firmly in the downtown, it allowed the downtown to continue thriving as the primary location for commerce as well as many of the social functions of the city. This would be the case up until the end of WW2, towards the end of the 1940s when the economy was regaining traction.<sup>11</sup> Although the planned shopping centre had existed in a minimal form up until this point, it was after the boom following WW2 that “larger, more diverse centres were conceived to serve a regional clientele.”<sup>12</sup> At this point, the shopping centre has overtaken the downtown, forcing an adaptation of design strategy as it promotes the usage of downtown space.

## Planning Strategies

Following the sudden boom in planned shopping centres, downtowns were forced to turn to similar strategies, and the downtown pedestrian mall was born. Both the planned shopping centre and in turn the downtown pedestrian mall were a direct response to automobile accessibility.<sup>13</sup> When the downtown could no longer meet the requirements for access via automobile due to a lack of parking space, shopping centres began to take advantage of the land on the periphery of existing suburbs where space was abundant for the inclusion of parking lots surrounding their newly built shopping centres.<sup>14</sup>

The new shopping centre planning strategy aimed to take advantage of ongoing urban planning projects, placing itself at the intersection of new major highway networks. Initially in the middle of nowhere, and sometimes completed before the highway, these shopping centres were establishing themselves as commercial destinations, drawing clientele from nearby city centres who would have otherwise been shopping in the local downtown. Strategically located at the highway intersections, they took advantage of the rise of suburbia during the postwar boom. This provided the perfect location for the planned shopping centre to capitalize off suburban growth. By locating the new retail spaces at the intersections of suburbs, the design aimed to attract patrons from a half hour driving radius, with minimal focus on connection via public transit.<sup>15</sup> At this point, the department store industry had identified the failure of the downtown and had begun the implementation of chain branches, often taking

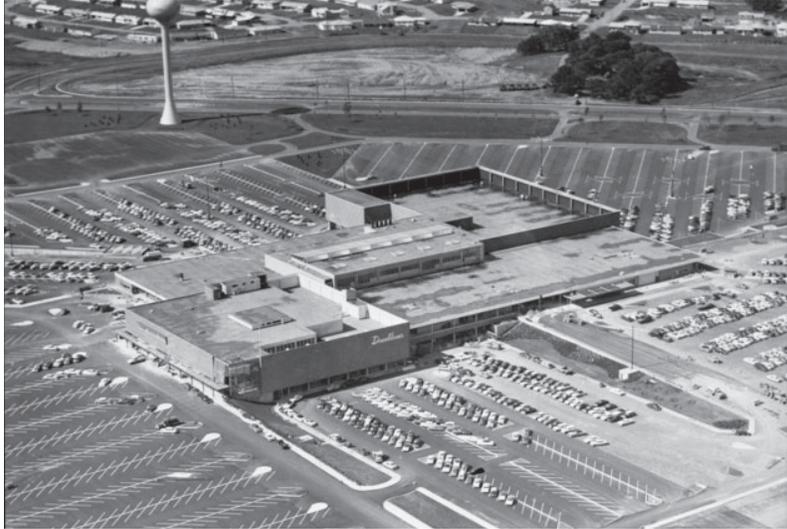


Figure 1.02: Southdale Shopping Center



Figure 1.03: Southdale Shopping Center Interior

up residence in the new suburban shopping centres, effectively killing off retail potential of the downtown.

16

Due to the decentralization of communities based on the rise of reliance on the personal automobile, suburban population in the United States grew seven times faster than that of the city centre.<sup>17</sup> By strategically implementing the planned shopping centre as the future urban core for these new suburban residential nodes, the planning strategy of the existing city centre was undermined, aiding with the growth of the suburb. Not only was the shopping centre supposed to provide the majority of retail demand, but these spaces were also planned to act as a new marketplace, aiming equally to attend to the community needs of suburbanites. This led the shopping centre to claim the title of the modern-day downtown.<sup>18</sup>

## Community Impact

Original intentions of the planned shopping centre were simple: create a new, ideal version of the downtown. Removing all of the negative aspects of downtowns at the time such as the “dirt and the chaos”, and instead replacing it with clean aesthetics forming an internalized ideal Main Street.<sup>19</sup> By strictly controlling the design of store frontage and advertisement, the initial shopping centres seen in locations such as Southdale Centre in Minneapolis was the image of idealistic retail. The inclusion of positive downtown plan design such as planned seating elements, divided by planting and foliage, and the generation of a perceived crowded street experience cemented the shopping centre as the new ideal urban centre. Through this design, Gruen had effectively created the middle ground between city and country, private and public.<sup>20</sup>

By creating the ideal physical space of the downtown, a demand exists for an inclusion of community-based programming. In addition to traditional retail focused program, shopping centres were growing to include services such as restaurants, post offices, laundromats, cleaners, key stores, shoe repair, banks, loan companies, barber shops, travel agencies, and real estate offices. Beyond the services, many shopping centres even expanded to include recreational facilities such as movie theatres, bowling alleys, children’s playgrounds, and gymnasiums.<sup>21</sup> As the shopping centre has now become the major retail centre of the suburbs, it has taken on the role of the setting for cultural and social events.<sup>22</sup> By the 1970s, many shopping centres had become indispensable

to public social life, and people no longer felt attachment to the term downtown, hosting many, if not all of the functions the downtown would have once held. <sup>23</sup>

With the shopping centre taking over the responsibility previously held by the downtown for the convening of public program and gathering, an issue of commercialization of public space occurs. Owners and financiers of the shopping centre are now facing the heightened effect of the usage of their shopping centre of public space, causing them to define the types of public and political behaviours that were to be allowed in their new creations. <sup>24</sup> In many cases, the shopping centre interior condition is now being viewed as the effective side walk of the new suburban downtown. <sup>25</sup> Many thought that this new perceived public space should be held to an equivalent standard of public engagement as the downtown had previously held, allowing for public and political activity alike including “peaceful picketing and leaflet distribution,” likening the public thoroughfare of the shopping centre to that of the company town. <sup>26</sup> This conflict of community and commerce elevates the need for the role of the downtown to be the bridging point, a space where public, political, and private enterprise can co-exist.

## **Pedestrianization of the Downtown**

In short order, the rise of the shopping centre had subverted the downtown almost entirely. It was late in the 1950s that the first constructed attempt at reimagining the downtown would be unveiled in the pedestrian mall recreation of Kalamazoo's downtown, in October 1959.<sup>27</sup> In a way, the design of these pedestrian malls was cyclical, being based off the ideal downtown as designed in the ever-so successful planned shopping centres. By the end of the 1970s, over 200 pedestrian malls had sprung up over North America, attempting to replicate that idealistic image of the downtown, "by designing nicely landscaped parklike corridors in the center of town and forbidding automobile traffic in these areas."<sup>28</sup> The pedestrian mall thus emerges as the foremost strategy for regaining patron interest in downtowns which had seen an extreme downturn due to the rise of the planned shopping mall. The downtown pedestrian mall not only attempts to regain public interest through architectural and urban design, but also through the response to public space management being faced in suburban planned shopping centres.<sup>29</sup>

Following his design of many planned shopping centres in the United States, Victor Gruen was turned to as the leader in design for pedestrianization of the downtown. In many of his designs, Gruen invoked ideas of the "market-town", drawing on the nostalgic symbolism and imagery of pre-industrial references such as European market towns, village greens, and other urban conditions that predate the automobile.<sup>30</sup> In addition, matching

these motifs, Gruen implemented similar strategies to the planned shopping centre, planning thousands of new parking spots on the periphery of the pedestrian mall in an attempt to match the automobile accessibility offered by the suburbs. In the case of Paterson, NJ, Gruen allocated space for up to 6,000 parking spaces in an attempt to regain the patronage lost to the convenience of the planned shopping centre.<sup>31</sup> By implementing these strategies, it was clear that Gruen intended to transform downtowns into large shopping malls, met with scepticism by many on the assumption that the strategies implemented in the planned shopping centre would be as successful when directly transplanted to the existing downtowns.<sup>32</sup>

Unfortunately for the resurgence of the downtown, this design aspiration would not last long for a myriad of reasons. The pedestrian mall design promised to be the solution to the failing downtown proved to only last for a few decades, falling victim to the climate and existing urban planning of the North American post-industrial city. In the European context, closing existing medieval city streets to wheeled traffic was a common occurrence, with the pedestrianization of shopping streets in Britain being traced back to 1923.<sup>33</sup> As the North American city plan does not support this style of access, many of the pedestrian malls failed due to a factor of downtown revitalization being crucial to the North American downtown, whereas the pedestrian districts were already vital in the European counterparts.<sup>34</sup> In other Main Street pedestrianization efforts across America, of the roughly 200 pedestrian malls created, only 30 remain.<sup>35</sup> In cases such as in Kalamazoo, the first

pedestrian mall in North America, the design was sentenced to destruction with the re-opening of the Kalamazoo Mall to vehicular traffic having failed to restore the city's downtown economy.<sup>36</sup>



Figure 1.04: Kalamazoo Pedestrian Mall, 1959



Figure 1.05: Kalamazoo Pedestrian Mall, Present

## **The Future of the Downtown**

The role of the downtown has become clear through the trials and tribulations of the planning attempts in the 60s and 70s. In the current era more than ever, the downtown of most North American cities must stand out through the provision of activity and leisure, with many cities reinventing their downtown districts as “leisure centres” for local residents.<sup>37</sup> When completing research on the qualities that define a successful downtown, researchers found that out of the top five “very important” features, three were based on public engagement: the pedestrian environment, cultural activities, and people on sidewalks. Out of the top ten responses of the same study, only two were retail focused: an active retail scene, and street-oriented retail.<sup>38</sup> In many instances, the success of the downtown is reliant on a secondary program to bring life to the streets after the business day is over. In some cases, the location of student residence in the downtown provides this influx of pedestrian traffic, whereas in others it is the dominance of cultural programming in the area in the guise of successful bars and restaurants.<sup>39</sup>

To promote a future of pedestrian accessibility within the downtown, the factors of pedestrian and transit accessibility must be looked at together, striking a balance between various methods of accessibility. To reduce the negative implications of a streetscape dominated by the automobile, walking, cycling, and public transportation must have an emphasis within the downtown and are dependant on the level of accessibility as compared to that of the

automobile.<sup>40</sup> In large metropolitan centres, a typical successful downtown can be characterized by an area that is roughly 4 square miles, or a 20-minute walk from the centre, giving the downtown an advantage over the suburbs through walkability.<sup>41</sup> For smaller, rural centres where the overall population is lower, the area should be smaller in order to promote an appropriate level of density within the downtown area. When determining if there is an accessible route, considerations include perceived paths on which to walk, actual, perceived, or physical barriers to walking, and perception of distance to a particular destination.<sup>42</sup> Based on these elements, a successful pedestrian experience within the downtown can be attained through the re-evaluation of the pedestrian-vehicle hierarchy, placing emphasis on safety and accessibility for the pedestrian.

In addition to measures of pedestrian accessibility, the downtown must rely on not only an improved built environment to succeed, but also expand the notion of placemaking to include the development of places for the collective good, measuring success through community attachment and cultural stewardship.<sup>43</sup> In the *Life and Death of Great American Cities*, Jane Jacobs calls for a diverse cityscape, outlining successful primary programs as being offices, factories, dwellings, places of entertainment, education, recreation, and some museums, libraries, and galleries.<sup>44</sup> The goal of a diverse combination of primary programs is to create use cases for different times throughout the day, putting people on the streets at all hours, generating an economically stimulating environment through the addition of new program.<sup>45</sup> In Kingston, Ontario,



Figure 1.06: Downtown Halifax, Nova Scotia



Figure 1.07: Downtown Kingston, Ontario

considered an example of a thriving downtown, the Business Improvement Area is effective in filling empty storefronts with new programming. Additionally, the downtown is consistently used as a venue for community events on weekends, catering to the large close-by residential population.<sup>46</sup>

When considering accessibility and location of programming, it has been determined that the average pedestrian is inclined to walk on short trips, with 70% willing to walk 500 feet (150 meters), 40% are willing to walk 1,000ft (300 meters), and only 10% willing to walk half a mile (400 meters).<sup>47</sup> Others have distilled the average distance to be considered as a quarter mile, or 5 to 10 minutes.<sup>48</sup> It would follow then, that the majority of programming and pedestrian accessibility should be condensed within an area covered by a 10 minute walk from parking and alternate transportation connections. To succeed, it is apparent that the modern downtown must rely on more than just retail to succeed, by providing leisure and activity to all classes of residents, while exhibiting a strong balance between pedestrian accessibility and vehicular access.

## 1.2 | Proposed Interventions

Taking precedent from the successful elements of planned shopping centres and downtown pedestrianization attempts, three elements critical to the success of the downtown emerge: Wayfinding, Pedestrian Experience, and Community Oriented Programming. The introduction of new cohesive wayfinding and identity increases the knowledge of the user, generating an increased desire for an ease of ability to access the spaces within. An improved pedestrian experience is then required in order to travel to the locations within the downtown. This can be done by changing the relationship between the pedestrian traffic and vehicular traffic through methods of traffic calming and establishing enclosure. Finally, providing new programming will provide destination for the user beyond that of retail, generating a future for the downtown through a variety of community-based programming.

## **Wayfinding**

Larger urban centres have been at the forefront of promoting wayfinding in order to increase pedestrian knowledge of the space in which they are traveling. Cities such as Victoria and Toronto have undergone wayfinding studies and began to implement their designs across their downtowns and tourist centres, as well as park systems and civic centres. Now, smaller cities are catching on. Wayfinding systems are being implemented in smaller, tourist focused centres, such as Lunenburg, Collingwood, and Peterborough.



Figure 1.08: City of Victoria Wayfinding



Figure 1.09: City of Lunenburg Wayfinding

## **Pedestrian Experience**

When looking at the pedestrian experience, the vehicle and pedestrian hierarchy is a crucial aspect of promoting a healthy pedestrian environment. Learning from the failures of the North American pedestrian mall, true pedestrianization was not a successful response to generating an improved pedestrian experience in the downtown. Retaining a limited amount of local traffic and on street parking is an important aspect of access to the downtown. Through traffic calming solutions, vehicular through traffic can be discouraged by means of raised crosswalks, lane diets, and entrance conditions. Once the pedestrian and vehicle hierarchy are balanced, designs can be implemented to generate the experience of a cohesive streetscape, promoting a sense of enclosure and overall experience of the street. By reducing overall through traffic usage and generating a new streetscape, the ability to utilize the space as a temporary pedestrian only space is also increased.



Figure 1.10: Downtown Boyne City, Michigan



Figure 1.11: Argyle Street, Halifax

## **New Programming**

Based on the idea that the future success of the downtown is community-based programming, programs that are successful in larger urban centres can be taken and implemented in the city of North Bay. Looking at the most successful downtowns there exists a programmatic use case beyond the 9 to 5 of the workday, through implementation of community-based programs that extend beyond food services. For example, the IDEA Exchange in Cambridge, and tool rental programs such as the Toronto Tool Library promote a hands-on engagement with the community by providing access to services and technology which may otherwise be inaccessible to local residents. In addition to these programs, a combination of necessary and optional spaces can be generated through the connection to alternate transportation programming, providing an increased level of access to the new program.



Figure 1.12: IDEA Exchange, Cambridge



Figure 1.13: Toronto Tool Library, Toronto

## **Part 02**

### **2.1 The City of North Bay**

### **2.2 Outline of the North Bay Downtown Waterfront Masterplan**



Figure 2.01: Aerial Image of North Bay

## 2.1 | The City of North Bay

The origin of North Bay can be strongly linked to the incorporation of British Columbia into Confederation in 1871. Due to this, Canadian Pacific Railway was established as the first continental railway between the east and west of Canada in 1885. In 1881, the railway “located their divisional services and regional headquarters on the shore of Lake Nipissing, where the City of North Bay subsequently sprang up. The first CPR station became the centerpiece of the new community, with McIntyre and Worthington Streets named after prominent officials of the CPR at that time.”<sup>49</sup> After the railway was introduced to the region, the northern shore of Lake Nipissing was deemed as a convincing location to settle, and North Bay was incorporated as a town in 1891.

Following the introduction of the CPR to the region, many other smaller, private rail lines were constructed in the north of Ontario, up to cities such as Cobalt where mining was beginning to take off. These rail lines all connected to, or began in North Bay, allowing the city to grow through the connection of rail, in addition to the strength of the lumber and mining sectors in the area. This prosperity allowed North Bay and its downtown core to thrive, creating a four-block strip of retail and business that formed the bulk of retail and business in the entire city.

The fabric of North Bay’s downtown has remained largely intact since the creation of Main Street. Many of the buildings constructed then remain in some form today, although their programmatic uses have changed throughout time. In 1996, the

North Bay Local Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee was formed to advise City Council on the identification of heritage buildings under the Ontario Heritage Act. Several of the buildings in the downtown core have since been identified as historic buildings under this act, including the Former Canadian Pacific Railway Station, Former Normal School, the Former Empire Hotel, the Capitol Centre, the Cochrane-Dunlop Block, Former Bank of Nova Scotia, and the Former Cecil's Hotel. Of these buildings, the latter four are located directly on Main Street, providing significant historic significance to the area. Mixed with these buildings are other, less architecturally significant buildings, continuing to act as retail, restaurants, and businesses. As more of these buildings are lost to fire, or otherwise deemed unfit, new construction is popping up in the spaces between the remaining original fabric, giving the elevation of Main Street a patchwork aesthetic of historic and current significance.

