

# **Downtown Revitalization Strategies in Ontario's Mid-Sized Cities: A Web-Survey and Case Study**

by  
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## **AUTHOR'S 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**

This study and research was conducted to understand the myriad tools utilized as part of downtown revitalization plans, strategies or efforts in Ontario's mid-sized cities, what impacts municipalities are seeking in their downtown revitalization plans, strategies or efforts, and the implications for planning theory and practice.

This study and research involved a mixed methods research strategy – known as triangulation- which included a literature review, a web-survey directed to municipal staff within each of Ontario's mid-sized cities, and a case study of London Ontario's downtown revitalization strategy.

The findings of this study and research indicate that traditional revitalization tools are still favoured in Ontario's mid-sized cities. Further, marketing and quality of life tools are highly used by municipalities in downtown revitalization. Municipalities appear to be tailoring their downtown revitalization programs or efforts to stimulate business, and are increasingly taking an entrepreneurial, business-like approach to revitalization city centres. Transportation featured prominently in downtown revitalization efforts within Ontario's mid-sized cities. Parking in particular, was an element that was planned for as part of downtown revitalization. Finally, stimulating the local downtown housing market was of primary importance to Ontario's mid-sized cities. The literature consistently notes the extreme importance of housing as a downtown revitalization strategy over time. It appears that Ontario's mid-sized cities prescribe to the theory that downtowns cannot truly function and become centres

with strong retail markets, and activity hubs with synergistic uses within proximity without housing. Further, Ontario's mid-sized cities appear to be increasingly seeking to stimulate the private sector in constructing housing.

“Increase Residential Population” and “Increase General Activity” are the most prevalent objectives of downtown revitalization in Ontario's mid-sized cities. Given that the top-three objectives of the web-survey were increasing population within the downtown, increasing general activity within the downtown, and increasing employment within the downtown, a combination of objectives which are multi-dimensional, it appears that mid-sized municipalities are seeking multi-dimensional downtowns, with particular attention paid to increasing population levels.

The web-survey and case study did not concretely confirm or deny the literature with regard to monitoring and evaluation. However, the web-survey and case study do suggest that plan evaluation is not a particularly robust element of downtown revitalization efforts in Ontario's mid-sized cities.

Recommendations based on the findings of this research are provided for municipalities, planning practitioners and academics. This research contributes to the limited but expanding literature on mid-sized cities, downtown revitalization of mid-sized cities, as well as monitoring and evaluation techniques and concepts for mid-sized cities to consider. Recommendations for further research are also provided.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### *1.1 Purpose of Study and Research Objectives*

The literature on social geography and urban economic development is predominantly focused on the impacts of decentralization of both population and employment as well as the impact such decentralization has had on the central business district. Faulk (2006) posits that there is a direct relationship between suburbanization (i.e. dispersion or decentralization) and downtown vitality, which is supported by other researchers (Bunting et al., 2000; Edmonston et al., 1985; Filion et al., 1999). Government programs, such as changes to the Federal Insurance Act<sup>1</sup> immediately following WWII, and the provision of subsidized loans through CMHC<sup>2</sup> unlocked mortgages for millions in Canada, thereby increasing demand for single-family homes. As wages increased and manufacturing automation improved (bringing product costs down), demand for other standardized goods increased. Automobile ownership, which had been rising since the 1920s and assisted by highway construction programs by successive Federal governments, increased dramatically. These phenomena lay the foundation for outward expansion of cities, and the creation of new cities, towns and hamlets. It also opened opportunities to businesses that had not existed before; new locales on greenfield land were available to business, at low cost and

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<sup>1</sup> Following WWII, the government anticipated a spike in housing demand and sought to stimulate private housing construction. To accomplish this, it changed the Federal Insurance Act to allow insurance funds to be allotted to housing finance. This effectively created mortgages that were affordable to the middle-class, thus widening the eligibility of home ownership.

<sup>2</sup> To further increase private housing construction and increase home ownership, the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) began providing subsidized loans. Such loans were not given to just anyone and the Government wanted to ensure the housing was well-designed and constructed. To do this, the "...conditions on the CMHC mortgages helped establish the framework of provincial and municipal planning and zoning regulations" (Leo, 1995, pp. 31).

without constraints (Florida, 2009). This in turn created more demand for housing outside of traditional cities and can help explain (generally) the expansion model Canada has followed in the recent decades.

Provincial and municipal governments are under increasing pressure to limit outward growth in favour of directing growth inward. This pressure, compounded with the fiscal constraints all levels of government work within, the desire to use infrastructure efficiently, and the increasing popularity of downtown living, has led to numerous policies and programs created to lure people and business downtown. A number of municipal governments have taken to offering specific incentives for downtown revitalization. Generally, these incentives can be characterized as directed toward the following audiences:

- Development Industry: Incentives directed to the development industry focus heavily on providing direct financial assistance (i.e. planning and/or permit fee exemptions, such as development charge exemptions), as well as decreasing regulatory timelines for desirable projects. The acquisition and sale of land within downtown can be another important tool for municipalities where public-sector intervention is needed to revitalize derelict industrial properties within the downtown core
- Businesses which locate downtown: Infrastructure projects fall within this category, such as increased communications technology within downtowns to attract high-technology firms, funding of Business Improvement Areas within downtowns, streetscape improvements,

etc. Generally, this category of incentives relates to attraction of businesses by making downtowns more desirable locations for businesses to locate.

- Consumers (of both commercial goods, and housing): Attracting consumers is important for successful downtowns (Faulk, 2006; Filion et al., 1999; Filion et al., 2004; McBee, 1992). While there is cross-over with incentives mentioned in the bullet above, municipalities have also focused on quality of life improvements, such as improved or expanded parks and open space systems, construction of large venues such as convention centres or entertainment centres (i.e. arenas), increasing automobile accessibility to the downtown, and marketing downtown as a desirable location for various consumer groups, such as young urban professionals.

While a great deal of literature has outlined how time periods have witnessed different techniques to improve downtowns (or Central Business Districts), an understanding of how incentives measure up to each other has not been undertaken by academics. As noted by Bunting et al., (2007), the adoption of big-city downtown revitalization initiatives has led to a series of initiatives that have not been particularly successful in mid-sized cities. It is therefore important to understand which tools are perceived to perform well from planners within mid-sized cities.

Planning practice is lacking in the area of plan evaluation and monitoring (Seasons, 2003a; 2003b; Murtagh, 1998). In Ontario, the majority of municipalities do undertake evaluation of programs, however it is often simple performance measurement such as “Operating costs for paved (hard top) roads per lane kilometer” or “Percentage of new lots, blocks and/or units with final approval which are located within settlement areas”, both of which are mandated to be measured by the Provincial government and centre around efficiency of taxpayer dollars.