North Bay falls in a region where there is ample opportunity for both summer and winter activities to exist, many move to the city for this ease of access to activities year-round. In the summer, public beaches, hiking, and outdoor sports are popular and in close geographic proximity to the downtown. Located in the waterfront area of the city, the largest marina in the city hosts many private boats, and offers walking and running trails, the start of the bike path, and large public beaches. Pedestrian access to the waterfront from the downtown is limited to one underpass, however, dividing the user into groups of people using the waterfront or staying within the downtown. In the winter, there

are fewer points of access to activity to the downtown as many of the winter activities require alternate modes of transportation such as snow mobiles and all terrain vehicles, or even cross-country skis. Lake Nipissing, the lake nearest the downtown core, has become a destination for ice fishing to many people from Ontario and even surrounding provinces. These cultural connections near the downtown would provide strong future connections for programmatic implementations within the downtown core.

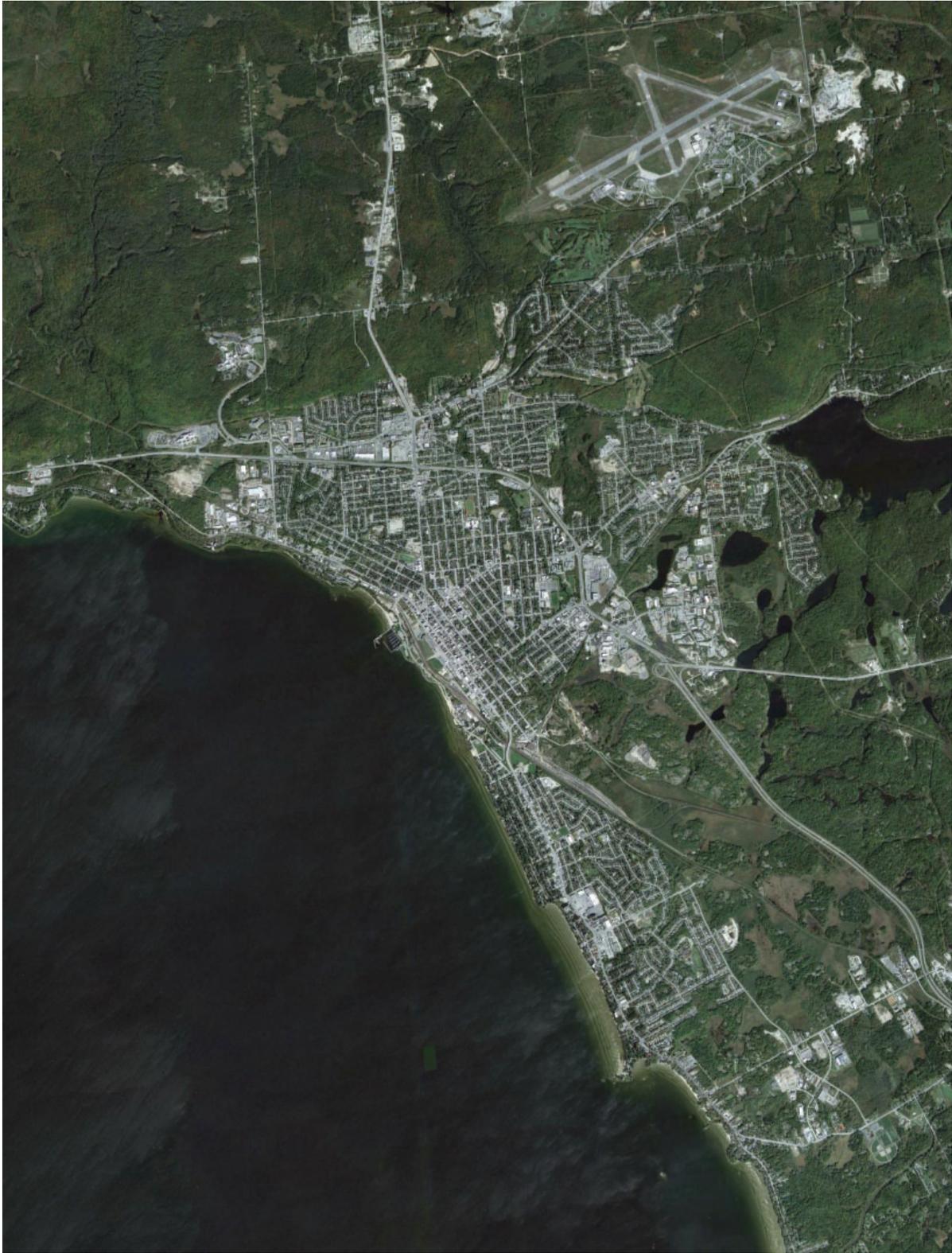
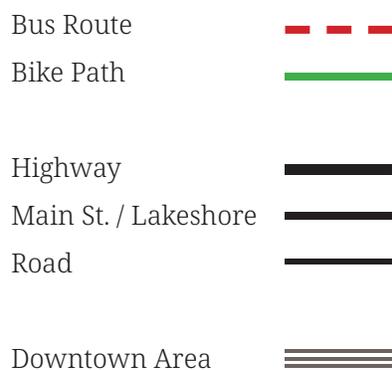


Figure 2.02: Satellite Image of North Bay

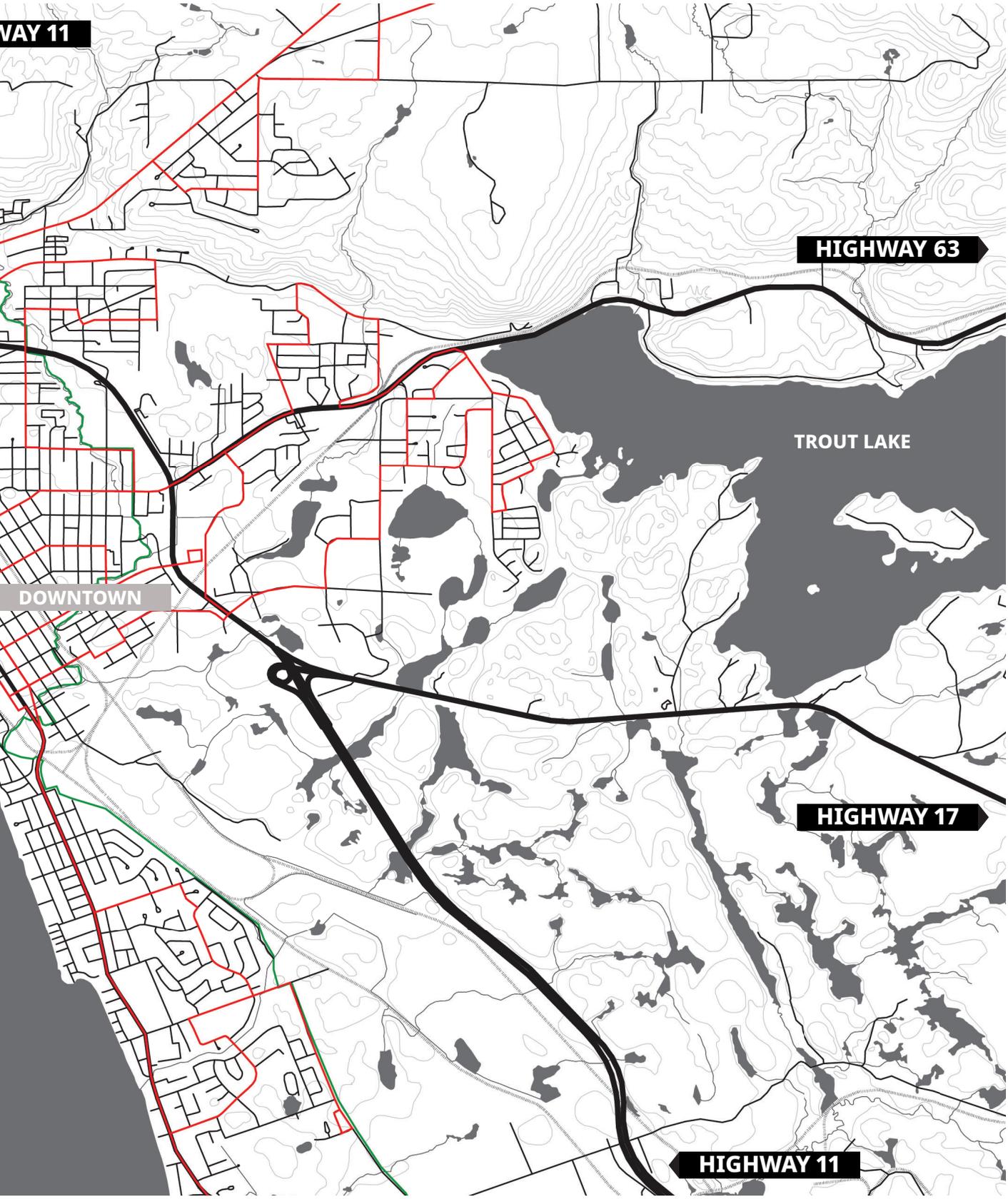
The downtown core is located near the shore of Lake Nipissing, connected to the rest of the city mainly through vehicular traffic. Although there are bus routes, the sprawling nature and lack of cohesive urban planning strategies promote this vehicular access. Through the city, there are no bike paths on roads, only existing as two standalone multi-use recreational trails (Figure 2.03).

The existing retail centres are likewise located to promote this vehicular connection, with hubs throughout the edges of the city. Even Nipissing University and Canadore College are located on the outskirts, the closest high school being a ten-minute walk from downtown (Figure 2.04).



**Figure 2.03: Connections to the Downtown**

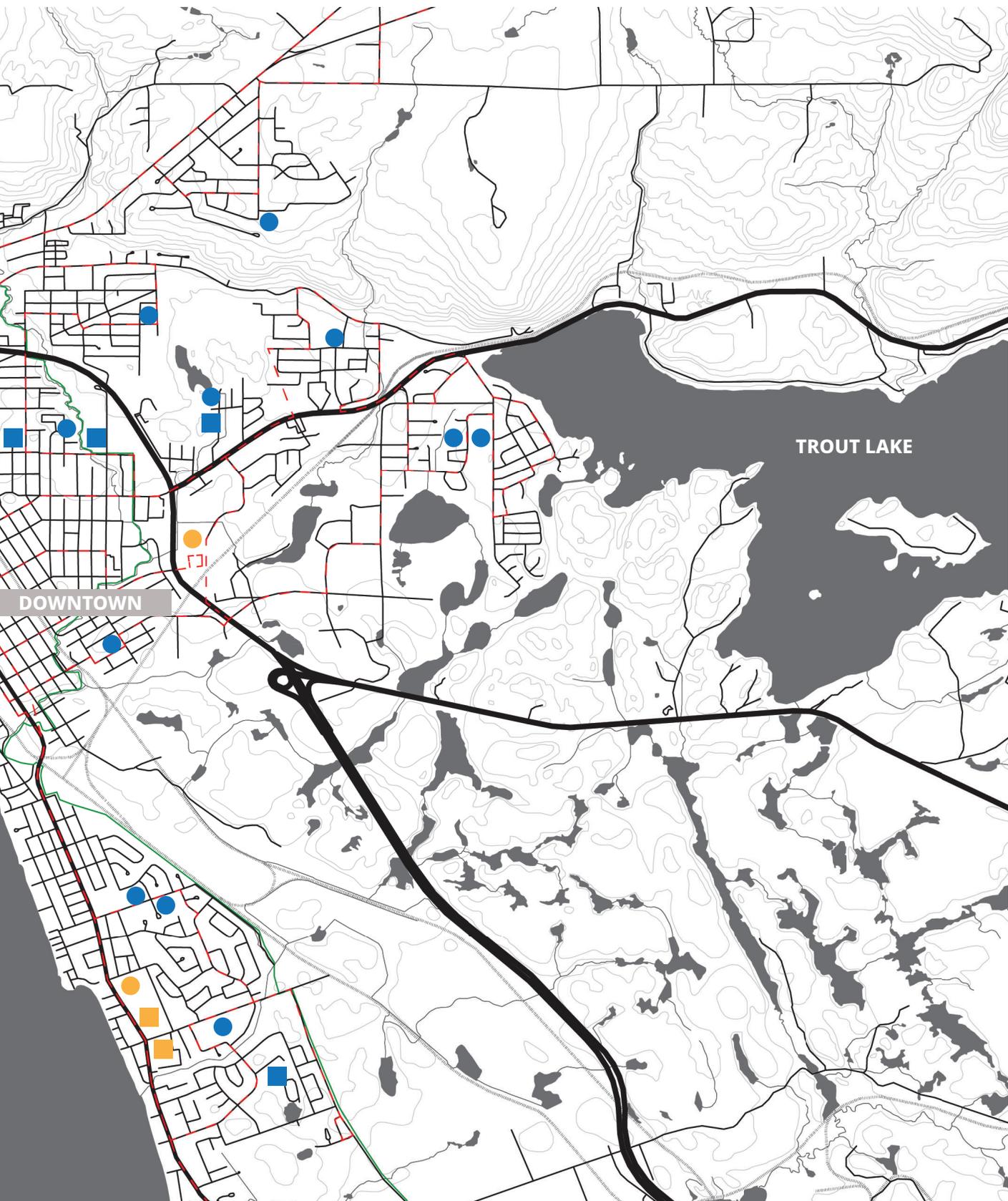




- University/College
- High school
- Elementary School
  
- Mall
- Box Retail
  
- Highway
- Main St. / Lakeshore
- Road
  
- Downtown Area



**Figure 2.04: Education and Retail Centres in North Bay**



The downtown improvement area occupies four central blocks of Main Street, encompassing the entirety of the original retail and business centre of the city. To the south west is the waterfront on Lake Nipissing, separated from the downtown by a large swath of parking, green space, and railway. On the north, east, and west, residential fabric surrounds the downtown (Figure 2.05).

Looking at a one-kilometer cross section through the downtown shows the city sloping consistently towards Lake Nipissing, creating unique section conditions through the downtown and surrounding fabric (Figure 2.06).