Proper monitoring of downtown revitalization programs can inform municipal staff on the effectiveness of the tools within such programs, and act as a significant component of the implementation phase of plans. To these ends, monitoring strategies would entail a degree of strategic planning, whereby specific monitoring goals are set (such as frequency of reporting), data is chosen based on the ability to inform the reporting process (rather than chosen based solely on ease of use or availability) and its ability to inform the progress of downtown revitalization programs in achieving the stated goals and objectives. Done correctly, monitoring of programs engages planners into an evidence-based decision making model, which allows programs to be modified and finely tuned to meet the goals and objectives of programs. Under such scenarios, downtown revitalization programs are not static, and are improved as a result of monitoring and reporting of outcomes.

The purpose of this study is to understand how mid-size cities in Ontario undertake downtown revitalization, focusing on convergence and/or variation

with regard to use of financial, regulatory and planning tools. The first objective of this study is to understand how incentives are *perceived* to perform by municipal staff. The second objective is to determine the level of integration between downtown revitalization plan or strategy and the use of tools; that is, are municipal governments strategically aligning long term goals with appropriate incentives. Specifically, given that the literature theorizes a weakness in plan evaluation and monitoring, the prevalence of plan evaluation and monitoring techniques for downtown revitalization is also explored, with a goal to identify the methods of evaluation that are effective and appropriate for downtown revitalization efforts. The third objective of this research paper is to propose practical recommendations that assist discussions within both planning practice and theory regarding the appropriateness of incentives within Ontario's mid-size cities.

## ***1.2 Rationale for Research***

There is a very small body of research for mid-sized cities, which are home to over 22 percent of Canada's population and nearly 25 percent of North America's population. As noted by Bunting et al., (2007), seven percent of urban-content articles covered mid-sized cities in the Journal of the American Planning Association from 1994 to 2004, compared to cities with populations over 1 million people, which were a focus of 87 percent of such urban-content articles. Similarly, Robertson (1999) points out that the research community has given little attention to mid-size cities. Major urban centres are the chief focus of

studies that explore the subject of cities. Bradford (2002) takes this point further, noting that second-tier cities, while a contemporary urban experience for Canadians, are not well studied.

“...are the challenges confronting Canada’s largest city-regions qualitatively different from those in smaller centres pointing to the need for alternative frameworks and policy perspectives? Or is the national urban system better understood as a continuum where the same basic problems and prospects simply become magnified in larger cities?”

Bradford clearly provides an answer to the question he poses. It is Bradford’s position that not all cities are the same, but rather the Canadian urban system can be viewed along a spectrum, or continuum. This research seeks to explore how mid-size cities tackle urban planning problems within their local context.

This research will also provide a uniquely Canadian perspective to downtown revitalization. As Charney (2005, pp. 303) notes, “To a large extent, literature on downtowns is primarily based on the experience of cities in the United States”. Charney posits that Canadian cities are different than American cities. England and Mercer (2006) note that policy approaches to urban problems have varied between Countries. Further, Bunting et al., (2002), Goldberg and Mercer (1986) and England and Mercer (2006) have found Canadian urban density decline to be less dramatic than in the United States. Thus, given that planning is heavily dependent on local context, policy solutions to urban planning problems in the United States may very well not fit within the context of Canadian cities.

The use of financial, planning and regulatory tools to stimulate desired projects and outcomes is not heavily studied within the Canadian context, and

thus an understanding of the prevalence of such tools in Canada's mid-sized cities is critically lacking. How municipal staff in Canada's mid-size cities spur desirable projects for positive outcomes is thus a research gap that needs to be filled. Further, this research will offer practical solutions to common problems associated with downtown revitalization programs in an attempt to assist municipal staff within these cities.

### ***1.3 Organization of the Research Paper***

This research paper is organized into nine chapters, outlined below:

**Chapter 1** outlines the research problem and the context within which the research problem can be understood; outlines the study objectives; rationale for the research; identifies the organization of the paper; and describes the research methodology, as well as the data analyzed to address the research problem.

**Chapter 2** discovers the evolution of downtowns; identifies characteristics of downtown; outlines the declining densities of downtown, and also approaches to downtown revitalization in the context of both different countries, as well as time periods.

**Chapter 3** outlines the research question and subsidiary questions; identifies the research strategy and the methods employed to address the main research question as well as subsidiary questions. This chapter also examines the concept of triangulation in research and its importance in social science research.

**Chapter 4** provides the results from a web-survey that was undertaken for this research which targeted municipal planners within the 28 mid-sized cities in



Ontario. The results of the case study of London, Ontario's downtown revitalization strategy are also provided.

**Chapter 5** covers the analysis from the web-survey; outlines the most commonly stated impacts (or outcomes) of downtown revitalization plan/strategies or efforts; identifies 17 incentives identified as both effective and commonly used within the survey respondents; and uncovers trends in monitoring and evaluation of downtown revitalization plan/strategies or efforts.

**Chapter 6** uses a case study and content analysis of London Ontario's downtown revitalization strategy as a means to further highlight specific methods employed to attract investment to a mid-sized downtown,

**Chapter 7** compares and contrasts the results from the web-survey to the results of the case study, focusing specifically on use of downtown revitalization tools, downtown revitalization objectives, as well as monitoring and evaluation efforts.

**Chapter 8** makes recommendations for planning practitioners that is based on the findings of this research. A common framework to creating a downtown revitalization strategy is identified for Ontario's mid-sized cities. Further, a recommendation is put forward for planning scholars to study methods to successfully revitalize downtowns. Finally, this section makes concluding remarks.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

The following literature is intended to lay the groundwork for my research question, which seeks to understand how downtown revitalization programs in Ontario's mid-size cities converge and/or vary with regard to their use of financial, planning and regulatory tools; how municipalities evaluate their downtown revitalization programs, and the implications for both planning theory and practice.

The literature review provides a background to downtowns in both American and Canadian cities, analyzes the literature pertaining to downtown revitalization in both large and small cities, and briefly outlines characteristics that make mid-size cities unique. Furthermore, the literature review identifies a gap in scholarly description and hence understanding of downtown revitalization programs in mid-sized cities.

### ***2.1 Understanding of Downtown in the Literature***

The downtown of North American cities was of prime importance during the early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Prior to the advent of the personal automobile, city form was largely dictated by pedestrian movement. The streetcar allowed development to fan out in a radial fashion along streetcar routes. However, with all routes leading to the downtown, the central business district held a competitive advantage over outlying areas. Downtowns thus had a sizeable population, excellent pedestrian movement as well as public transit that served the needs of citizens. These factors and desirable qualities in turn attracted visitors, shoppers

as well as businesses (Bunting et al., 2000; Robertson, 1995; Smerk, 1967). This early 20<sup>th</sup> Century rendition of downtown has been said to have been the zenith of North American downtowns (Muller, 1980; Robertson, 1995). However, with the increasing popularity of the suburb as a place to live, work and in many cases shop, the health of the downtown in many cities has been on the decline (Abbott, 1993; Robertson, 1995), leaving behind lower income households, vacant lots and abandoned buildings (Burayidi, 2001a).

As Filion and Gad (2006) note, the downtown of major urban centres within Canada, which historically had office and retail location advantages over suburban areas, have witnessed stagnation in the growth of such sectors from 1991 to 2001 (p. 174). This trend has also been evident in the United States, where downtown retail sales accounted for 20 percent of the nationwide metropolitan total in 1954, compared with 4 percent in 1977 (Robertson, 1995). Such trends are particularly troubling for downtown vitality, as it signifies that consumers are increasingly having their needs and desires met outside of the downtown, creating negative multiplier effects as businesses increasingly agglomerate outside of downtown.

The scholarly literature describing and analyzing downtown is robust, having been covered for decades. Further, just as solutions to urban problems have varied throughout the last 60 years, the literature and perspectives within the literature has changed over time. One constant has been the importance of downtowns; the literature has almost universally positioned downtowns as serving a specialized, but important purpose for cities. Notable pieces of scholarly

literature include Frieden and Sagalyn (1989), Teaford (1990), McBee (1992), Abbott (1993), Robertson (1995) and more recently Fogelson (2001), Ford (2003) and Birch (2006). These works have played an important role of recounting and analyzing the downtown experience since the mid-twentieth century, when downtowns began to undergo significant stress due in part to the wide use of the automobile. Another commonality: these works of literature all focus on downtowns in large American cities. Unfortunately, the literature regarding downtowns has focused heavily on the American experience, and has also largely favoured major metropolitan cities in discussions concerned with downtown revitalization. Any review of literature within the Canadian context would inevitably need to rely on the North American narrative, as Canadian-centric literature is scarce. This North American narrative of downtown revitalization will be reviewed in the next section.

## **2.2 *Downtown Revitalization: Evolution***

The term “revitalization” can and has been used loosely to encompass a wide degree of activities and levels of growth in downtown. As Bunting and Millward (1998) note, “revitalization” has been used to refer to new growth that took place in the central business district (CBD). It can involve altering land uses as well as the ways that people use and envision the downtown. In today’s terms, revitalization includes everything from local economic development, enhanced urban design, to social policy programs and services for our diverse, multicultural communities. In the broadest sense, downtown revitalization refers to increased

investment downtown, while investment can include many forms of resources (i.e. time, money, programs, etc).

Downtown revitalization programs have been categorized in a number of ways. Abbott (1993), Carmon (1999), and Filion et al., (2004) have categorized the underlying assumptions within different eras, while Robertson (1995) and McBee (1992), both highly influential articles, outline traditional redevelopment strategies that have been used to revitalize downtowns.

Abbott (1993) argues that the concept of downtown, and appropriate interventions to identified ills, have undergone great change since 1945. The author offers five eras to downtown (re)building:

- 1945-1955: Downtown as unitary centre of the metropolis, with improvements to highways and roads required;
- 1955-1965: Downtown as a failing real estate market, requiring land clearance and redevelopment of blighted areas;
- 1965-1975: Downtown as a federation of districts, where planning strategies involved community planning (i.e. public participation), historic preservation and emphasized human scale designs;
- 1975-1985: Downtown as a set of individual experiences, with increasing focus on provision of cultural facilities, festival markets, open spaces and other amenities; and
- 1985 – onward: Downtown as a command post in the global economy, with emphasis on planning for office districts and supporting facilities.

Carmon (1999) focuses on three phases of downtown building:

- 1<sup>st</sup> Generation - The era of the bulldozer, with governments exercising their will on areas, razing and rebuilding (slowly) the built environment. Generally from the 1940s to late 1960s;
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Generation - Neighbourhood rehabilitations, with a focus on improving existing housing, incorporating social planning into neighbourhoods in need, with an emphasis on strong public involvement. Generally from the late 1960s to Early 1970s.
- 3<sup>rd</sup> Generation – Business-like approach to revitalizing city centres, featuring gentrification, and private sector involvement in redevelopment.

Filion et al. (2004) identify three phases of downtown revitalization within North America. There is overlap within these phases, as identified below:

- 1950s and 1960s: Preservation or restoration of downtown's dominant position, with strategies aimed at improving accessibility via construction of expressways, arterial roads and parking spaces.
- Late 1950s to early 1980s: Clearing downtown of unsightly buildings, construction of desirable projects that compete with suburban areas.
- 1970s: Preservation of distinctive characteristics of downtown, recognizing that downtowns could not successfully compete with suburban surroundings. This era coincided with major urban renewal programs losing funding, and a consequential reliance on public-private initiatives.

The generally accepted history of downtown revitalization is that, early on, large sums of public monies were used to clear vast tracts of undesirable areas. These areas, referred to as slums, usually housed the working poor and were characterized by substandard housing conditions, including overcrowding and dilapidated housing stock (Hodge, 2003). Planners and other public officials were seen as knowledgeable technocrats, with large amounts of power over decision making. Along with razing slums and construction of large blocks of multi-story housing projects, transportation improvements, specifically construction of highways and major roads, were a major component to improving the accessibility of downtowns with the automobile (Abbott, 1993; Carmon, 1999; Filion et al., 2004; Grant, 2006; Hodge, 2003). Such improvements were largely funded by Federal governments in both the United States and Canada, and designed to have downtowns compete with suburban areas, as well as providing affordable housing. This is generally viewed as the first phase of urban renewal. Three projects that exemplify this phase include Regent Park in Toronto, the

Jeanne Mance project in Montreal, and Mulgrave Park project in Halifax. These projects all involved land clearance of blighted areas and construction of large housing projects, funded by the Federal government (Hodge, 2003).

Public participation played an important role in rolling back the immense urban renewal programs that was funded by the Federal government. The general public rallied behind residents that were displaced by these large programs. Similarly, government funded, grandiose projects began to be viewed as a failure by many. In Canada, the National Housing Act of 1944 called on planning to promote the public interest. New programs and forum such as the Canadian Planning Association of Canada were designed to give citizens access to decision making. In Canada, the Neighbourhood Improvement Program was created to allow municipalities to assist citizens in improving their rundown neighbourhoods (Carmon, 1999; Hodge, 2003; Grant, 2006). The Neighbourhood Improvement Program was much more careful than the first phase of urban renewal. Strategies under this program included renovation of housing projects, select demolition of sub-standard housing stock, and the introduction of social services in neighbourhoods that were deemed in need of such services (Carmon, 1999; Hodge, 2003).