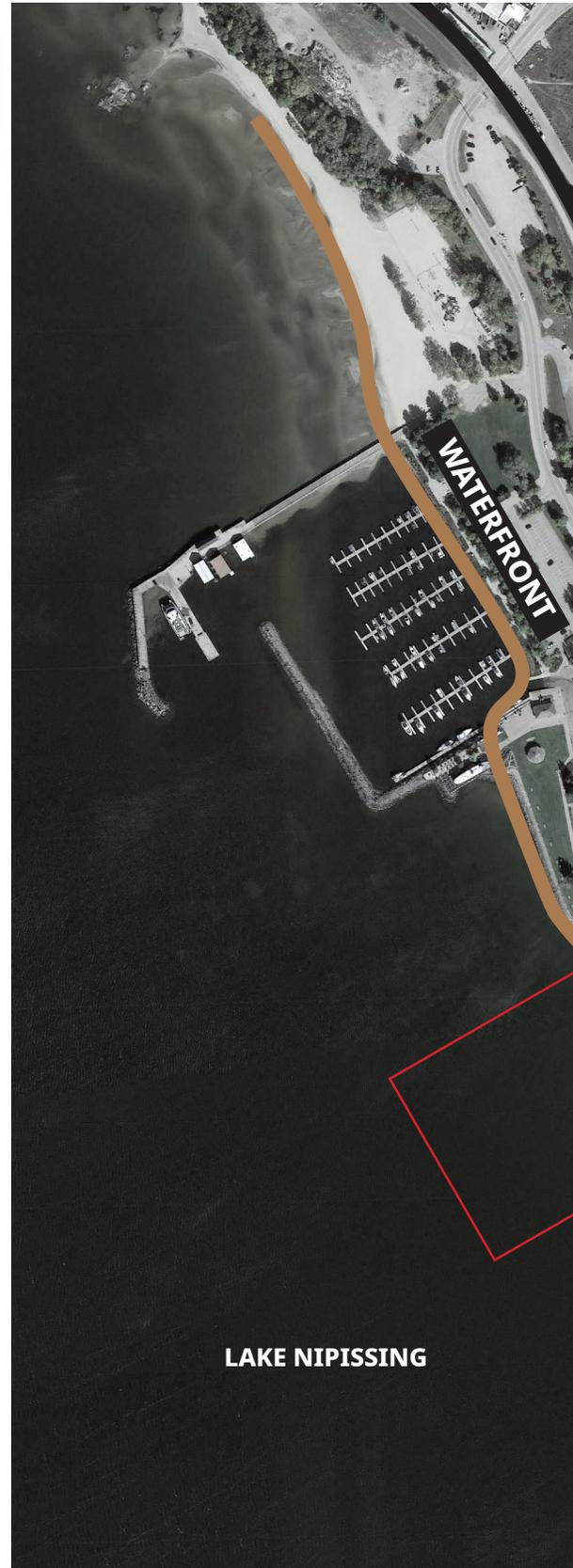


Figure 2.05: Downtown Overview



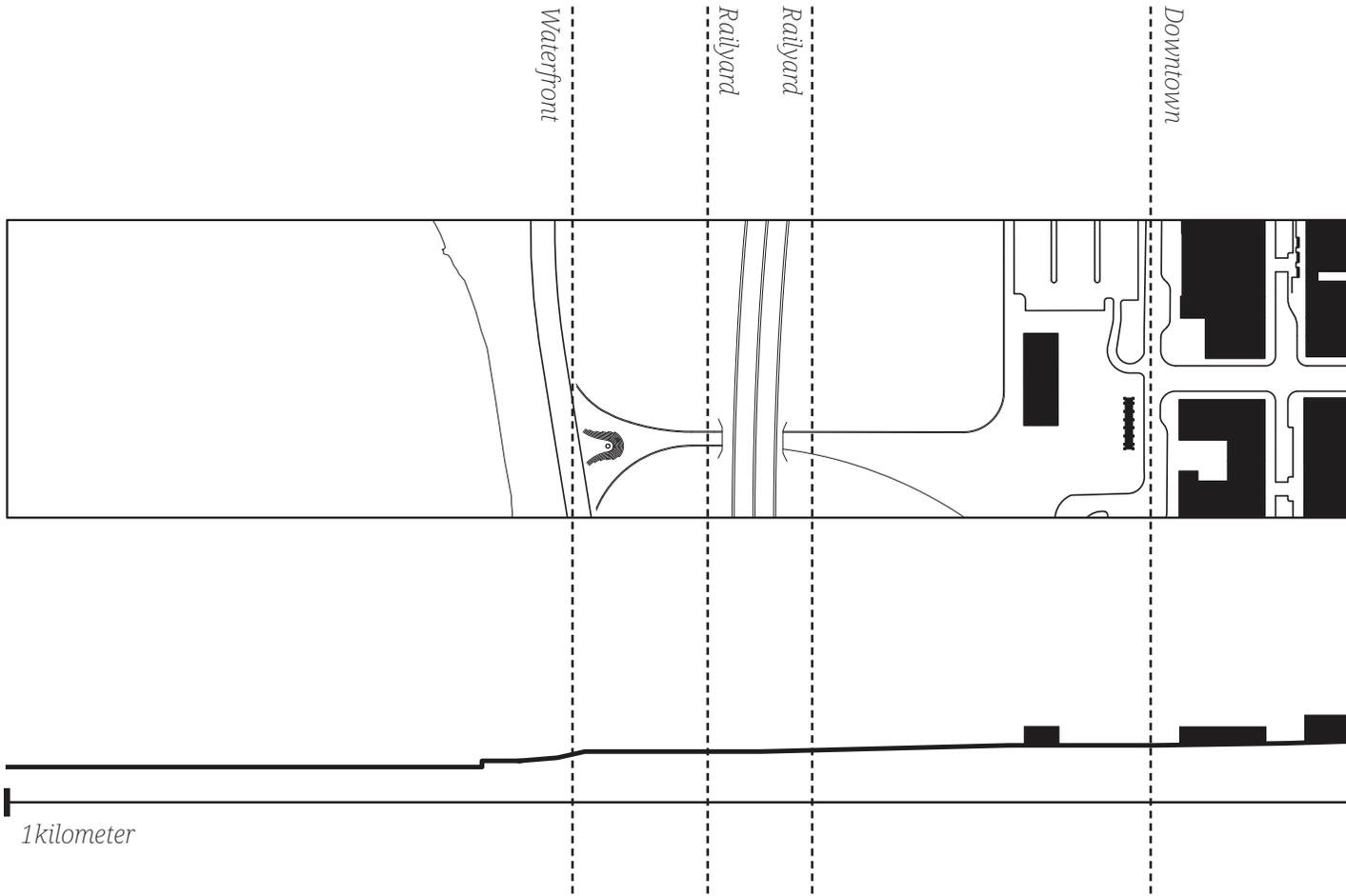


Figure 2.06: Downtown/Waterfront Section



Looking closer at the composition of the downtown, many of the buildings span from Main Street to either Oak Street on the south, or McIntyre Street on the north. While the buildings tend to span the width of the block, the main entrance for these is always on Main Street (Figure 2.07).

At grade, there is a mix of programming within and around the downtown, with many of these buildings also supporting residential use on the upper floor. Separating these programs into groups based on their use case starts to give an image of the current programmatic makeup of the downtown (Figure 2.08).

Pulling the main programs apart into these four groups gives a clearer view of the main program at grade. For the majority of buildings within the downtown, retail and food service take up the majority of program, as well as a comparable number of private businesses. Most notable, however, is the lack of community-oriented programming, either in the form of public or educational program. Prior to the pandemic, many of the buildings within the downtown were already vacant (Figure 2.09).



**Figure 2.07: Urban Fabric**



- Private Residential*
- Senior Living*
- Apartment*
- Hotel*
  
- Food Service*
- Retail*
- Health*
- Office*
  
- Civic*
- Religious*
- Cultural*
  
- Education*
  
- Transit*
- Unoccupied*



**Figure 2.08: Downtown North Bay Program Breakdown**

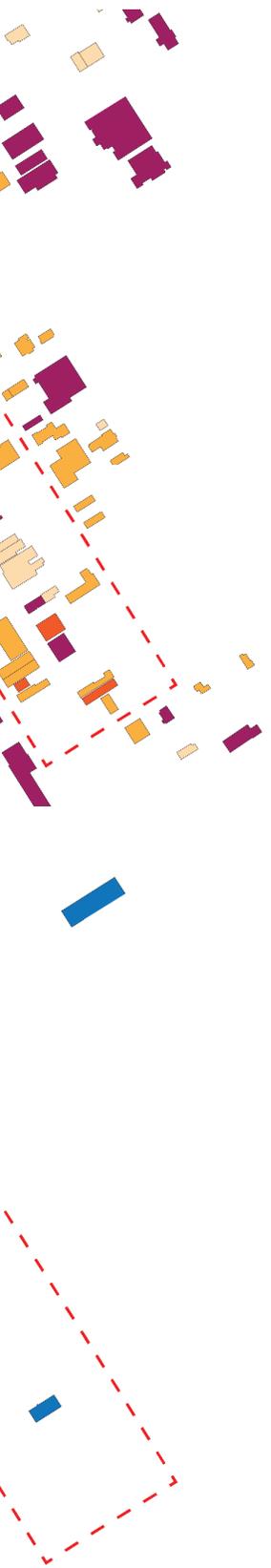


- Food Service*
- Retail*
- Health*
- Office*
  
- Civic*
- Religious*
- Cultural*
  
- Education*
  
- Transit*
- Unoccupied*

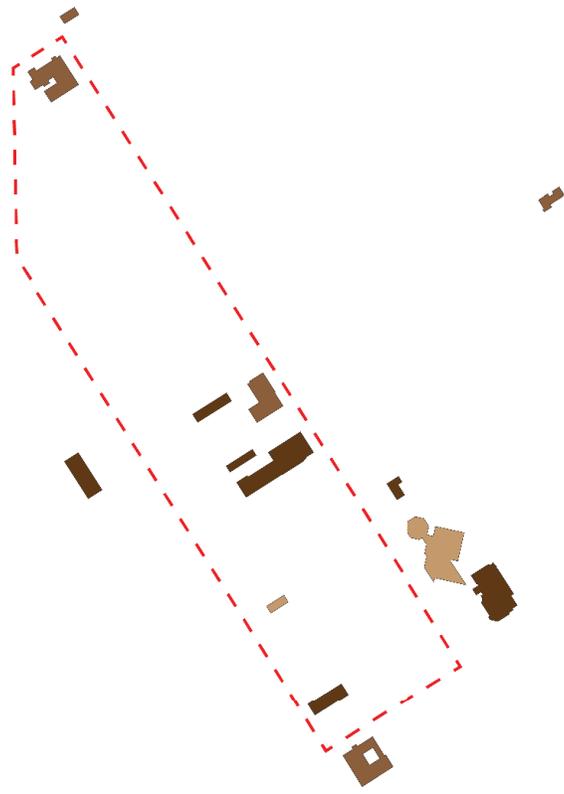
**Business**

**Education**

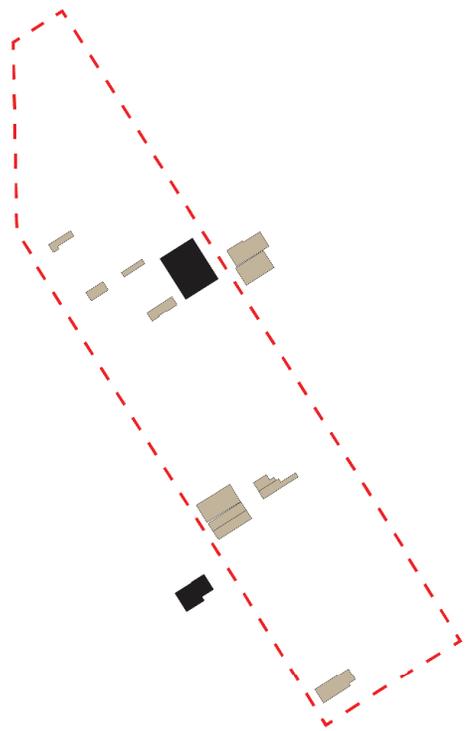
**Figure 2.09: Program Breakdown**



Public



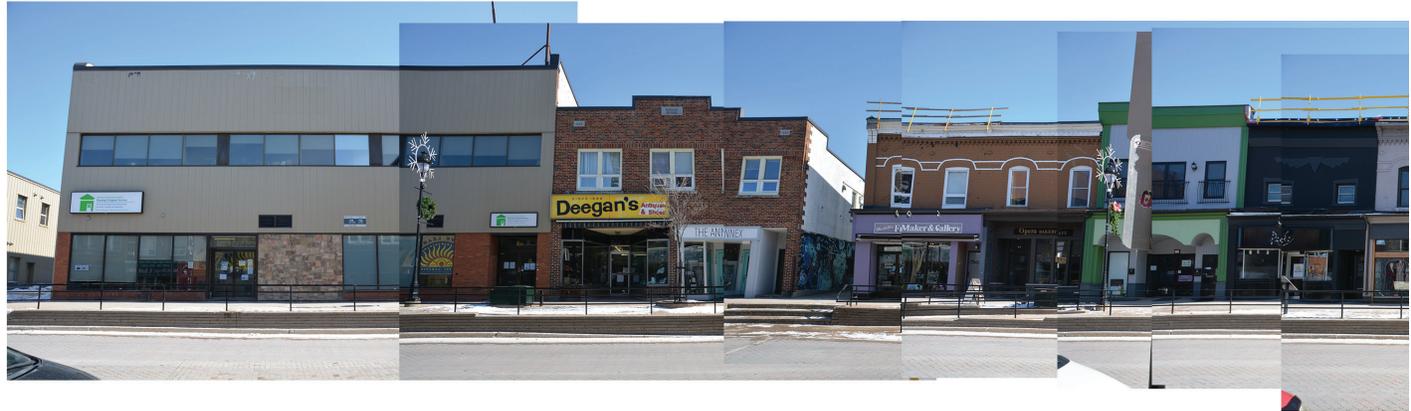
Other

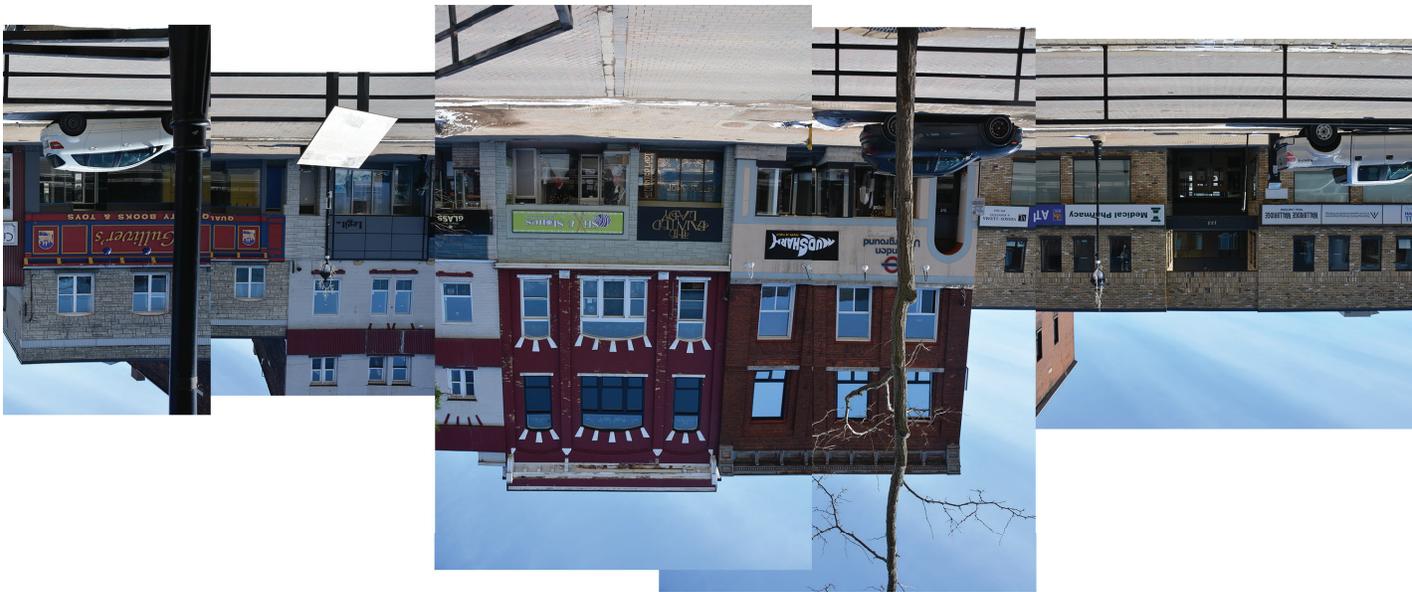
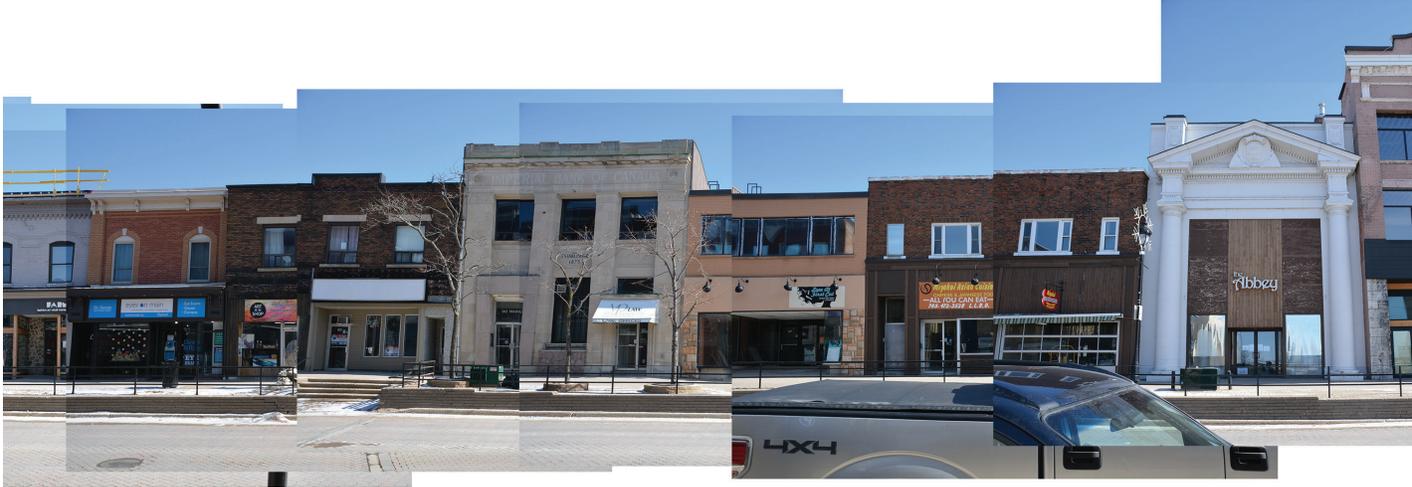


The built environment of the downtown is a mixture of the remaining historic downtown store fronts mixed with a style typical of contemporary retail store frontage, giving Main Street a patchwork aesthetic of historic and current significance. Due to the downtown being located on a slope, this portion of Main Street has a condition where the north side is higher than street level.



**Figure 2.10: Main Street Elevation**







## 2.2 | Outline of the North Bay Downtown Waterfront Masterplan

Within the past five years, the city of North Bay has undergone a variety of processes demonstrating an urgent need for development of the city to promote a continued growth city-wide. In 2016, motion was started to complete a masterplan for the entire downtown and waterfront area, completing a broad overview of concepts and planning elements to be implemented through these two areas. By 2017 a final draft was presented to city council and in October 2019 the Downtown Waterfront Master Plan (DWMP) was accepted as the way forwards for the city's downtown core.<sup>50</sup> The DWMP has a wide range of focus, spanning both the Downtown and Waterfront with implementation of new programming, zoning changes, and increased housing in the downtown core.

In addition to this masterplan, various other documents have been produced by the city and community groups, including an Active Transportation Master Plan and a Growth Community Improvement Plan. The Active Transportation Master Plan focuses on bringing accessibility throughout the city through various forms of human-powered modes of mobility. Generating a city-wide trail network, the aim is to connect the entire city through multi-modal transportation with an Active Transportation artery proposed through the downtown.<sup>51</sup> The Growth Community Improvement Plan is aimed

towards businesses and private enterprises within the city, providing grants and incentives with the aim of growing the community through industrial development, and intensification of housing and downtown waterfront commercial projects. Showing a desire for improvement within the Downtown, the plan promotes the most financial incentives focused within the Downtown Improvement Area (DIA).<sup>52</sup>

Overall, the DWMP focuses largely on the implementation of new program and planning strategies within the Waterfront region, and these strategies do not carry into the DIA. The DIA ranges for four blocks from Cassells St. and Algonquin Avenue on the North-West to Sherbrooke Avenue on the South-East. The DIA was created incorporated to the city's bylaws in 1978, with a focus on the preservation and development of the heart of North Bay through a concentration of tourism, business retention and expansion, and promotions.<sup>53</sup> In the final version of the DWMP that has been accepted by city council, the only direct change noted within the DIA is a renewal of the surface conditions on Main Street and the introduction of a single multi-unit residential building.<sup>54</sup> Otherwise, the focuses of the DWMP focus on areas falling outside of the DIA, with any new community, public, or private programming being implemented outside of this area. In the 2011 Cultural Plan, survey respondents identified Downtown North Bay as a significant cultural resource, with a call for sustained investment in the area was determined through survey response. If the city is to be allocating funds to the improvement of the Downtown and Waterfront areas of the city, then there needs to be a dedicated focus on the DIA

to promote the continued usage of the downtown for support of existing and future business, retail, and cultural locations located there.

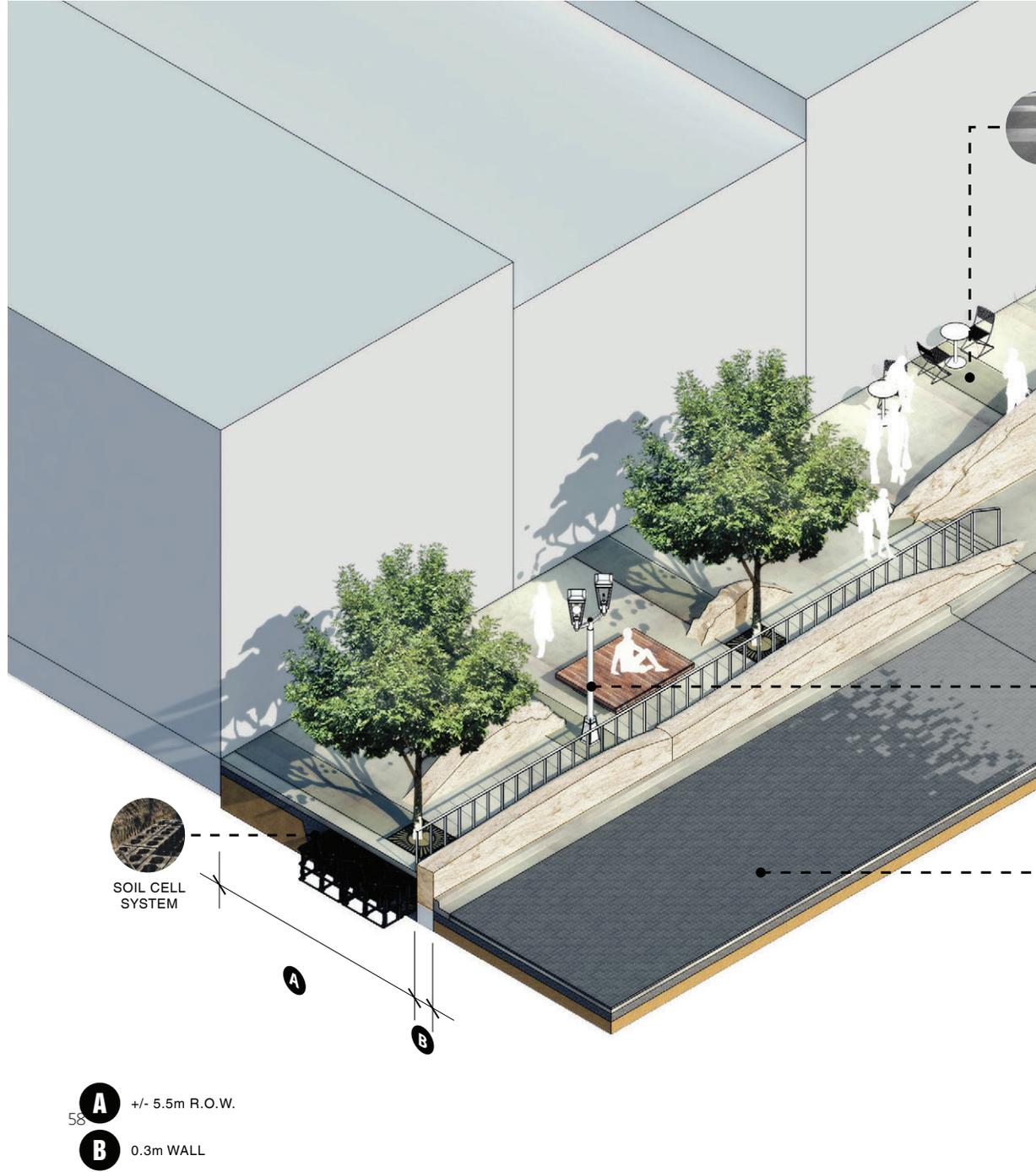
In January 2021, the city announced that they will be awarding a contract for the reconstruction of Main Street from Cassells Street to Sherbrooke Street, as “much of the surface infrastructure in North Bay’s downtown has reached the end of its life and requires replacement”.<sup>55</sup> Member of Council Dave Mendicino states that the proposed reconstruction of Main Street is to follow the design implemented within the DWMP.<sup>56</sup> If the new street revitalization effort is to follow the design provided in the DWMP, the street section will have minimal reimagining, with the effort being focused mainly on resurfacing and aesthetic work as opposed to the creation of a functional street section.

Currently Main Street between Fraser and Ferguson Street provides three distinct locations for pedestrian crossing, however the new masterplan reduces this access to a single opportunity for pedestrians to cross. This design directly contradicts a key goal outlined later in the DWMP document stating that “All streets in the Downtown Waterfront should be designed with a priority on pedestrian circulation as well as cycling where appropriate”.<sup>57</sup> The following sentence in 5.5 Street Design additionally states that “Decision-making that affects transportation options should favour modes of travel in the following order: walking (included assisted-mobility devices); cycling and other non-motorized vehicles; local buses; private vehicles.”<sup>58</sup> As it currently stands, the proposed design for the new Main Street does not include the introduction of an

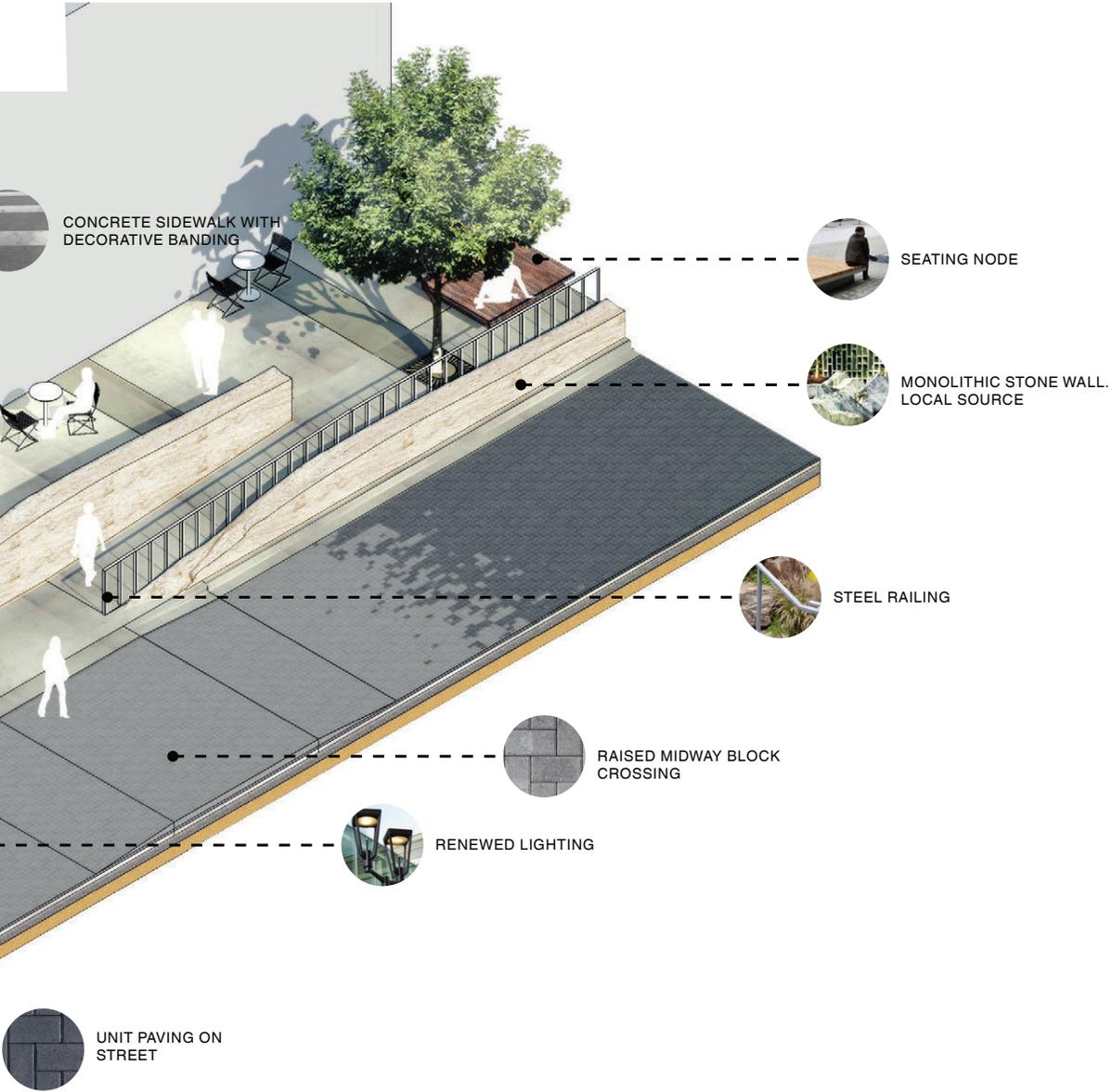
increased access for Active Transportation methods, with the upcoming overhaul of the Main Street an immediate solution for the introduction of elements of the Active Transportation Master Plan. As a critical element of downtown accessibility, there should be a higher level of focus on the implementation of strategies to put the pedestrian at the forefront of design considerations over vehicular access. Within the order of needs for a pedestrian to be encouraged to travel within a space, the highest order needs include accessibility, safety, comfort, and pleasure, respectively.<sup>59</sup> If there is no accessibility and safety for the pedestrian within the street scape, then the comfort and pleasure need not be considered, a situation which has arisen in the current design of the downtown street section where a premium is placed on vehicular access on Main Street.

Going beyond the pedestrian level to address the implementation of new programming in and around the downtown, while the DIA's mission statement is to develop the heart of North Bay, no new construction or retrofitting is located within the DIA other than the inclusion of residential buildings.<sup>60</sup> This allocation of space outside of the DIA for new programming goes against the idea of the walkable downtown and would see no benefit of the proposed new street scape. The city of North Bay has already outlined the DIA as an area which would benefit most from an influx of new users. Learning from other smaller city centres, many of these cities which are known for their walkability have gained this reputation from a single, great street.<sup>61</sup> To create this diverse downtown, Jane Jacobs describes a need for people to appear at different times of day, considered

**Zone A: Fraser Street to Ferguson Street**



**Figure 2.11: Proposed Street Section from the Downtown Waterfront Master Plan**



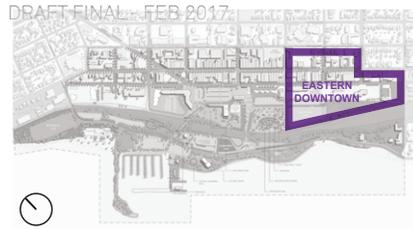
**ZONE A: CORE**



on an hour-by-hour basis across the day and especially during the hours of 2pm to 5pm, as well as Saturday and Sunday.<sup>62</sup>

When discussing the opportunity of new programming within the downtown, there are currently opportunities for both infill and retrofitting spaces within the downtown. As of April 2020, the business directory for North Bay's downtown currently shows 26 vacant buildings on Main Street, with an additional 8 buildings vacant on surrounding streets, for a total of 34 vacant buildings within the DIA alone.<sup>63</sup> Additionally, there are several vacant lots within the DIA, or lots being used for private parking which break up and affect the character of a continuous downtown image. In the DWMP, the only new programming opportunities for business and education are located firmly outside the DIA, with the goal to "contain uses to create new vibrant business activity" and the introduction of "new mixed-use development through this area".<sup>64</sup> In the Growth Community Improvement Plan, there is a focus on supporting infill development and to develop spaces or properties that are currently vacant or underutilized.<sup>65</sup> By ignoring these spaces that lay empty on Main Street, the DWMP ignores the "missing teeth" of the downtown, with it only taking one of these spaces to ruin a great walking environment.<sup>66</sup> If this new masterplan is looking to encourage new businesses and multi-use development, they should look inwards at a space which is already described as the location for such programmatic implementations.

To quote Jeff Speck in his book *Walkable City*, “The downtown is the only part of the city that belongs to everybody. It doesn’t matter where you may find your home; the downtown is yours, too. Investing in the downtown of a city is the only place-based way to benefit all of its citizens at once.”<sup>67</sup> For North Bay, a balance needs to be reached between the efforts of updating and maintaining a consistent user basis within both the Downtown and the Waterfront regions. If there is no consideration for the continued usage and growth of the Downtown Improvement Area, then the downtown user base will continue to decline, hurting existing local businesses and any existing community programming. The addition of new programming and pedestrian accessibility, along with the inclusion of wayfinding strategies is necessary for the city to consider in the future in order to maintain a critical emphasis on the Downtown.



## 4.7 EASTERN DOWNTOWN

As part of the Innovation District, the Eastern Downtown will focus on education and employment. This area is bounded by McIntyre Street to the east, the rail corridor to the west, and Regina Street to the south (excluding the southeast corner of Main Street and Fisher Street).

The Eastern Downtown will become home to a new Innovation Hub (1), which will create an employment cluster with education and research facilities or an innovation centre as the anchor. This Innovation Hub will support new small businesses, usher in new spaces for higher learning, and create a vibrant business centre in the Downtown. An Innovation Hub will also provide an attractive tool for retaining young people and encouraging population growth in North Bay. Currently, 20% of Downtown North Bay's population is between the ages of 20-29, but the rate of youth out-migration in Northern Ontario's major downtowns is still high.<sup>1</sup> However, anecdotal reports from the CUI's "Investing in Northern Ontario's Downtowns" study imply that "suitable job opportunities" tied to a high quality of life will aid in drawing young people back to Downtown North Bay.<sup>2</sup>

The remainder of the Eastern Downtown will be characterized by heights up to six storeys to allow for mixed use development with space for office or commercial retail on the ground floor and residential or employment units above (2).

1 CUI, "Investing in Northern Ontario Downtowns", 2014, p.29.  
 2 *ibid.*



Figure 2.12: Description of new programming from the Downtown Waterfront Master Plan



*Innovation Hub should contain uses to create new vibrant business activity (1)*



*May include higher learning or business incubator space (1)*



*Introduce new mixed-use development throughout this area (2)*

## **Part 03**

### **3.1 Proposal Introduction**

### **3.2 Wayfinding**

### **3.3 Pedestrian Experience**

### **3.4 Community Programming**

### **3.5 Conclusion**



## 3.1 | Proposal Introduction

The proposal takes inspiration from the precedents and concepts outlined earlier, now in the context of North Bay's Downtown. The proposed elements are also a direct response to the areas found to be lacking within the Downtown Waterfront Master Plan. All of the proposed elements tie into the theories that promote the future of the downtown such as walkability, pedestrian accessibility, and the creation of a diverse downtown.

**Wayfinding** is the broadest reaching of the interventions, promoting the knowledge required for the user to locate their way within and around the downtown. Wayfinding elements aid the overall image of the downtown, creating and identifying a space within the city that can be recognized as a cohesive whole.

The **pedestrian experience** reimagines the street section of Main Street to promote a more accessible street scape, giving importance back to the pedestrian and other methods of alternative transportation. By re-establishing the pedestrian as the main user of the downtown, Main Street can provide a safe and accessible pedestrian experience prior to the introduction of aesthetic elements.

Introducing **new programming** provides a destination with community-based programming and alternate transportation connection, adding to the diversification of spaces, promoting increased hours of usage within the downtown.

## 3.2 | Wayfinding

Wayfinding is the broadest reaching of the three proposals, with wayfinding elements able to be located within the downtown but also surrounding the space, promoting knowledge and interest of the spaces within.

The first type of wayfinding typical to many larger urban centres is location signage. With a larger informational element to be located at entrances to the downtown and parking lots, these provide the most detailed informational content to promote access to public programming and destinations. The smaller wayfinding elements can be dispersed throughout, to remind the user of their location within the space as well as providing visual cues that add to the overall designed experience of the downtown (Figure 3.01, 3.02).

In addition to the locational signage, historic signage is an important addition to North Bay's downtown. As the downtown and surrounding areas have many designated heritage buildings, this provides a unique opportunity to promote appreciation and respect for the local environment through the inclusion of historic information and imagery to be included in the downtown (Figure 3.03, 3.04).