As federal funding for major rebuilding programs ended in the 1970s, revitalization of downtowns relied increasingly on partnerships with private developers (Carmon, 1999; Filion et al., 2004; Frieden and Sagalyn, 1989). Projects remained large in this era, with a focus on the creation of activity generators: convention centres, sports venues, as well as some hotels and limited

prestige housing (Carmon, 1999; Filion et al., 2004). The impetus for such projects was to draw large numbers of visitors to downtown, in anticipation that spill-over spending would occur from this captive audience (Ford, 2003; Robertson, 1995). This rationale has continued to current times, with the popularity of special activity generators as a means for revitalization increasing dramatically since 1970. For example, since the 1970s, stadiums or arenas have been constructed in Phoenix, Indianapolis, St. Louis, Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Buffalo, Minneapolis, Cleveland, and Atlanta (Robertson, 1995), and London, Ontario, with downtown revitalization being a consistent rationale for the placement of such stadiums within the downtown. Finally, festival markets, preservation of historic districts, and the creation of usable open space and other amenities have also featured prominently in downtown revitalization strategies since the 1970s (Abbott, 1993; Filion et al, 2004; Hodge, 2003; Listokin et al., 1998; Faulk, 1995).

Pedestrianization and indoor shopping malls became a popular revitalization tool in this era. Early projects geared toward improving the pedestrian environment included converting downtown streets into pedestrian malls (Frieden and Sagalyn, 1989; Robertson, 1993), and creating skywalks (Maitland, 1992). Indoor shopping centres in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s (Frieden and Sagalyn, 1989; Robertson, 1995) were designed to compete with suburban retail concentrations. However, over the longer term, these malls were not able to overcome the decline in population levels and other supporting activities which occurred in many downtowns. Thus, indoor malls have not been economically



successful, and in fact, many pedestrian malls in American downtowns have since been redesigned to accommodate vehicular traffic.

Waterfront development has been a very favourable means of revitalization (Beauregard, 1986; Faulk, 1995; Gordon, 1997; Robertson, 1995) in many cities since the 1970s. As cities historically located along water bodies for the benefit of industry, there have been issues associated with public access to waterfront, as many unsightly land uses have occupied such areas. Viewed as a method to distinguish downtown from outlying suburbs, cities have sought to increase public access to the waterfront through a myriad of means including the introduction of walkways, parks, eateries and other pedestrian-oriented uses. A consistent argument of waterfront development is that these projects effectively increase the amount of privatized public space (Beauregard, 1986; Robertson, 1995). At the heart of this argument is the amount of land dedicated toward pedestrian-oriented, public space (such as walkways, parks, etc) versus competing, private uses such as new residential projects, commercial development and other uses not open to the public.

Strategies to position downtowns as the administrative and economic hub of the new economy have also been common downtown revitalization strategies. Office development was attractive due to the type of workers it brought to the downtown – being professionals, administrative and managerial employees. These workers were viewed as consumers of stores, restaurants and other amenities downtown. Office development was promoted extensively by major urban centres throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Levine, 1987; Robertson, 1995), which led to an

over-supply of office space and consequently, high vacancy rates resulting in devalued space (Faulk, 2006), and creating a negative effect on the surrounding community (Robertson, 1995).

Business Improvement Districts (or Associations), which emerged within the United States in the 1970s, have become an increasingly popular method for cities to collaborate with the private sector in managing the downtown, while also shifting some responsibilities, and providing local businesses an avenue to express (and important, act on, and fund) their ideas about what should be done to improve the downtown (Clough and Vanderbeck, 2006; Mallett, 1994). In Canada, Business Improvement Areas are organizations with a Board of Directors appointed by local business owners. Once legally granted to operate by the municipality, BIAs have a small but dedicated budget for which to provide upgrades to the streetscapes within their boundaries. In Canada, BIAs are likely best known to conduct streetscape improvements, and fund studies which seek to inform and influence municipal governments on the state of downtowns.

Transportation enhancement commonly involves the provision of parking spaces, and road improvement projects designed to ease congestion or address safety concerns (Faulk, 1995; Robertson, 1995). In recognition of the ills associated with an automobile-oriented downtown, the literature has shifted focus away from accommodating the automobile as a means to downtown revitalization, viewing such strategies as outdated (Abott, 1993; Bunting & Millward, 1999).

Provision of housing has been a strategy that crosses revitalization eras. Since the 1970s, housing has been viewed as a means to ensure downtown commercial operations have a population base that provide consumer support (Birch, 2002; 2006; Faulk, 2006). Specifically, housing projects have been viewed as a land use that activates downtown beyond the traditional working hours – or making downtown an 18 or 24 hour centre. Rather than directly provide housing, as was the predominant housing strategy as part of the urban renewal agenda, cities have increasingly sought to stimulate private sector development or housing, usually in the form of free-market housing (or housing for sale or rent without public support) (Birch, 2002; Faulk, 2006; Wagner et al., 1995). Birch (2002) identifies six approaches undertaken to stimulate housing:

- Fostering adaptive reuse of office buildings, warehouses, factories, and stores;
- Building on “found” land, such as a reclaimed waterfront or remediated brownfield sites;
- Redeveloping public housing through HOPE VI;
- Crafting mixed-use projects with new construction;
- Targeting niche markets, such as senior or student housing; and,
- Using historic preservation to forge a special identity. (page 10)

Birch’s summary of housing approaches indicates that the stimulation of housing as a downtown revitalization strategy has combined other strategies identified in the literature, such as waterfront redevelopment and historic preservation.

Carmon (1999) and Filion et al. (2004) identify a similar final phase of downtown revitalization. This final phase is one whereby municipalities have shifted toward decision-making models that are entrepreneurial in nature. This trend has been exasperated since the 1990s. Pushed by globalization, increasing mobility of capital, and the birth of (and desirability to attract) the creative class,

municipal governments have been required to alter the ways they interact with business, adopting approaches that increasingly involve partnerships with businesses (Constantine & Gee, 2003; Haque, 2001; Leo, 1994; McNeal & Doggett, 2003).

At the same time, municipalities have shifted their attention to planning for or providing amenities that support a high quality of life, as such amenities are viewed as a means to attract emerging demographic groups, or target consumers of downtown living, which include downsizing baby boomers, young urban professionals and a segment of the creative class. These amenities include tourist and recreation activities, and have been highlighted in the literature as means to attracting people downtown to live, shop or play (Filion & Gad, 2006; Florida, 2002; Lederer, 2007).

### **2.3 *The Canadian Urban Experience***

Regarding differences between American and Canadian cities, as noted by Bunting et al. (2002), Goldberg and Mercer (1986) and England and Mercer (2006), Canada's central cities are more compact with less dispersion than their American counterparts. England and Mercer (2006) also note that residents within Canadian cities are more likely to rely on transit for commuting to and from work. Comparing American and Canadian "Metropolitan Areas" provides a control for the fact that nearly fifty percent of the Canadian population resides within the Vancouver CMA, Montreal CMA and Greater Golden Horseshoe (Statistic

Canada, 2009). Further, Edmonston, Goldberg et al. (1985), Goldberg and Mercer (1986), Robinson (1986), Jacobs (1993), and Mercer and England (2000) all recognize that the blight, crippling disinvestment and social tensions were not nearly as severe as witnessed in American inner cities. However, the same authors do note that Canadian cities have undergone urban decline to a significant degree, and Bunting et al., (2002) argue that most Canadian cities appear to have higher densities than American counterparts as a result of residual centralization. Bunting et al., 2002 also find that recentralization of some central tracts, and densification of suburban tracts, are a general trend for only a select few, faster growing CMAs with increasing land values. For the most part, however, Bunting & Filion (1999), Filion & Gad (2006) note the suburban form these cities have taken over time, and argue that the heavy form of urban dispersion is essentially reinforcing, as new developments are designed to fit into, or compliment this local context.

While Canadian cities tell a different story in terms of growth, central city density and dispersion, all authors noted above lend credence to the argument that Canadian cities are not the same as American cities. England and Mercer (2006) argue that Canadian provincial governments have employed techniques to achieve a stronger regional planning function than American counterparts, whereas the American policy context has focused heavily on promotion of private consumption. These authors argue that the Canadian experience is characterized in part by a more uniform distribution of municipal services. If, as the literature indicates, central city decline and dispersion are not as prevalent in Canada, with

stronger regional planning functions and more uniform distribution of services, downtown revitalization in the Canadian context will not be the same as an American approach. In short, Canadian cities may have less decline to counteract, and a dissimilar government structure to work within.

#### **2.4 *Mid-Size Cities and Their Characteristics***

City size is an extremely important distinction in understanding downtowns, their history, and their future. Our understanding of mid-size cities is undermined by assumptions that they are smaller versions of large cities and therefore share the same qualities. Furthermore, Filion et al. (2004) note that,

small-metro downtowns deserve distinct treatment because the circumstances they face are different from those encountered by CBDs of smaller urban areas or of larger metropolitan regions. They are more complex than downtowns of small urban areas (with less than 100, 000 residents) and thus require more diversified revitalization strategies (p. 329-330).

The term medium-sized city (MSC) has no single meaning, and thus can be understood in a variety of ways. Filion et al., (2004) used metropolitan areas with populations between 100,000 to 500, 000 for a study of *small-metro* downtowns in both the United States and Canada, indicating that the definition of cities within such population ranges is unclear. Lederer and Seasons (2005) and Seasons (2004) note that researchers at the University of Waterloo's Centre for Core Area Research and Design (CCARD) and Mid-Size Research Centre categorized an MSC as being an urban settlement in the range of 50,000 to 500,000 inhabitants. The noteworthy collection of papers in Burayidi (2001) focus on the downtowns

of smaller cities, which is characterized as those with populations of 25,000 to 100,000. While there are a number of definitions for MSCs, the mid-sized city categorization of a city in the range of 50,000 to 500,000 inhabitants will be adopted for this paper.

Mid-sized cities have characteristics that have been generalized by Bunting & Filion (1999), Bunting et al., (2000; 2007), and Filion et al., (1999). Specifically, mid-sized cities have been shown to be characterized by a dispersed urban form conforming to the following trends:

- Reduced densities at the core (compared to large urban centres), combined with a weak density gradient moving toward the periphery. Filion et al., (1999) also found a lack of suburban peaks in density, a phenomenon which is present within large urban centres (Bunting & Filion, 1999, Bunting et al., 2007, Filion et al., 1999)
- A modal split that is heavily dominated by automobile use. Public transit use figures much less in the modal splits of mid-size cities;
- A lack of employment nodes within the core, with employment clusters being centred around locations with high vehicular access; and,
- Residents that enjoy the type of city they live in, which helps to perpetuate this urban form.

The challenge within mid-sized cities revolves around reversing these trends, which appear to be entrenched by resident satisfaction with these cities, as well as planning standards that perpetuates this urban form (such as a lack of maximum parking standards, which effectively permits developments to provide 2-3 times the minimum required parking). These cities need research that is tailored to their circumstances.

Regarding downtowns within mid-sized cities, Bunting et al. (2000) argue that planning programs should be customized to individual cities, they also argue that, at a high level, mid-sized cities in Southern Ontario generally share a

characteristic: a downtown that has declined greater than Canada's large urban downtowns, and require larger interventions to reverse decline.

## **2.5 *Downtown Revitalization Programs in Mid-Size Cities***

A major gap in research has been downtown revitalization in mid-size cities. Given that mid-size cities have characteristics that separate them from downtowns of large urban centre (such as having lower densities, dispersion of activities, and a lack of alternative transportation options), it is imperative to have literature on downtown revitalization programs in mid-size cities that is current. With regard to downtown revitalization strategies, much of the literature has not made distinctions based on city size, and the assumption that cities both large and small rely upon similar methods in their redevelopment strategies has been predominant. Of the literature that has focused on Canada's mid-sized cities, a limited number of scholars have heavily dominated the discourse. This body of literature will be reviewed below.

Aspects of mid-sized Canadian cities have been covered within the literature, most notably by Bunting and Filion (1996), Bunting and Filion (1999), Bunting and Millward (1998), Bunting et al., (2000), Bunting et al., (2007), Filion (1995), Filion and Bunting (1993), Filion and Gad (2006), Filion and Hoernig (2003), Filion et al. (2004) and Seasons (2003). However, very few of these articles deal specifically with the appropriate use of incentives to spur downtown revitalization, but rather, a number of the articles focusing on the Canadian context are concerned with the dispersed urban form of mid-sized cities (Bunting



and Filion, 1996; Bunting and Filion, 1999; Bunting et al., 2007), general structural characteristics (or properties) of urban form (Bunting and Filion, 2006), whereas another set of articles examine aspects of decline within Canadian cities (Bunting and Millward, 1998; 1999; Filion and Hoernig, 2003). With regard to Canadian literature that recommends the use of specific tools as part of revitalization strategies, Filion et al., (1999), Filion et al., (2004); Filion & Gad (2006) contribute to this body of literature. Their recommendations will be discussed below:

Filion & Gad (2006) briefly highlight strategies that have been undertaken by mid-sized cities in efforts to revitalize downtowns. Strategies coincide with the common story of the North American downtown, which includes the promotion of downtown shopping centres and accommodating the automobile in order to compete with suburban markets. More recent trends include planning for cultural and public-sector institutions within the downtown, and attracting downtown post-secondary satellite campuses.