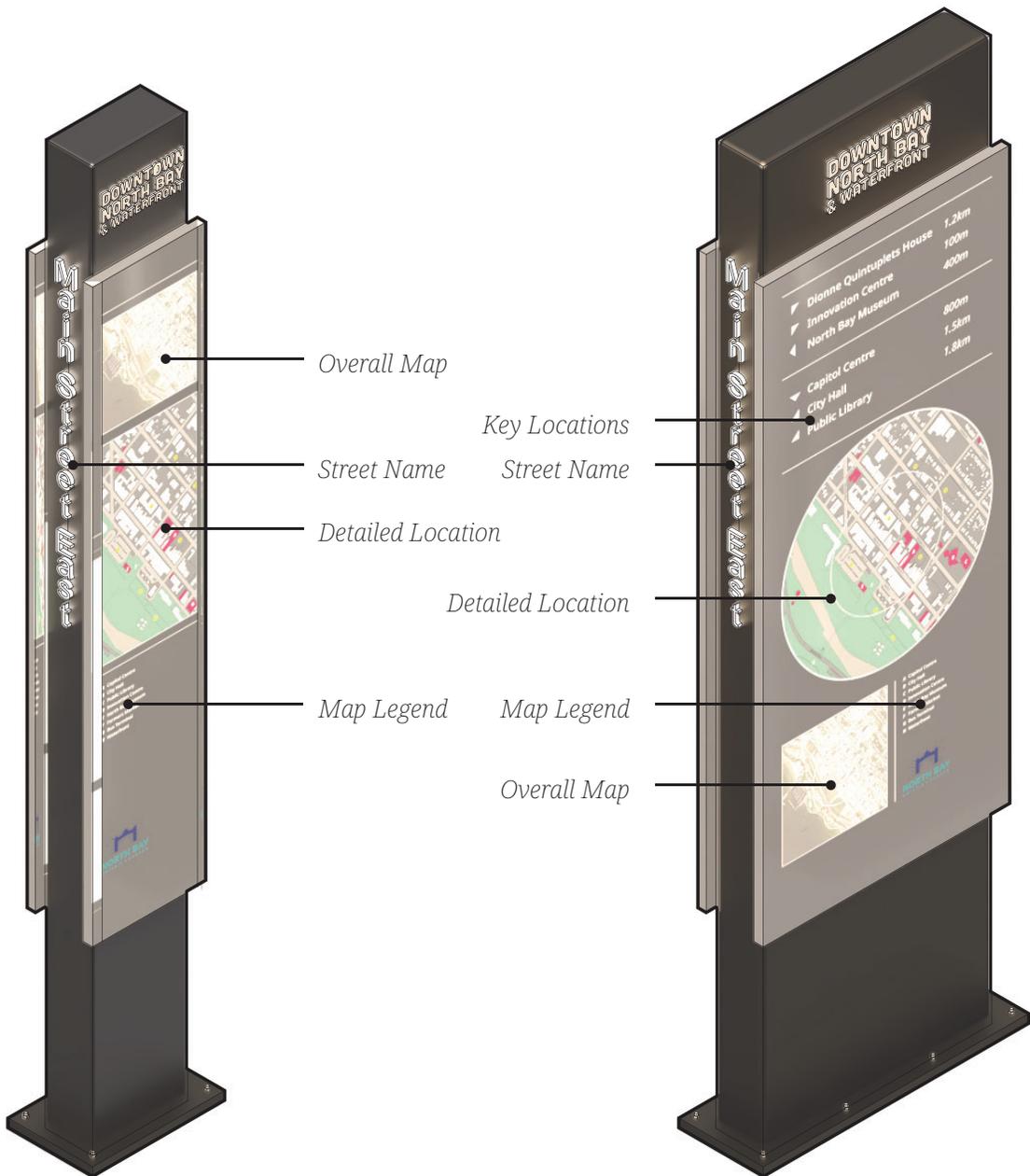


Figure 3.01: Information Signage Detail



Figure 3.02: Information Signage Perspective

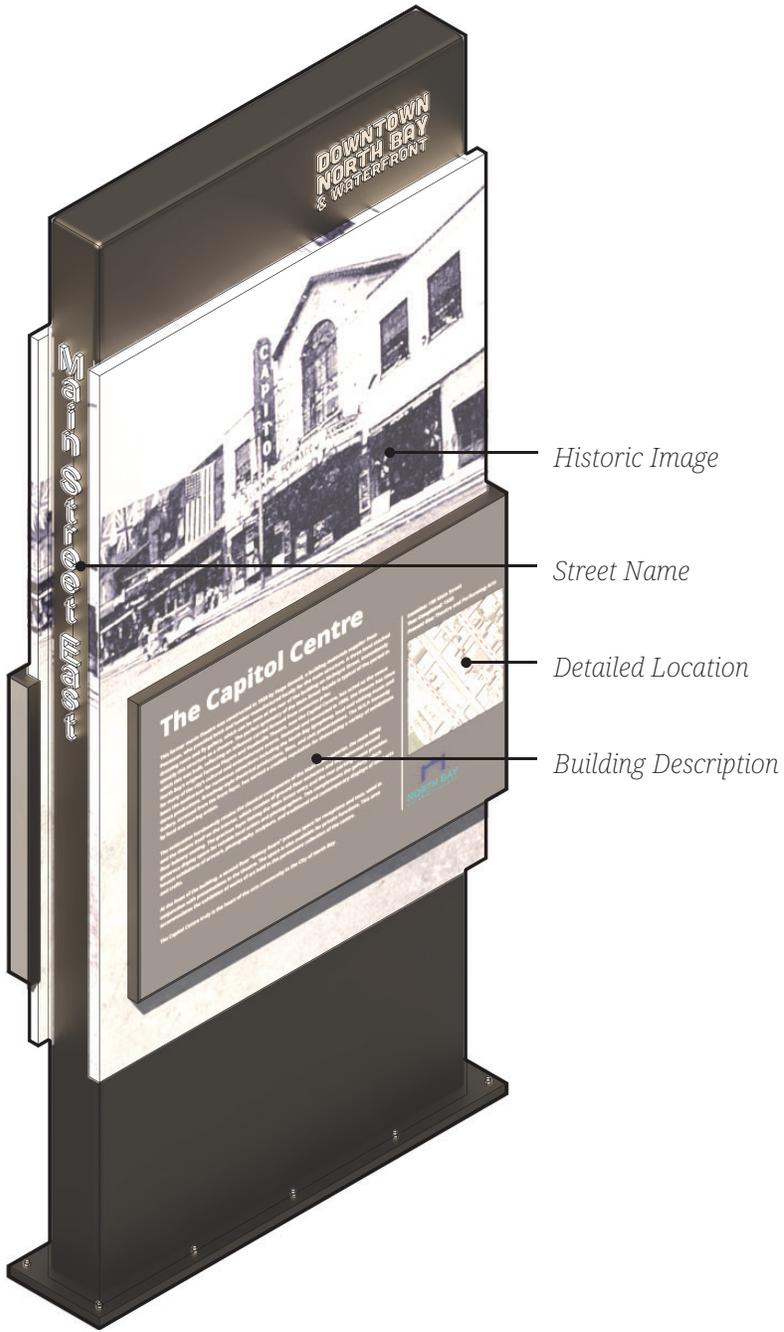


Figure 3.03: Historic Signage Detail



Figure 3.04: Historic Signage Perspective

### 3.3 | Pedestrian Experience

To continue past the inclusion of wayfinding, the pedestrian experience then needs to be addressed. Once people have the knowledge of where to go in order to arrive at the downtown the street section needs to be such that the pedestrian and vehicle have a more balanced hierarchy. To address this, the proposal looks at what is considered the central downtown and provides a re-imagined street scape for this section of the downtown.

Throughout this proposed section of the downtown are a variety of traffic calming elements, as well as a re-imagined street section to remove the physical barrier of the raised sidewalk (Figure 3.05).

The first location looks at the level of access between the raised sidewalk on the north and the rest of the main street through the introduction of raised crosswalks and a dissolved vertical barrier. Including a raised crosswalk at all locations has a multitude of benefits: not only is the pedestrian safer, but traffic is required to slow down in order to drive over the speed table, overall slowing traffic down. In addition, the inclusion of a bike lane provides space to promote alternate transportation within the city centre. On the north side of the street, dissolving the vertical barrier of the elevated sidewalk allows for side parking on the north, with designated sidewalk space for passengers to stand by their vehicles allowing for the inclusion of a bike lane on the south (Figure 3.06, 3.07).

In these other locations, one shown is in within the same block of Main Street, whereas the second is the next block over. Throughout all blocks within the downtown, the inclusion of the raised crosswalks and bike lane help to reduce traffic speed and allow pedestrians to cross safely and more frequently. In these cases, however, the sidewalk edge has been pushed and pulled to generate pockets of public gathering spaces, as well as locations for restaurants and stores to spill out into the sidewalk. In this area, wayfinding elements can also exist (Figure 3.08, 3.09).

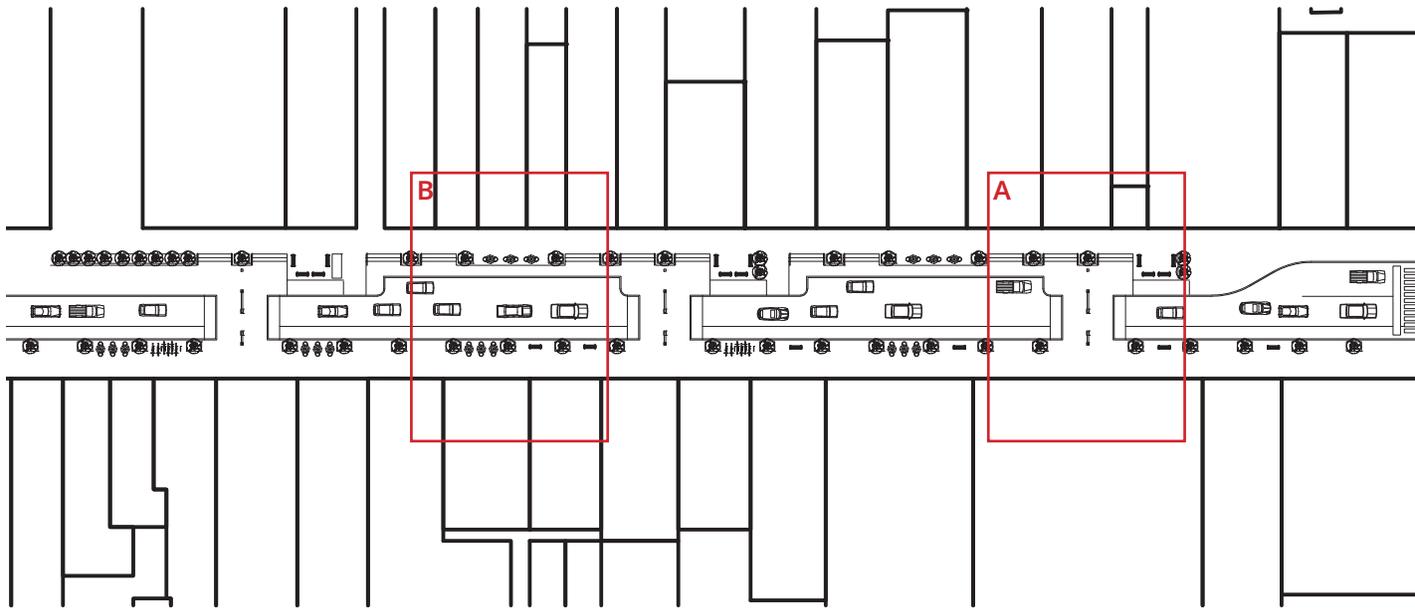
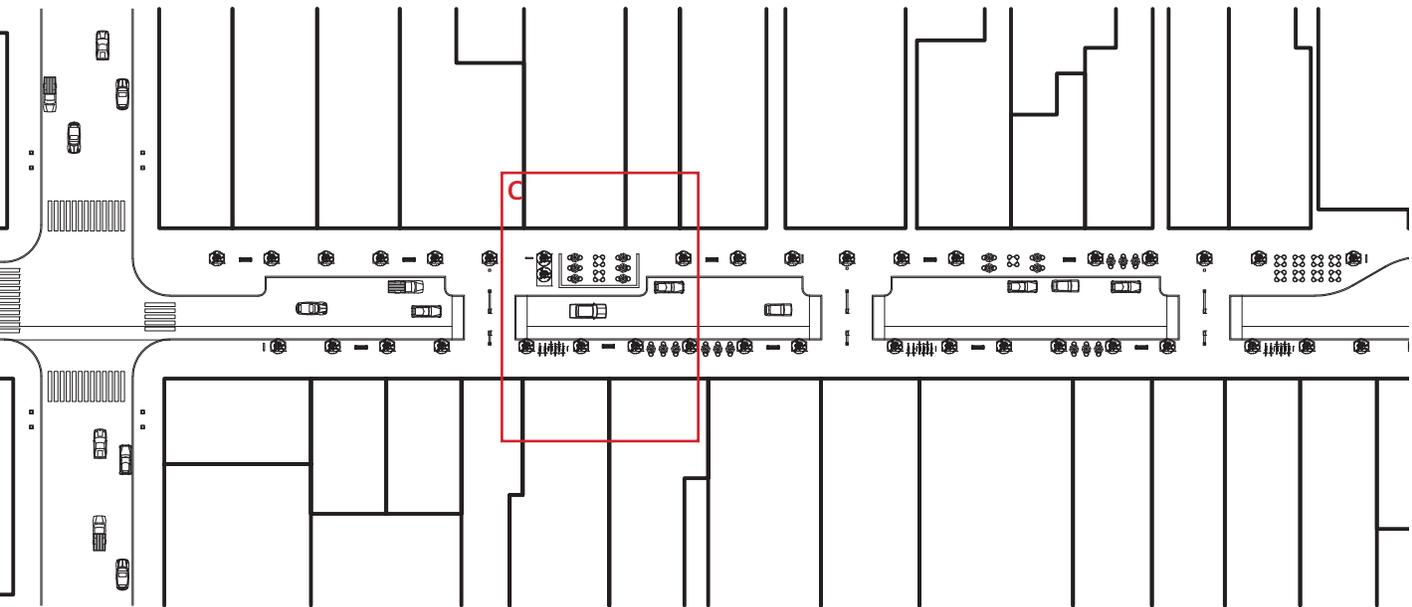


Figure 3.05: Overall Plan of New Pedestrian Streetscape



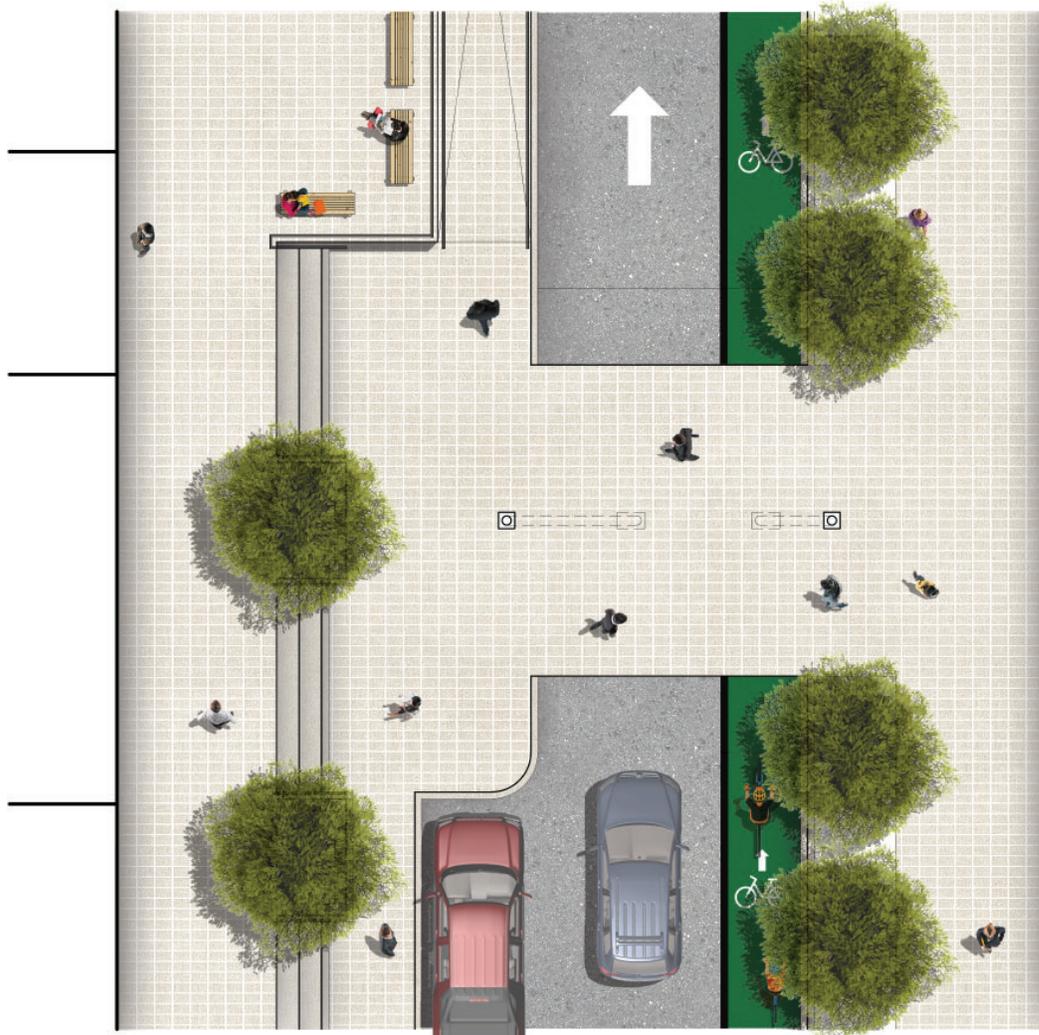
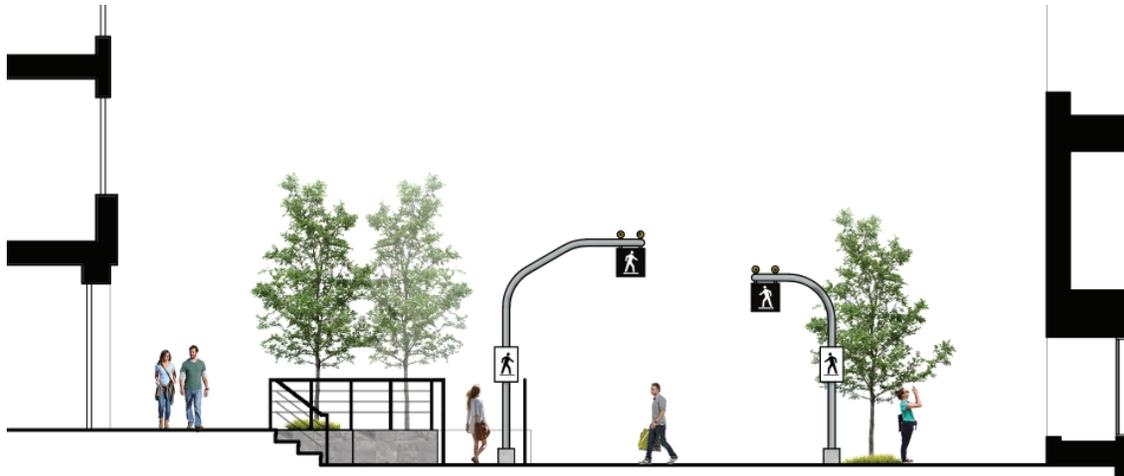


Figure 3.06 Area A of New Pedestrian Streetscape



Figure 3.07: Perspective of Area A of New Pedestrian Streetscape

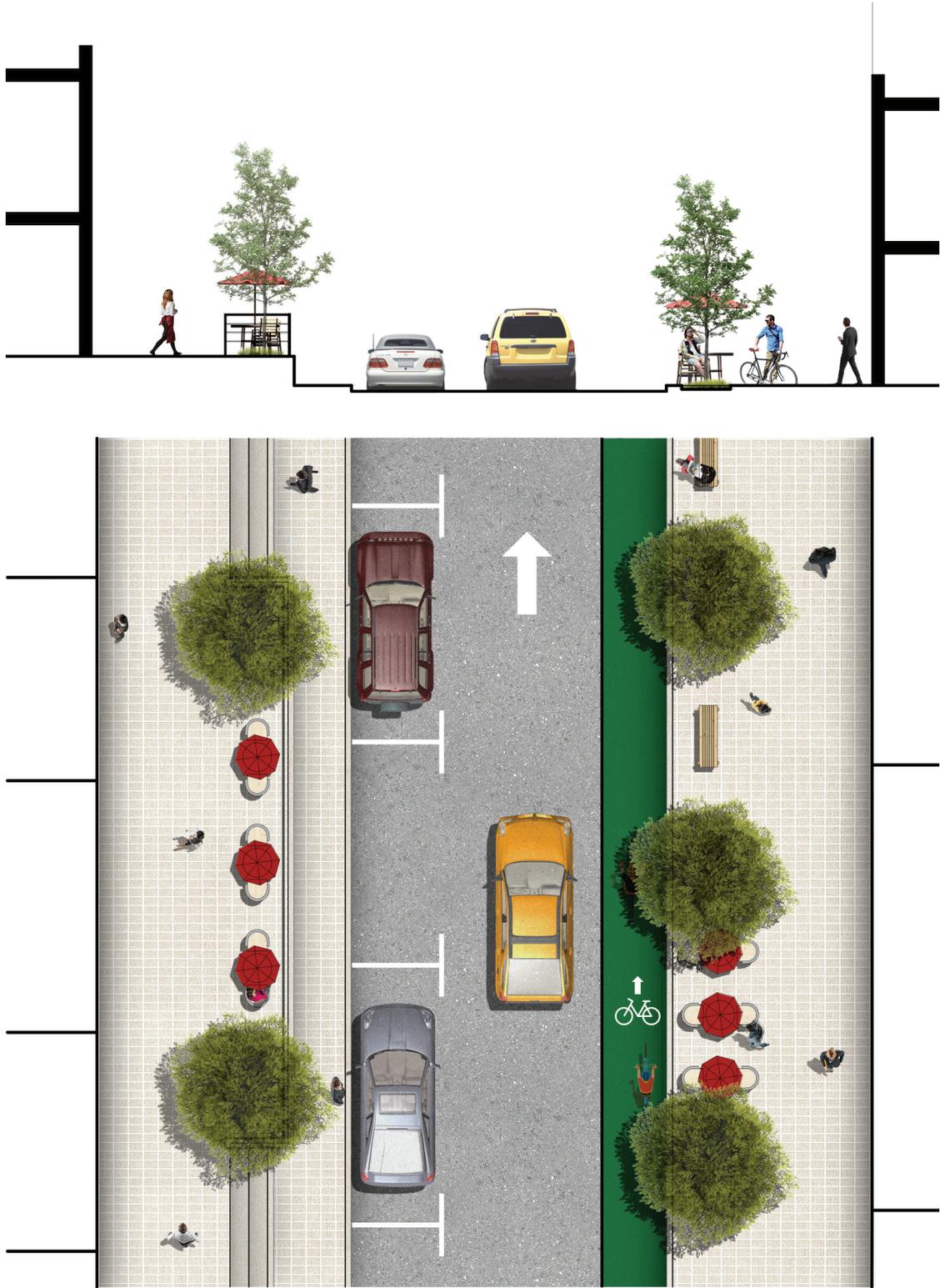


Figure 3.08: Area B of New Pedestrian Streetscape

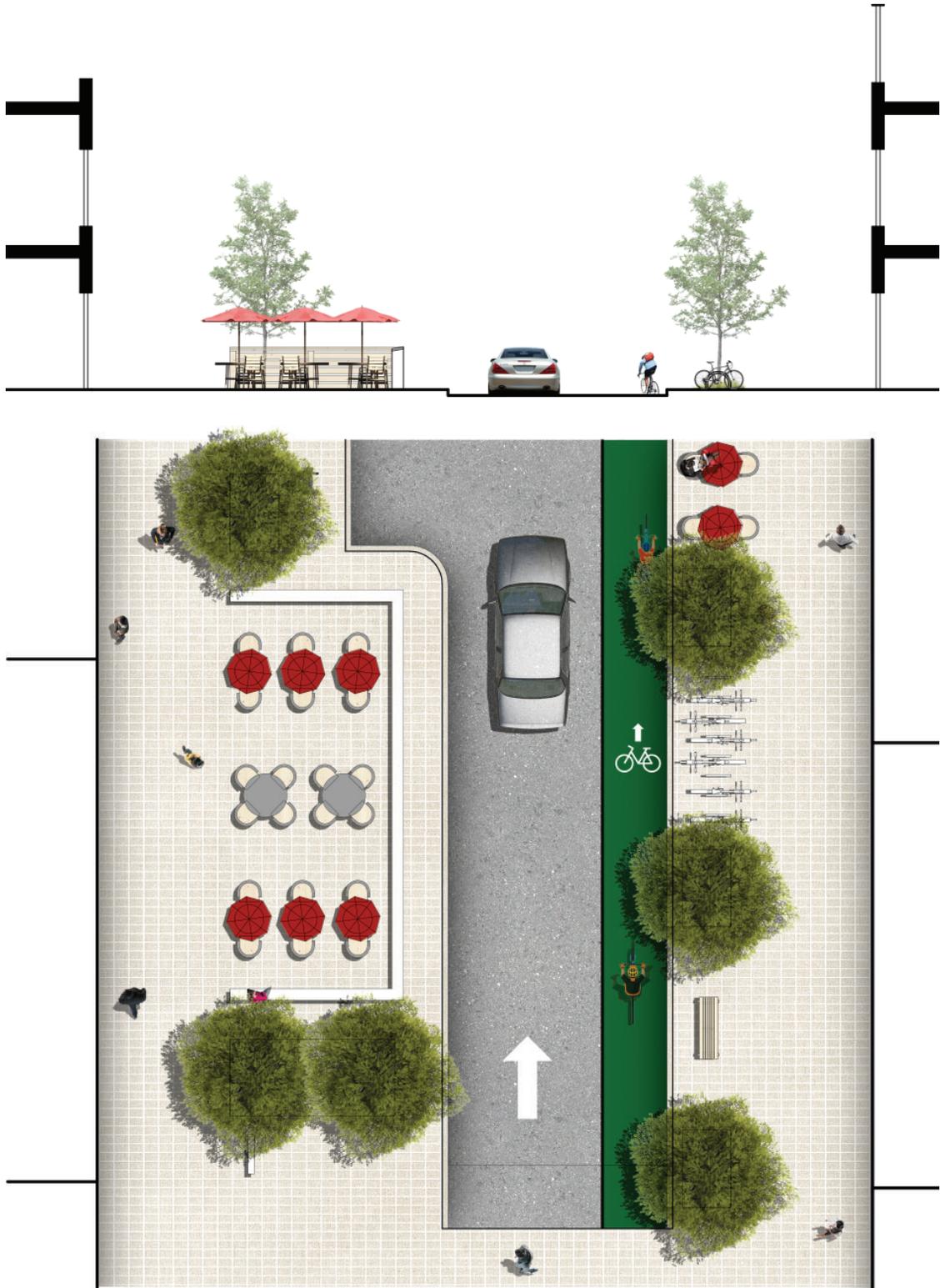


Figure 3.09: Area C of New Pedestrian Streetscape

## 3.4 | Community Programming

To conclude the list of interventions, the new community programming provides the largest architectural design challenge, moving beyond the urban planning into the inclusion of new programming to amplify usage of the space in the downtown. The inclusion of increased community programming within the downtown combined with a connection to alternate transportation methods adds to the existing downtown usage to promote a continued use case for the downtown, pushing the downtown out of a firmly retail and commercially focused space into a multi-use community-oriented space. The building designed here is a small cross-section of program that could possibly exist within the downtown, with inspiration being pulled from the most recent master planning exercise by the city as well as through an analysis of the programs located in and around the downtown core.

To determine the program, I first called reference to the previous master plan by the city in which they outlined a page on an “innovation hub”, located two blocks south east of the downtown, which would provide space for a small business and tech incubator. Looking to further this concept and provide a stronger connection to the downtown, I wanted to include community programming into this space and give the building a dual function, wherein the community-oriented program and business program could collaborate and make use of each other’s spaces. The current model of the city’s masterplan is to promote a de-centralized approach, increasing the travel time between the downtown

and surrounding locations. To promote the growth of the downtown core, the existing trend of creating sprawl needs to be reversed, instead focusing on creating a vibrant, walkable core to support the existing downtown.

Looking at the program on Main Street shows that the at grade programming is mostly retail or commercial space, be it store fronts or food services, showing a clear gap to be filled by this new program that would provide both cultural and educational based programming, supported by the consistent usage of the business spaces. Inspired by the concept of an Innovation Hub in the downtown, the spaces in the building thus include a workshop, tool rental, bike parking and change rooms, co-working space, and maker's space.

To choose a site, I started by looking at the difference of infill versus retrofitting a space. Both provide their own list of pros and cons; retrofit gives opportunity to bring life back to a currently unused building, whereas infill allows a new, specifically designed space to be created. However, a clear winner came to the forefront when looking at potential site locations (Figure 3.11).



**Retrofit Locations**

**Figure 3.10: Site Options**



Infill Locations

Within a central block of Main Street exists a large, private parking lot, located in a central area of the block. This site provides a fantastic opportunity to fill in the elevation of the Main Street, taking a large swath of underutilized space and giving it meaning within the downtown.



Figure 3.11: Site Location



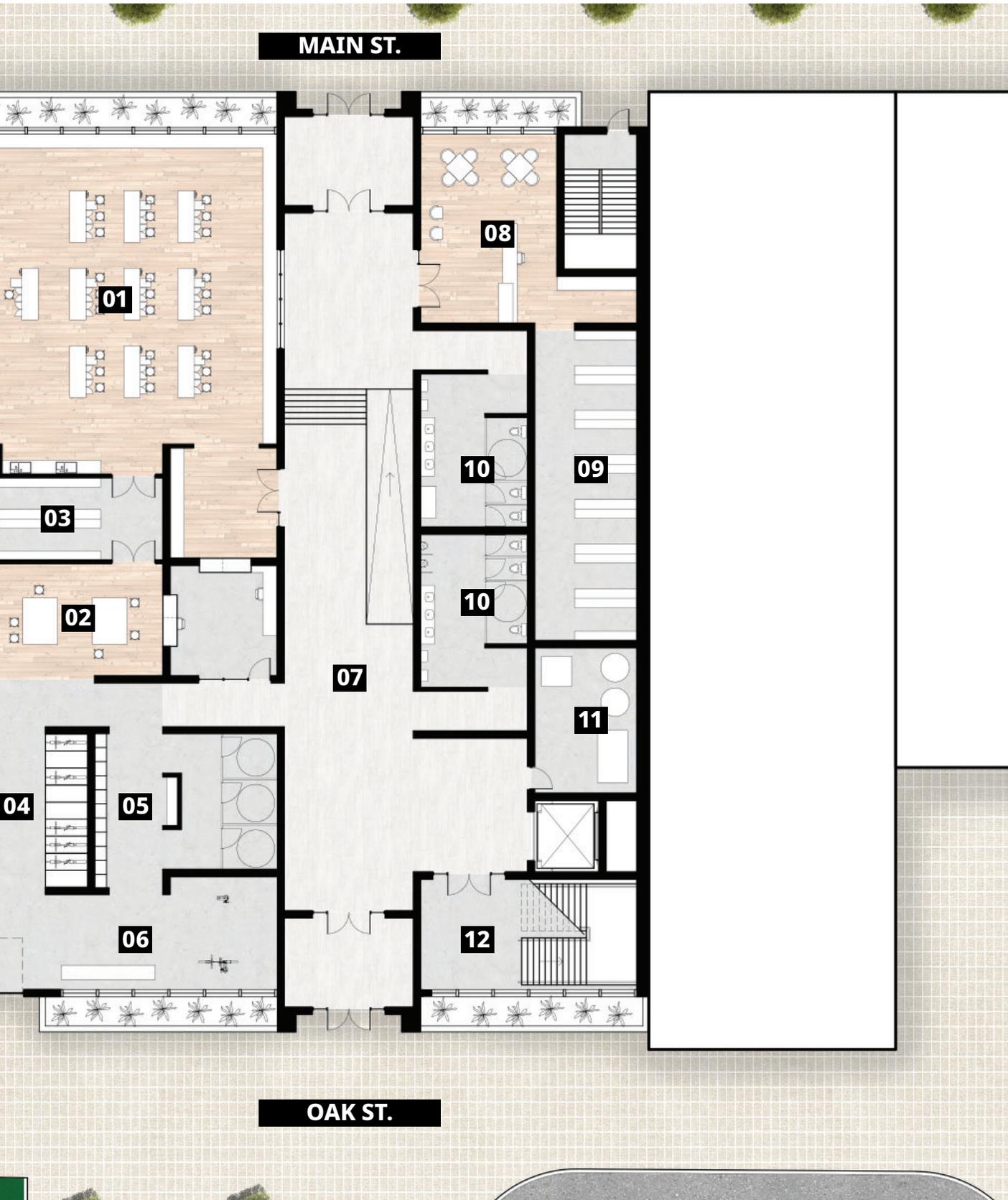
The site is occupied by a private parking lot which could share space with the parking lot across Oak St, which includes rental parking spaces in addition to public parking. The site has an opportunity by being located near the public parking lot as well, making it a prime location for an introduction of new community programming. In addition to being located near the public parking, the site provides a unique opportunity for both frontages to have function.