Filion et al., (1999), in describing the entrenching aspects of urban dispersion, provides a bleak view of the success of intensification within dispersed cities in successfully leading to re-concentration. While the recommendations are not necessarily directed toward improving downtown, they are relevant nonetheless. These authors argue that re-concentration of dispersed cities would require large-scale public transit investments oriented along transit corridors. The researchers point out that this type of investment is likely not within the realm of possibility for most dispersed cities, concluding that, “There is

presently little prospect for a reversal of dispersion in metropolitan regions such as Kitchener CMA where this form of urbanization is particularly advanced” (p. 1340). These researchers, within this snapshot of time, appear to have little hope for the reversal of dispersion in many mid-sized cities, and also note that attempts to revitalize downtown Kitchener have failed despite intentions.

Filion et al., (2004) is the most relevant piece of scholarly literature with respect to Ontario’s mid-sized cities and downtown revitalization strategies. These researchers conducted a review of “small metropolitan regions”, being those with a population of 100,000 to 500,000, within North America, and identified characteristics of healthy downtowns of the lot. This research also identified six categories of strategies used in successful downtowns, being:

1. Initiatives to stimulating development: financial support (Tax increment Financing), land assembly, brownfield revitalization;
2. Streetscape improvements: façade improvement programs, installation of public art and urban furniture;
3. Erection of public buildings in downtown: convention centres, courthouses, municipal offices;
4. Transportation & Parking: traffic calming, creation of pedestrian malls, municipal parking program;
5. Natural amenities: restoration of waterfronts, pedestrian access to such amenities; and,
6. Marketing and promotion of downtown.

This research also provided general recommendations for downtown revitalization strategies. As they relate to this thesis, Filion et al., (2004) noted that successful downtowns tended to have a magnet that attracted people downtown, capitalized on a strong pedestrian environment and synergistic uses, including niche retail to keep people downtown. To replicate such results, Filion et al., (2004), further recommend strategies to create a critical mass downtown, and highlight the

importance of attracting both housing and employment, combined with an attractive pedestrian environment and strong retail and services that fulfills needs.

Given that Filion et al., (1999) note the near impossibility of successfully reversing the dispersed nature of dispersed cities, combined with the research by Filion et al., (2004) which found 19 small metropolitan downtowns to be healthy (or successful) downtowns, out of 202 small metropolitan downtowns, downtown revitalization strategies must be documents that are able to change based on outcomes. To do this, downtown revitalization strategies would be required to have the capacity to be monitored periodically and evaluated. Literature regarding the use of monitoring and evaluation in the planning profession will be discussed below.

## **2.6 *Monitoring & Evaluation***

Evaluation literature has been heavily consumed and put into practice by the fields of management sciences, public administration as well as political science. Interestingly the concerns, techniques and typologies found within the robust evaluation literature have not gained prominence in plan evaluation (Brody & Highfield, 2005; Laurian et al., 2004; Talen, 1996; 1997). Mainstream evaluation literature focuses on the use of quantitative or qualitative techniques (Patton, 1986), the role of theory (Chen, 1990; 2004) as well as the utilization of important tools such as performance measurement (Perrin, 1998). Applied planning is increasingly concerning itself with accountability of public resources, as municipal organizations increasingly take on an entrepreneurial structure

(Graham et al., 1998; Fitzgerald & Green, 2002; Friedman, 1986; Seasons, 2003). This structure places a greater emphasis on performance and efficiency, leading to solid performance measurement programs (Perrin, 1998). However, such programs are not adequate evaluations of plans, programs and policies and the outcomes or impacts of public work (Seasons, 2003). While performance measurement can be an appropriate tool in understanding outcomes, its over-use can lead to simplification of monitoring techniques to accommodate simple indicators, resulting in an inability to link goals with outcomes (Hatry, 1997; Mintzberg, 1994; Perrin, 1999).

As noted by Seasons (2003), the literature on plan monitoring and evaluation has moved from the view that controlled, computer-generated quantitative models were the preferred form of monitoring, to recognition that these highly complex models were not functional for planners. The literature increasingly accepts that strategic, scoped monitoring and evaluation is a satisfactory approach. Further, the use of quantitative methods (such as using economic data and indicators to illustrate economic impacts over time) and qualitative data (such as surveys to various audiences) can provide unique viewpoints that complement each other.

Plan evaluation and/or implementation can be seen as a method to ensure accountability (Alkin & Christie, 2004). In reviews of various evaluation techniques available to planners, Bauer (1997) and Talen (1996) make obvious that evaluation is firmly rooted in the rational comprehensive decision making model. For example, both researchers identify the first form of evaluation as

dealing with plan alternatives. This is an important step in the rational comprehensive decision making model. While evaluation can be understood to encompass the evaluation of plan alternatives, critique of plans, and evaluation of post-hoc plan outcomes (Bauer, 1997; Mintzberg, 1994; Talen, 1996), the latter is relevant to evaluating downtown revitalization strategies.

Multicausality is an important concept regarding evaluation of planning documents (Talen, 1996; Seasons, 2003; Struening & Guttentag, 1979). Given the numerous variables that are always involved in urban planning, in particular the multiple players involved in affecting physical change (from councilors, developers, local business leaders, planners and transportation engineers, to name a few), linking goals and outcomes is often difficult. As Seasons (2003) alludes to, creating a planning document that can be evaluated through the use of appropriate indicators and surveys can assist planners in understanding impacts more clearly. Further, by creating goals or objectives for plans, evaluation can concern itself with whether or not actions occurred that support the stated goals or objectives, without having to attribute them to the planning document itself (Talen, 1996).

Choosing the correct evaluation methods is critical to understanding if downtowns are in fact improving within the context of revitalization efforts. To these ends, Seasons (2003) conducted a review of municipal plans within 14 Ontario municipalities, finding that the following data was used as part of plan evaluation:

- National and municipal censuses;
- Municipal assessment records;

- Development application files; and,
- Special statistical or scientific surveys.

Given that the literature consistently highlights the absence of evaluation in professional planning (Bauer, 1997; Seasons, 2003; Talen, 1996; Waldner, 2004), understanding how municipalities use data sources, how often they use them, as well as how many municipalities use such data sources can effectively confirm or deny the literature.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODS

### 3.1 *Research Methodology*

#### 3.1.1 *Research Questions*

The research question to be explored is as follows: “**What financial, planning and regulatory tools are used by Ontario’s mid-size city municipal planning departments to facilitate downtown revitalization? What impacts are municipalities seeking through use of these tools?**” These questions can be broken into a number of subsidiary questions:

- Do municipalities commonly have programs geared to revitalization of the downtown;
- What tools are most consistently used by municipalities in downtown revitalization;
- What tools are seen by planning departments as having the greatest impact;
- Do municipalities evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of downtown revitalization programs & the tools used therein;
- What evaluation processes do these municipalities apply (i.e. indicators, roles and responsibilities, etc);
- Does the size of planning department have an impact on the presence/application of a revitalization program; and
- What factors impede or facilitate the use of these tools?