**Figure 3.12: Existing Site Plan**





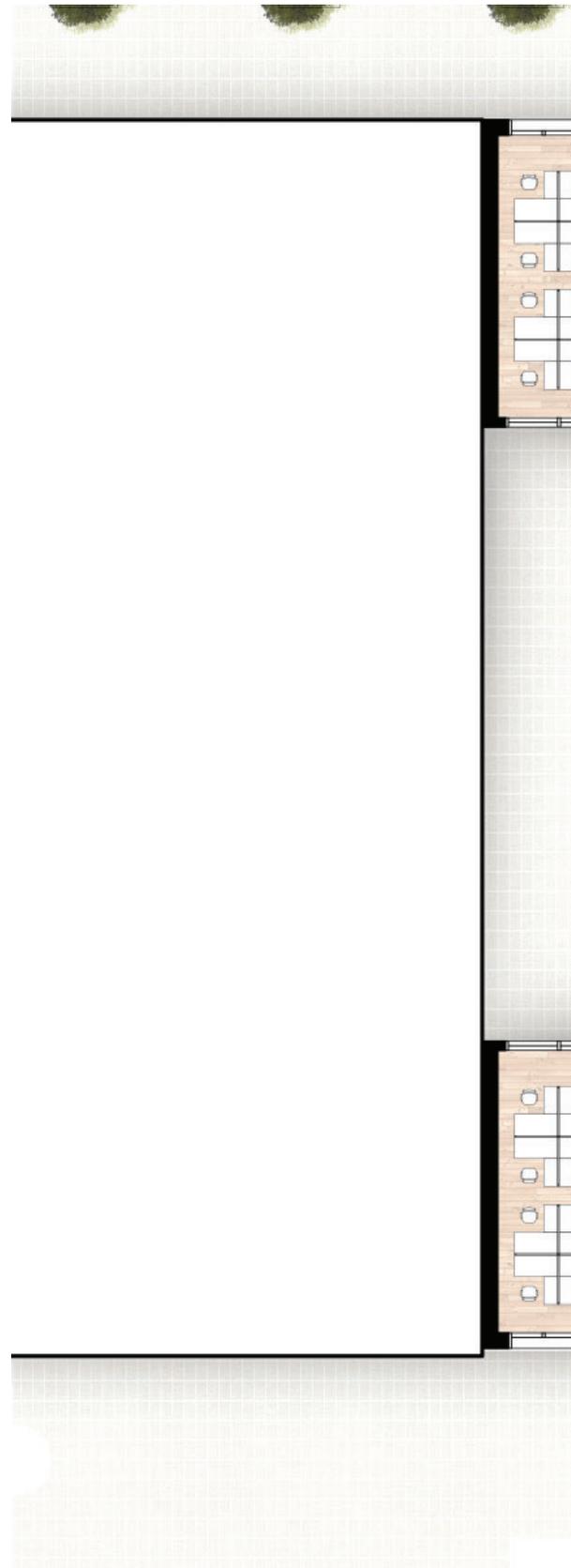


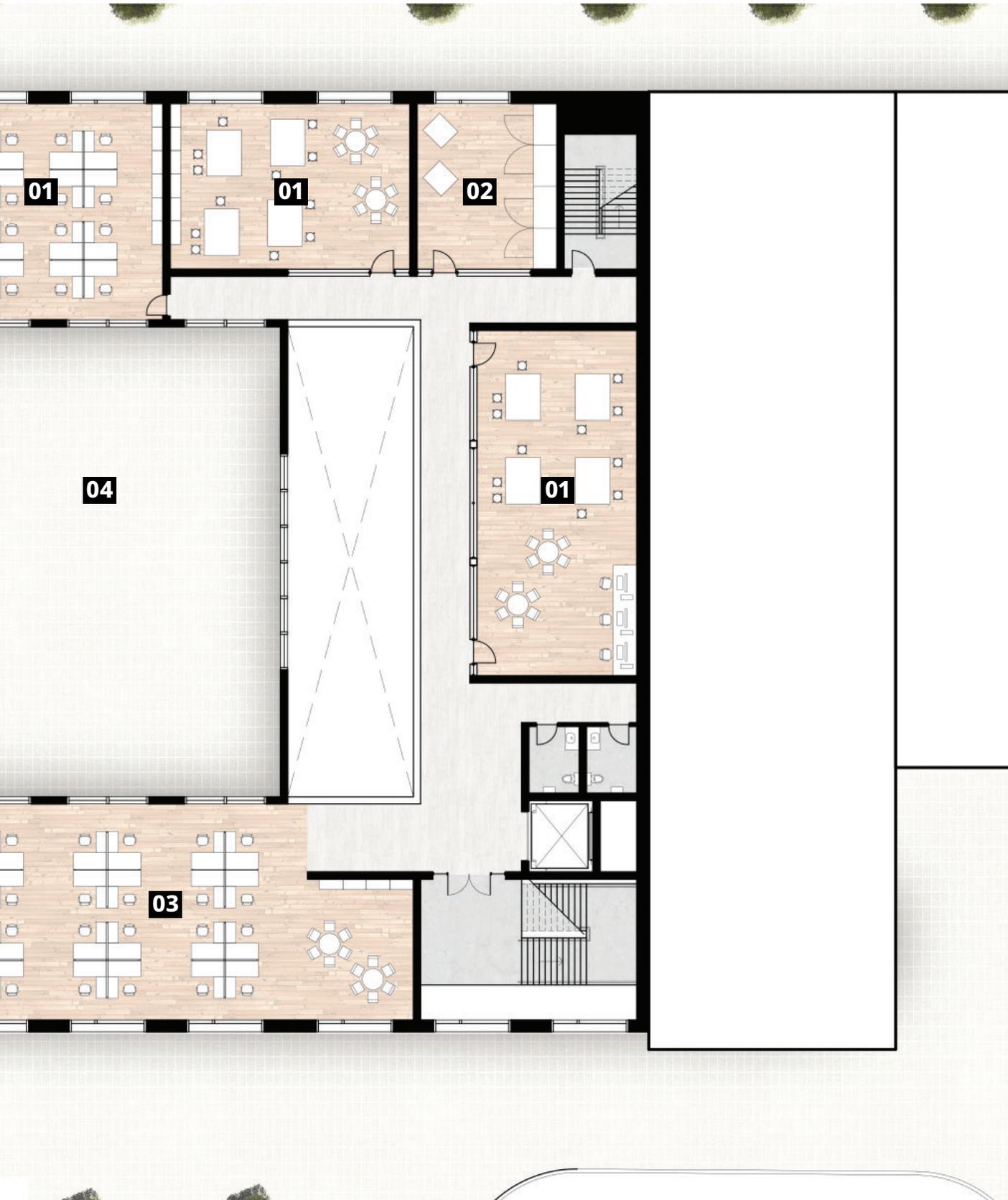
The second floor is dedicated space for co-working spaces, taking up a large portion of the overall floor area. By providing space in the building for these small businesses, it allows them to benefit from the other programs within the building (Figure 3.14).

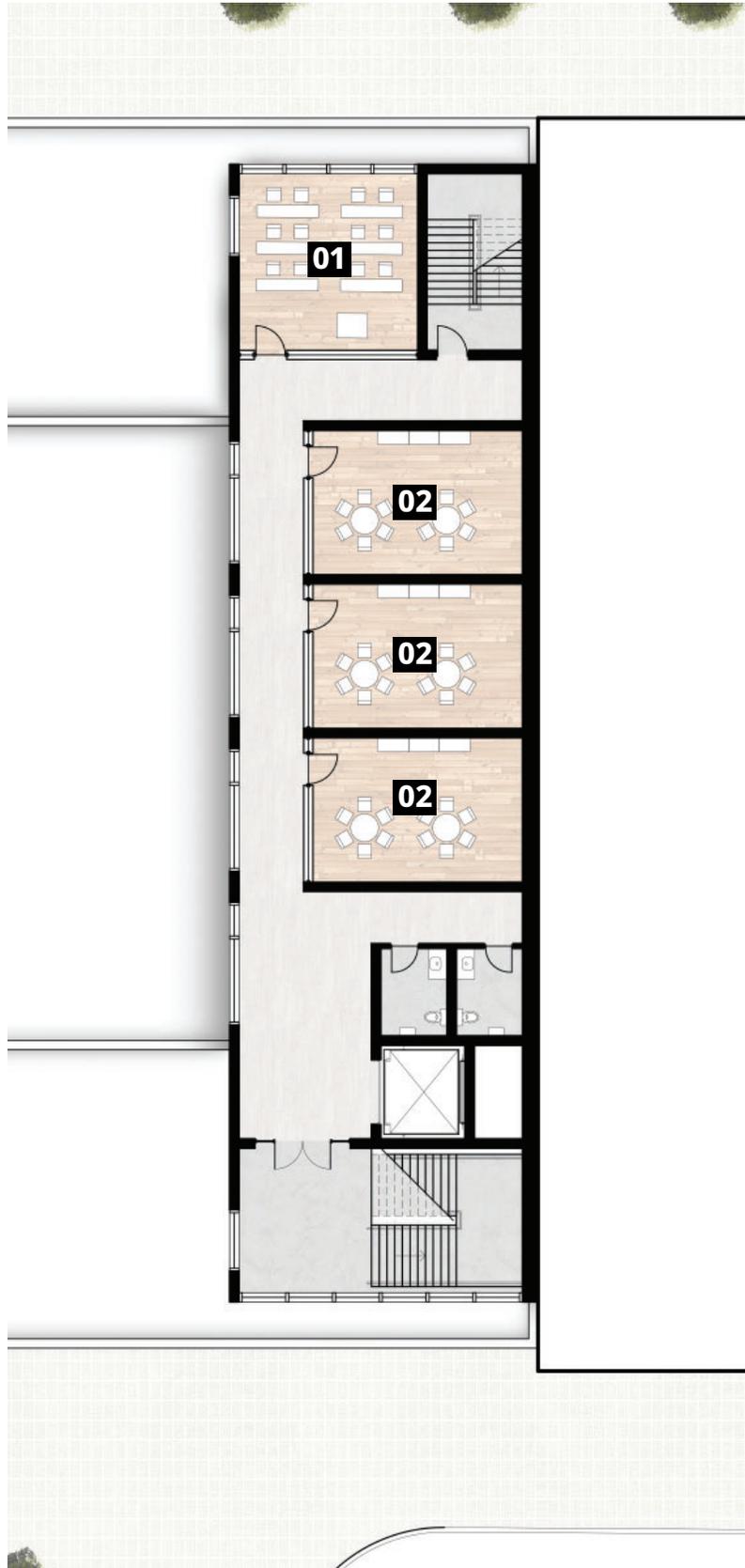
On the third floor, there are rentable meeting spaces for the public as well being able to be used by the businesses from the second floor (Figure 3.15). The fourth floor adds more public innovation space, giving access again to the businesses but also the public. In this space there would be all manners of technology typical to makers spaces, 3D printers, laser cutters, a CNC, and more (Figure 3.16).

- 01 *Individual Offices*
- 02 *Shared Resources*
- 03 *Collaborative Workspace*
- 04 *Accessible Roof*

**Figure 3.14: Second Floor Plan**

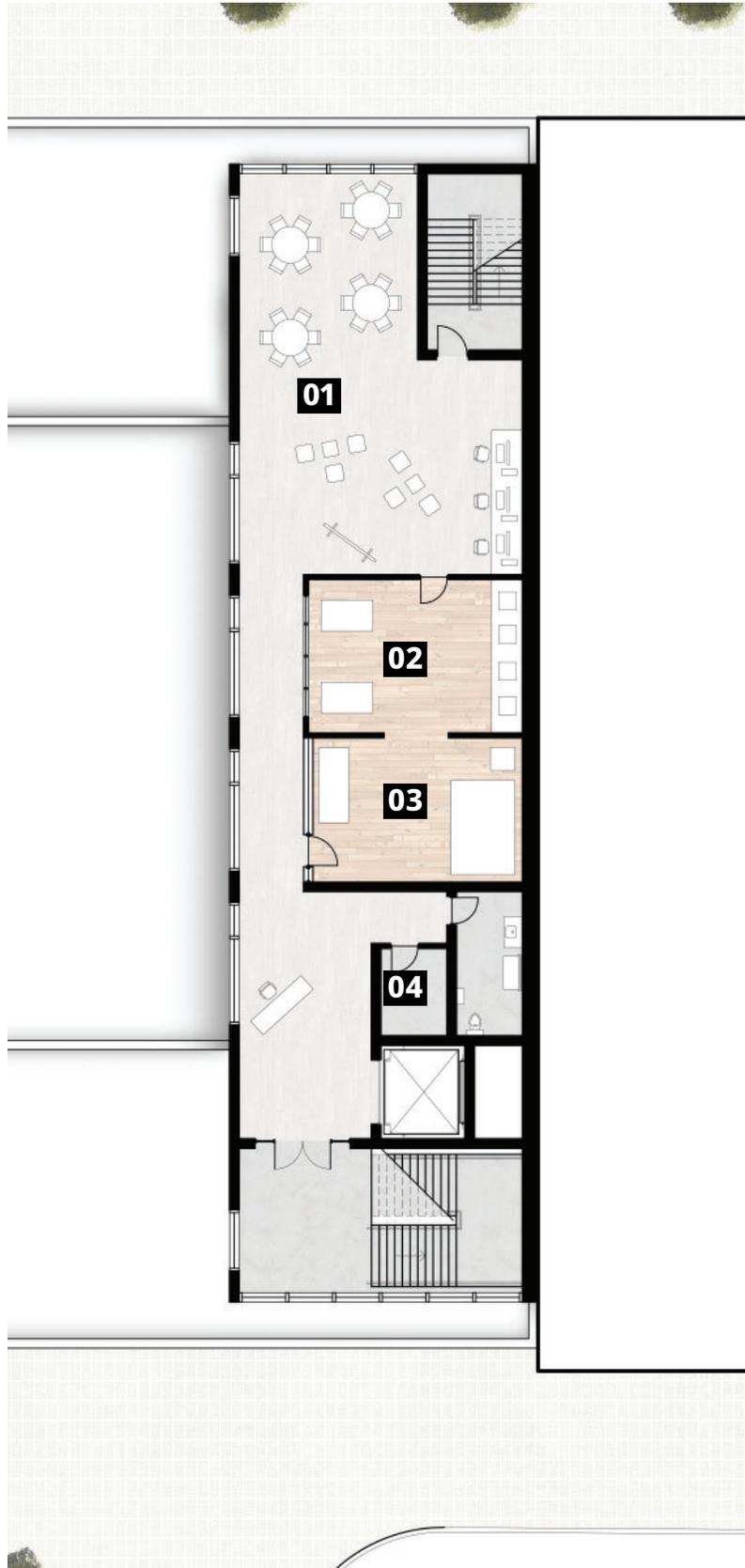






- 01 *Small Classroom*
- 02 *Meeting Rooms*

**Figure 3.15: Third Floor Plan**



- 01 *Work Space*
- 02 *Laser Cutters & 3D Printers*
- 03 *CNC Machine*
- 04 *Storage*

**Figure 3.16: Fourth Floor Plan**

The grade at Main Street is roughly a meter higher than the grade at Oak Street, giving need to have stair and ramp access through the central corridor space. In addition to the grade change, providing a double height space with windows and skylights above gives continuity to the idea of an alleyway off of Main Street with program located on all sides.



Figure 3.17: Overall Building Section



On the Main Street section, the floor level of the building is the same as the oak street entrance, which means it is roughly 1m lower than Main Street. By locating program that would have a consistent usage, a visual connection to Main Street is created while allowing the space to require access through the building.

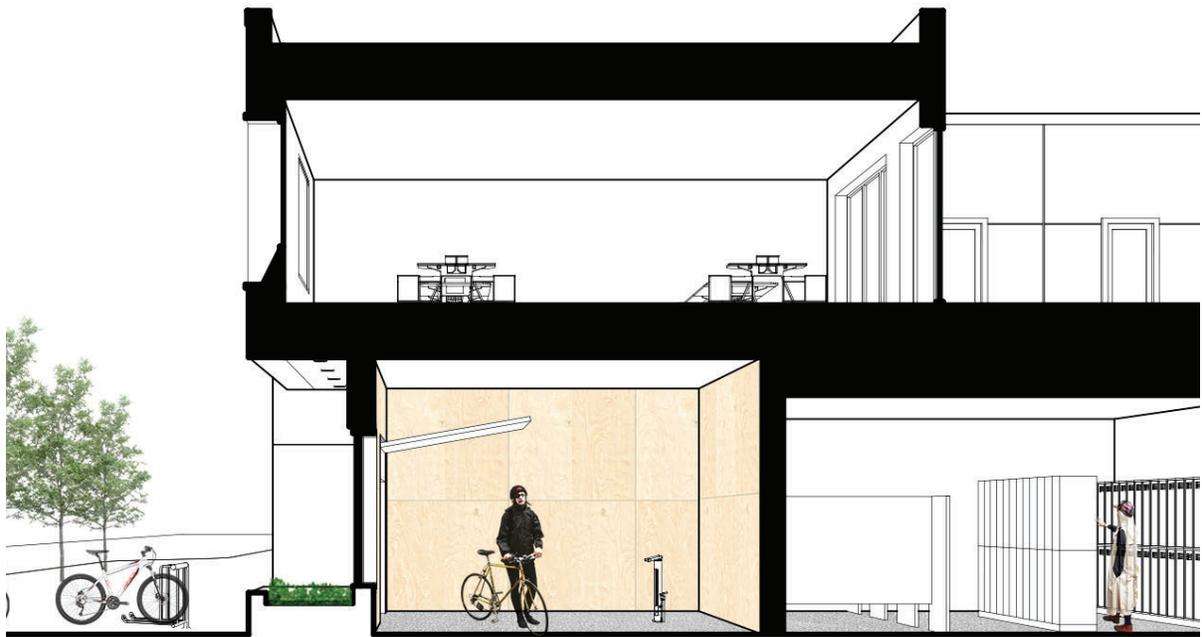


**Figure 3.18: Workshop Detailed Section**



Figure 3.19: Workshop Exterior Perspective

Locating the building in the centre of downtown provides an opportunity to make a connection to the rest of the city through alternate transportation. The indoor bike parking is located at the rear of the building on Oak Street where the interior is at grade. This is a space that should be easily accessible to the street scape surrounding the downtown, allowing for constant access without the requirement of entering the building.



**Figure 3.20: Bike Parking Detail Section**



Figure 3.21: Bike Parking Exterior Perspective



Figure 3.22: Interior Circulation Space





Figure 3.23: New Streetscape Perspective



## 3.5 | Conclusion

Considering the lessons learned from the examination of postwar retail evolution and the ensuing pedestrianization of many downtowns across North America and considering this in relationship to North Bay's downtown provides a clear way forwards for the strategies implemented in and around the downtown. As seen in the failed attempts of the complete commercialization of the downtown as a pedestrian mall, the way forward for the downtown lies outside the introduction of a complete retail experience. It has also been found that the introduction of new residential spaces within the downtown contributes such a low percentage of users to the space, that the introduction of condominiums and large residential spaces directly within the downtown is not the whole solution. Through these three levels of design – wayfinding, pedestrian experience, and community programming – the downtown of North Bay can be designed to re-establish itself as the city's core. Promoting the design of a downtown based on the user experience will allow the city to continue its' usage of the space in a healthy way to keep up with the downtown's evolution beyond retail and towards a new, community based future.



# Endnotes

## Introduction

- 1 Seth S. King, "Supermarkets Hub of Suburbs," *The New York Times*, 1971, <https://nyti.ms/1kdCkGL>.
- 2 Vicki Howard, *From Main Street to Mall: The Rise and Fall of the American Department Store* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015).

## Chapter 1

- 3 King, "Supermarkets Hub of Suburbs."
- 4 Howard, *From Main Street to Mall: The Rise and Fall of the American Department Store*.
- 5 Howard.
- 6 Howard Cillette, "The Evolution of the Planned Shopping Center in Suburb and City," *Journal of the American Planning Association* 51, no. 4 (1985): 449–60, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944368508976833>.
- 7 Eli Pousson, "Baltimore Building of the Week: Roland Park Shopping Center," 2010, <https://baltimoreheritage.org/bbotw-roland-park-shopping-center/>.
- 8 Cillette, "The Evolution of the Planned Shopping Center in Suburb and City."
- 9 Howard, *From Main Street to Mall: The Rise and Fall of the American Department Store*.
- 10 Howard.
- 11 Cillette, "The Evolution of the Planned Shopping Center in Suburb and City"; Kelly Gregg, "Conceptualizing the Pedestrian Mall in Post-War North America and Understanding Its Transatlantic Transfer through the Work and Influence of Victor Gruen," *Planning Perspectives* 34, no. 4 (2019): 551–

77, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02665433.2018.1437555>.

12 Cillette, “The Evolution of the Planned Shopping Center in Suburb and City.”

13 Pierre Filion et al., “The Successful Few: Healthy Downtowns of Small Metropolitan Regions,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 70, no. 3 (2004): 328–43, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944360408976382>.

14 L Hugh Wilson, Source Official Architecture, and No June, “CIVIC DESIGN AND THE SHOPPING CENTRE” 21, no. 6 (1958): 271–74.

15 Lizabeth Cohen, “From Town Center to Shopping Center : The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America,” *The American Historical Review* 101, no. 4 (1996): 1050–81.

16 Howard, *From Main Street to Mall: The Rise and Fall of the American Department Store*.

17 Howard.

18 Cohen, “From Town Center to Shopping Center : The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America.”

19 Cillette, “The Evolution of the Planned Shopping Center in Suburb and City.”

20 Cillette.

21 Cohen, “From Town Center to Shopping Center : The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America.”

22 Richard A Feinberg et al., “There’s Something Social Happening at the Mall,” *Journal of Business and Psychology* 4, no. 1 (1989): 49–63.

23 King, “Supermarkets Hub of Suburbs.”

24 Cohen, “From Town Center to Shopping Center : The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America.”

25 King, “Supermarkets Hub of Suburbs.”

- 26 Cohen, "From Town Center to Shopping Center : The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America."
- 27 Kent A Robertson, "Pedestrianization Strategies for Downtown Planners Skywalks Versus Pedestrian Malls," *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 1993, 361–70; Michael Cheyne, "No Better Way? The Kalamazoo Mall and the Legacy of Pedestrian Malls," *Michigan Historical Review* 36, no. 1 (2010): 103–28, <https://doi.org/10.5342/michhistrevi.36.1.103>.
- 28 Robertson, "Pedestrianization Strategies for Downtown Planners Skywalks Versus Pedestrian Malls."
- 29 Gregg, "Conceptualizing the Pedestrian Mall in Post-War North America and Understanding Its Transatlantic Transfer through the Work and Influence of Victor Gruen."
- 30 Gregg.
- 31 Cillette, "The Evolution of the Planned Shopping Center in Suburb and City."
- 32 Cheyne, "No Better Way? The Kalamazoo Mall and the Legacy of Pedestrian Malls."
- 33 Robertson, "Pedestrianization Strategies for Downtown Planners Skywalks Versus Pedestrian Malls."
- 34 Kent A Robertson, "The Status of the Pedestrian Mall in American Downtowns," *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (1990): 250–73.
- 35 Witold Rybczynski, *Makeshift Metropolis: Ideas About Cities*, *Journal of Chemical Information and Modeling*, vol. 53 (New York: Scribner, 2010).
- 36 Cheyne, "No Better Way? The Kalamazoo Mall and the Legacy of Pedestrian Malls."
- 37 Howard, *From Main Street to Mall: The Rise*

*and Fall of the American Department Store.*

38 Fillion et al., “The Successful Few: Healthy Downtowns of Small Metropolitan Regions.” most downtowns have experienced decline, particularly those of small metropolitan regions. A survey of planners (both practitioners and academics

39 Robertson, “The Status of the Pedestrian Mall in American Downtowns.”

40 Michael A.B. van Eggermond and Alex Erath, “Pedestrian and Transit Accessibility on a Micro Level: Results and Challenges,” *Journal of Transport and Land Use* 9, no. 3 (2016): 127–43, <https://doi.org/10.5198/jtlu.2015.677>.

41 Rybczynski, *Makeshift Metropolis: Ideas About Cities.*

42 Mariela A. Alfonzo, “To Walk or Not to Walk? The Hierarchy of Walking Needs,” *Environment and Behavior* 37, no. 6 (2005): 808–36, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013916504274016>.

43 Debra Webb, “Placemaking and Social Equity: Expanding the Framework of Creative Placemaking,” *Artivate* 3, no. 1 (2014): 35–48.

44 Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Vintage Books, 1961).

45 Jacobs.

46 Fillion et al., “The Successful Few: Healthy Downtowns of Small Metropolitan Regions.” most downtowns have experienced decline, particularly those of small metropolitan regions. A survey of planners (both practitioners and academics

47 Richard K Untermann and Lynn Lewicki, “Accommodating the Pedestrian: Adapting Towns and Neighborhoods for Walking and Bicycling” (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1984), <file://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000365215>.

48 Michael Southworth, “Walkable Suburbs?: An Evaluation of Neotraditional Communities at the Urban Edge,” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 63, no. 1 (1997): 28–44, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944369708975722>

## Chapter 2

49 Municipal Heritage Committee, “Illustrative Guide to Heritage Sites in the City of North Bay,” 2017.

50 “Downtown Waterfront Master Plan | City of North Bay,” accessed February 26, 2021, <https://www.northbay.ca/projects/downtown-waterfront-master-plan/>.

51 City of North Bay, “City of North Bay Active Transportation Master Plan” (North Bay, 2019).

52 City of North Bay, “Growth Community Improvement Plan” (North Bay, n.d.).

53 “About Us | Downtown North Bay,” accessed February 24, 2021, <https://downtownnorthbay.ca/about-us/>.

54 City of North Bay, “North Bay Downtown Waterfront Master Plan,” 2017.

55 Michael Lee, “Redesign of Downtown Main Street on City’s Radar | North Bay Nugget,” North Bay Nugget, January 10, 2021, <https://www.nugget.ca/news/redesign-of-downtown-main-street-on-citys-radar>.

56 Lee.

57 City of North Bay, “North Bay Downtown Waterfront Master Plan.”

58 City of North Bay.

59 Mariela A. Alfonzo, “To Walk or Not to Walk? The Hierarchy of Walking Needs,” *Environment and Behavior* 37, no. 6 (2005): 808–36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944369708975722>

org/10.1177/0013916504274016.

60 City of North Bay, “North Bay Downtown Waterfront Master Plan.”

61 Jeff Speck, *Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time* (New York: North Point Press, 2012).

62 Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Vintage Books, 1961).

63 “Business Directory | Downtown North Bay,” accessed April 25, 2021, <https://downtownnorthbay.ca/business-directory/>.

64 City of North Bay, “North Bay Downtown Waterfront Master Plan,” 2017.

65 City of North Bay, “Growth Community Improvement Plan” (North Bay, n.d.).

66 Speck, *Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time*.

67 Speck.

## Bibliography

“About Us | Downtown North Bay.” Accessed February 24, 2021. <https://downtownnorthbay.ca/about-us/>.

Alfonzo, Mariela A. “To Walk or Not to Walk? The Hierarchy of Walking Needs.” *Environment and Behavior* 37, no. 6 (2005): 808–36. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013916504274016>.

Bickis, Ian. “Shopify Announces Post-Office Model, Most Staff to Permanently Work from Home | CP24.Com.” The Canadian Press, May 21, 2020. <https://www.cp24.com/news/shopify-announces-post-office-model-most-staff-to-permanently-work-from-home-1.4948678>.

“Business Directory | Downtown North Bay.” Accessed April 25, 2021. <https://downtownnorthbay.ca/business-directory/>.

Cheyne, Michael. “No Better Way? The Kalamazoo Mall and the Legacy of Pedestrian Malls.” *Michigan Historical Review* 36, no. 1 (2010): 103–28. <https://doi.org/10.5342/michhistrevi.36.1.103>.

Cillette, Howard. “The Evolution of the Planned Shopping Center in Suburb and City.” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 51, no. 4 (1985): 449–60. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944368508976833>.

City of North Bay. “City of North Bay Active Transportation Master Plan.” North Bay, 2019.

———. “Growth Community Improvement Plan.” North Bay, n.d.

———. “North Bay Downtown Waterfront Master Plan,” 2017.

Cohen, Lizabeth. “From Town Center to Shopping Center : The Reconfiguration of Community Marketplaces in Postwar America.” *The American Historical Review* 101, no. 4 (1996): 1050–81.

Davies, Nick, Clare Cornes, and Graeme Sherriff. “How Major Cities Are Trying to Keep People Walking and Cycling,” May 10, 2020. <https://theconversation.com/how-major-cities-are-trying-to-keep-people-walking-and-cycling-137909>.

“Downtown Waterfront Master Plan | City of North Bay.” Accessed February 26, 2021. <https://www.northbay.ca/projects/downtown-waterfront-master-plan/>.

Eggermond, Michael A.B. van, and Alex Erath. “Pedestrian and Transit Accessibility on a Micro Level: Results and Challenges.” *Journal of Transport and Land Use* 9, no. 3 (2016): 127–43. <https://doi.org/10.5198/jtlu.2015.677>.

Feinberg, Richard A, Jennifer Meoli, Amy Rummel, Richard A Feinberg, Brent Sheffler, Jennifer Meoli, and Amy Rummel. “There’s Something Social Happening at the Mall.” *Journal of Business and Psychology* 4, no. 1 (1989): 49–63.

Filion, Pierre, Heidi Hoernig, Trudi Bunting, and Gary Sands. "The Successful Few: Healthy Downtowns of Small Metropolitan Regions." *Journal of the American Planning Association* 70, no. 3 (2004): 328–43. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944360408976382>.

Glanz, Theresa, Yunwoo Nam, and Zhenghong Tang. "Sustainable Urban Design and Walkable Neighborhoods." *Sustainable Development - Policy and Urban Development - Tourism, Life Science, Management and Environment*, no. February 2012 (2012). <https://doi.org/10.5772/27285>.

Gregg, Kelly. "Conceptualizing the Pedestrian Mall in Post-War North America and Understanding Its Transatlantic Transfer through the Work and Influence of Victor Gruen." *Planning Perspectives* 34, no. 4 (2019): 551–77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02665433.2018.1437555>.

Howard, Vicki. *From Main Street to Mall: The Rise and Fall of the American Department Store*. University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.

Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*. Vintage Books, 1961.

King, Seth S. "Supermarkets Hub of Suburbs." *The New York Times*, 1971. <https://nyti.ms/1kdCkGL>.

Lee, Michael. "Redesign of Downtown Main Street on City's Radar | North Bay Nugget." North Bay Nugget, January 10, 2021. <https://www.nugget.ca/news/redesign-of-downtown-main-street-on-citys-radar>.

Lockridge, Jeff, and Sebastian Reyes. “2020 Migration Trends U-Haul Names Top 25 Canadian Growth Cities | U-Haul Blog | U-Haul,” January 5, 2021. <https://www.uhaul.com/Articles/About/22748/2020-Migration-Trends-U-Haul-Names-Top-25-Canadian-Growth-Cities/>.

Municipal Heritage Committee. “Illustrative Guide to Heritage Sites in the City of North Bay,” 2017.

Pousson, Eli. “Baltimore Building of the Week: Roland Park Shopping Center,” 2010. <https://baltimoreheritage.org/bbotw-roland-park-shopping-center/>.

Robertson, Kent A. “Pedestrianization Strategies for Downtown Planners Skywalks Versus Pedestrian Malls.” *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 1993, 361–70.

———. “The Status of the Pedestrian Mall in American Downtowns.” *Urban Affairs Quarterly* 26, no. 2 (1990): 250–73.

Rybczynski, Witold. *Makeshift Metropolis: Ideas About Cities*. *Journal of Chemical Information and Modeling*. Vol. 53. New York: Scribner, 2010.

Southworth, Michael. “Walkable Suburbs?: An Evaluation of Neotraditional Communities at the Urban Edge.” *Journal of the American Planning Association* 63, no. 1 (1997): 28–44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01944369708975722>.

Speck, Jeff. *Walkable City: How Downtown Can Save America, One Step at a Time*. New York: North Point Press, 2012.

Untermann, Richard K, and Lynn. Lewicki. "Accommodating the Pedestrian: Adapting Towns and Neighborhoods for Walking and Bicycling." New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1984. file://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000365215.

Webb, Debra. "Placemaking and Social Equity: Expanding the Framework of Creative Placemaking." *Artivate* 3, no. 1 (2014): 35–48.

Wilson, L Hugh, Source Official Architecture, and No June. "CIVIC DESIGN AND THE SHOPPING CENTRE" 21, no. 6 (1958): 271–74.

Wyckoff, Mark A. "Definition of Placemaking: Four Different Types." *Planning & Zoning News* 1 (2014): np. www.miplace.org.



## Appendix 01: Afterword

Originally, when I started my thesis in September of 2019, the world had not yet seen the influence of the global pandemic that we are currently facing. By the point when we had experienced a radical shift in the way we live life due to the challenges faced globally by Covid-19, this thesis was too far in development to consider the implications of our new global condition. It is, however, a wild coincidence that the basis of this thesis, taking precedent from successful elements of thriving urban centres, that there would suddenly be an influx of new residents to the city of North Bay, moving from Toronto, Ottawa, and other urban centres. Locally, the city of North Bay is facing an influx of one-way U-Haul trips, a metric with which to measure a rough inflow of people moving to any given area on a year-to-year basis. In the year 2020 there was an increase of 20% on arrivals to the city, with the total amount of arrivals accounting for 57.5% of all one-way U-Haul traffic within the city of North Bay.<sup>1</sup> Globally, major companies such as Shopify have announced they are moving completely digital, and Facebook has announced their company foresees 50% of employees working remotely within 5 years.<sup>2</sup> As peoples way of life has potential for radical change, the question of accessibility and use cases of spaces within cities change. As less people have the potential for transit to work, and residents seek active transportation for both transportation and leisure, cities are re-imagining their existing transportation networks. In Paris, France for example, they have implemented 650km of new bike routes, and London, England is aiming to enable

more people to walk and cycle for essential travel, extending walking routes, restricting driving in certain locations, and adding extra bike lanes.<sup>3</sup>

For the city of North Bay and other small communities within the country, the post-pandemic future could provide a fantastic opportunity to re-evaluate the way we consider the usage of existing public spaces within our cities. In North Bay specifically, an opportunity has arisen for the city to look to the larger aforementioned examples and promote methods of alternate transportation. Currently, 76% of people within the city commute to work in a personal vehicle, with 56% of all commutes being less than 15 minutes total door to door time.<sup>4</sup> If the city is already planning on completing an overhaul of the Main Street infrastructure, these urban examples, and existing completed studies on active transportation within North Bay should be considered as a method for the adaptation of our new collective lifestyle to promote pedestrian and alternate transportation accessibility to and from the downtown.

When discussing an increase of program within the Downtown Improvement Area, the movement of residents from larger city centres will begin to generate an increased level of desire for public and private programming. As the city looks to retain this influx of permanent and temporary residents of the city, the addition of new programming within the space of the downtown will allow for increased traffic to this area, bolstering existing businesses and civic spaces and allowing new program to be developed successfully. For

the program outlined within this thesis, the idea already existed to draw on ideas of innovative spaces from larger urban centres, bringing a new level of connection and program to an area that could benefit from these spaces. With this influx of people to the city, these programs would provide a timely inclusion to the existing programmatic composition of the downtown.

For the downtown of North Bay, the inclusion of strategies related to increased accessibility and new community programming would be a positive outcome of an otherwise challenging time. As more people look to support their communities, these new strategies promote the engagement of new and existing residents alike, generating a sustainable long-term growth in the downtown and the city as a whole, through the provision of a newly imagined experience within the downtown.



## Appendix Endnotes

- 1 Jeff Lockridge and Sebastian Reyes, “2020 Migration Trends U-Haul Names Top 25 Canadian Growth Cities | U-Haul Blog | U-Haul,” January 5, 2021, <https://www.uhaul.com/Articles/About/22748/2020-Migration-Trends-U-Haul-Names-Top-25-Canadian-Growth-Cities/>.
- 2 Ian Bickis, “Shopify Announces Post-Office Model, Most Staff to Permanently Work from Home | CP24.Com,” The Canadian Press, May 21, 2020, <https://www.cp24.com/news/shopify-announces-post-office-model-most-staff-to-permanently-work-from-home-1.4948678>.
- 3 Nick Davies, Clare Cornes, and Graeme Sherriff, “How Major Cities Are Trying to Keep People Walking and Cycling,” May 10, 2020, <https://theconversation.com/how-major-cities-are-trying-to-keep-people-walking-and-cycling-137909>.
- 4 “Census Profile, 2016 Census - North Bay [Population Centre], Ontario and Ontario [Province],” accessed May 4, 2021, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2016/dp-pd/prof/details/page>.