#### 3.1.2 *Research Strategy*

This research utilizes mixed research methods, known as triangulation. Triangulation is known as a robust form of social science research (Mathison, 1988), as it relies on multiple forms of data to construct an informed and more accurate depiction of issues, when compared to research that relies on a single method design (Jick, 1979; Smith & Klein, 1986). Mathison (1988) adds that

triangulation often provides “convergent, inconsistent, and contradictory evidence that must be rendered sensible by the researcher or evaluator” (p. 13). The challenge, therefore, in social science research is to ensure the proper research methods are used to triangulate viewpoints and evidence, and then to make correct assessments about the data that is gathered.

The methods employed for this research were chosen via consultation with my advisor as well as reference to other masters theses’ research strategies. A large majority of the research methods employed in this thesis are qualitative in nature. Qualitative methods are usually exploratory and inductive in nature (Trochim, 2006), which enable researchers to understand a given phenomenon in the larger context within which they (inter)act. These methods are as follows:

1. A literature review, characterizing (1) the evolution of Canadian downtowns; (2) the characteristics of mid-size cities; (3) a review of North American downtown revitalization programs throughout time; and (4) the trends in municipal plan or strategy implementation and monitoring, focusing in particular on shortcomings in current and historical practice.
2. A web-survey that seeks answers to both my research question as well as identified sub-questions; and
3. A case study of the downtown revitalization strategy within London, Ontario.

Trochim (2006) notes that, “to do good research we need to use both the qualitative and the quantitative [data]”. The literature review was conducted to understand what the academic and professional community “thinks”, or has “thought” about the topics and issues of downtown revitalization, mid-size cities and monitoring. As the field of planning has both theoretical and applied backgrounds, it is important to find a theoretical point of reference from which to



challenge practice. The web-survey was utilized to understand how planning practice converges or varies with respect to the academic and professional literature. Finally, the use of a case study is a means of ensuring the results have been tested for internal validity. Whereas content analysis is usually used as a means to ensure external validity (Downe-Wambolt, 1992; Krippendorff, 2004; Weber, 1990), where results from sample populations are inferred to the population being studied (known as the sampling model); in this research it was used as a method to ensure the results from the web-survey are evident in the municipal framework being studied, while exploring differences between the web-survey results and the case study. Refer to Table 1 to understand how each research sub-question relates, or is explored through, the research methods employed.

### 3.1.3 Research Methods

**Table 1: Research Questions Matrix**

<b>Questions</b>			
<b>What financial tools are used by mid-size city municipal planning departments to facilitate downtown revitalization? What impacts are municipalities seeking through use of these tools?"</b>	<b>Survey</b>	<b>Secondary Sources (literature)</b>	<b>Case Study</b>
<b>Downtown &amp; Tools</b>			
Do municipalities commonly have programs geared to revitalization of the downtown?	X	X	X
What tools are most consistently used by municipalities in downtown revitalization?	X	X	X
What tools are seen by planning departments as having the greatest impact?	X		
<b>Evaluation (why and how?)</b>			
Do municipalities evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of downtown revitalization programs & the tools used therein?	X	X	X
What evaluation processes do these municipalities apply (i.e. indicators, roles and responsibilities, etc).	X	X	X
Does the size of planning department have an impact on the presence/application of a revitalization program?	X	X	
What factors impede or facilitate the use of these tools? (i.e. city size, size of planning department)	X		

### ***3.1.3.1 Literature Review***

A literature review functions to place a given topic within a broader context of relevance. This literature review places the chosen topic within the much broader context of planning theory and practice as well as demonstrates a broad and firm understanding of the subject matter and its issues. A literature review should review, critique and document literature that is relevant to a specialization as well as its research methods. The area of specialization this thesis concerns itself with is core area planning, with a particular focus on mid-size cities and downtown revitalization. Literature that was included within this review includes refereed journal articles, government publications, relevant books as well as professional association materials and consultant reports.

### ***3.1.3.2 Web-Survey***

Surveys are generally viewed as an instrumental area of measurement in the field of social science research. Trochim (2000) points out that the general steps involved for survey design include, (1) setting goals, (2) ascertaining target population and sample size, (3) formulating questions, (4) survey pre-testing, (5) administering survey, and (6) analyzing the data.

The web-survey is quickly growing in popularity among researchers, and for compelling reasons. Generally, costs (time and money) are very low to administer web-surveys (Cobanoglu et al., 1997), data entry is usually eliminated from web-surveys in large part to web-survey software, and analysis is often much easier than conventional surveying methods (Roztocki and Morgan, 2002;

Schmidt, 1997). Furthermore, geographical distance between research and participants is not a concern with web-surveys; further eliminating travel needs (Roztocki and Morgan, 2002).

The goals of the survey were to assist in answering identified sub-questions. There were four broad themes that the survey was to address: (1) downtown revitalization plans/strategies in Ontario's mid-size cities; (2) tools associated with aforementioned downtown revitalization plans/strategies; (3) predominance of evaluation and monitoring of downtown revitalization plans/strategies in Ontario's mid-size cities; and (4) sophistication of evaluation and monitoring programs of downtown revitalization plans/strategies in Ontario's mid-size cities. These four themes came from the available literature regarding downtown revitalization efforts (Faulk, 2006; Robertson, 1995; 1999), successful attributes of mid-sized cities, or small metropolitan downtowns, (Filion et al., (2004), and the use of monitoring and evaluation as a component of downtown revitalization, a document predominantly created by professional trained in the use of the rational comprehensive decision making model (Bauer, 1997; Seasons, 2003; Talen, 1996).

The participants for this web-survey are all municipal staff who work within Ontario's 28 mid-size cities. Furthermore, all participants were identified for participation by the planning commissioner/director/manager to which the respondents report. Participation under this scenario are likely to be higher as the request to participate came from their superior, making the request more official and perhaps something closer to a duty than a favour to the researcher.

### **3.1.3.2.1 Common Concerns Relating to Web-Surveys**

While web-surveys are attractive because of the benefits they provide over traditional methods of surveying, there are a number of limitations to web-surveys that the literature has pointed out. Connectivity is a major limitation when undertaking a web-survey. Researchers must be wary of creating biased sample populations by only including individuals who have access to the internet (Dillman et al., 2001; Zeldman, 2006). Populations that regularly access the internet have been targeted as appropriate audiences for web-survey participation (Kaplowitz et al., 2004; Sills and Song, 2002). All participants in this survey have access to a personal computer at their corporate office and as such do not face limitations with respect to accessing the web-survey itself.

Response rates for most types of surveys have been declining since the early 1990s (Dillman et al. 2001; Jackson and Furnham, 2006). For web-surveys in particular, declining response rates may be a reflection in the number of times an individual is asked to participate in a web-survey, known as coverage bias. The number of web-surveys in cyberspace grows at extremely rapid rates thanks in large part to the software available which permits almost anyone to construct a survey. Other cited reasons for declining response rates include: familiarity with web browsers and email, inconvenience in completing a survey, and the type of internet connection being used (Crawford et al. 2001; Kaplowitz et al., 2004).

Given that web-surveys are self-administered questionnaires, navigation and flow are two very important components to creating a web-survey that leads to good or satisfactory response rates. To those ends, great pains were taken to

ensure the web-survey both flowed well (from starting with simple, logical questions, creating a “middle survey” that contained the more complex questions, and ending the survey with more simple questions) and also was easy to navigate. The survey was pre-tested with a local planning practitioner and fellow graduate students, with changes made based on their input.

#### **3.1.3.2.2 Web Survey Design**

A web-based survey was designed to gain insight that is relevant to the creation, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of local government’s downtown revitalization plans, strategies or programs.

As the focus of this paper is to understand the various financial, planning and regulatory tools mid-size cities use in facilitating downtown revitalization, the target audience was identified as professional planners within mid-size city local governments in Ontario. In total there are 28 mid-size cities in Ontario. This is different from Census Metropolitan Areas (CMAs), of which there are 34 mid-size CMA’s in Ontario. Therefore, professional planners or other municipal staff from each of the 28 mid-size cities were asked to participate in web-survey.

Recruitment letters were initially sent to the planning commissioner/director/manager, asking for participation by them or a suitable staff member. Information letters were also attached to these emails, as was a link to the survey. The survey was hosted by the Survey Monkey, a professional on-line web-survey software service. Survey Monkey specializes in hosting web-surveys for a monthly fee. Its advantages over other web-survey software are its

intuitive layout, affordable hosting rates and ease of distribution (McKinney, 2007).

The survey design stemmed from the literature, as all questions were closely tied to subsidiary questions found in Table 1. These subsidiary questions in turn were products of the literature review that was conducted. The literature review itself introduced the following themes that the survey sought to address:

- Planning sophistication often varies according to department funding (which is often a reflection of size of city and location);
- Financial incentives are often only a small component to a downtown revitalization plan, strategy or program; and,
- Downtown revitalization plans, strategies or programs are not necessarily designed logically. Specifically, it is not clear whether local governments use monitoring and evaluation to ensure the plan, strategy or program is meeting identified objectives.

**Table 2: Source for Web-survey Questions**

<b>Question Logic</b>		
<b>Question</b>	<b>Literature Review</b>	<b>Questions</b>
<b>Do municipalities commonly have programs geared to revitalization of the downtown?</b>	-Robertson (1995)	Does your municipality have a downtown revitalization plan/strategy/program?  Please indicate the reason for not having a downtown revitalization plan/strategy/program. -exhaustive list, including "Other"  If you have a downtown revitalization plan/strategy/program, when was it put into place? - <1 yr (since Bill 51 was given Royal Assent), 1-2 yrs (since the Provincial government's <i>Planning Reform</i> initiatives, 3-5 yrs, 5 or more
<b>What tools are most consistently used by municipalities in downtown revitalization?</b>	Pedestrianization, Indoor Shopping Centres, Historic Preservation (Buildings and Districts), Waterfront Development, Office Development, Special Activity Centres, Transportation Enhancement	In your downtown revitalization efforts, what tools are available for use? Please select all that are available in your municipality: -exhaustive list, including "Other"

	<p>Also: housing, hotels, entertainment, and cultural attractions (Robertson, 1995. JAPA. Vol 16 (4): Pp. 429-438.) See Also Robertson, 1997. <i>Planning Perspectives</i>. Vol 12: Pp. 383-401, Faulk, 1995, Maitland, 1992, Frieden and Sagalyn, 1989; Robertson, 1993; Buyardi, 2001</p> <p>LED:  1) Expand/Improve infrastructure  2) Site inventory/promotion  3) General promotion activities  4) Improve/expand public services  5) Downtown streetscape  6) Industrial parks  7) Special events (fairs/festivals)  8) Streamlined permitting process  9) Visits to prospects  10) Invest in arts/culture  Robertson, 1997. <i>Planning Perspectives</i>. Vol 12: Pp. 383-401,</p>	
<p><b>What impacts do municipalities seek in the use of these tools?</b></p>	<p>-Maintain/restore high density levels;  -Historic Preservation  -Civic public places  -avoid suburbanization of downtown  -dev./enforce strict design controls  -street level activity  -plan for multifunctional downtown (Robertson, 1995)</p> <p>LED (Community Wide)  1) Retention/expansion  2) Attraction  3) Base Diversification  4) Small Business Support  5) Downtown Development  6) Tourism  7) Service Growth  8) Minority Business</p>	<p>Using 1 – 7 (1= most important outcome, 7 = least important outcome) please indicate the outcomes that are targeted by the downtown revitalization plan, strategy or efforts?</p> <p>→Increased employment in the downtown  →Increased retail in the downtown  →Increase residential population levels in the downtown  →Increased office space in the downtown  →Increased business overall in the downtown  →Increased entertainment in the downtown  →Increased night activity in the downtown  →Other _____  →Other _____  →Other _____</p>

	<p>Development 9) Neighbourhood Development 10) Growth Mgmt (Reese, Rosenfeld. 2004. "Local Economic Development". <i>American Review of Public Admin.</i> Vol. 34 (3): Pp. 277-292.</p>	
<p><b>What tools are seen by planning departments as having the greatest impact?</b></p>	<p><i>Unknown</i></p>	<p>Using a scale of 1-7 (1= very effective, 7= ineffective), rate the following tools in facilitating downtown revitalization.</p> <p><u>New Business Attraction</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Financial</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Planning</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Regulatory</li> </ul> <p><u>Local Business Stimulation</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Financial</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Planning</li> </ul> <p><u>Marketing</u></p> <p><u>Quality of Life Strategies</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Other, Please Specify</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> _____</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> _____</li> </ul>
<p><b>Do municipalities evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of downtown revitalization programs &amp; the tools used therein?</b></p>	<p>Yes, but use standard quantitative tools (Seasons, 2003 (JAPA; <i>Planning Practice &amp; Research</i>);</p>	<p>Does your municipality have a monitoring program or strategy to understand key trends <u>in the community</u>? →Yes/No</p> <p>Does your municipality evaluate the effectiveness of the <u>downtown revitalization</u> plan/strategy or efforts made to revitalize downtown? →Yes/No</p> <p>How does your municipality carry out this evaluation? Please choose the answer that is most appropriate. → An evaluation strategy has been created and is adhered to → An evaluation strategy is not in place, but evaluation is performed based on experience → We use any data that is available, without a strategy → We don't evaluate</p>
<p><b>What evaluation processes do these municipalities apply (i.e. indicators, roles and responsibilities,</b></p>	<p>-Gap between knowledge of indicators and use and practice (Seasons, 2003. P. 437). -Political appropriateness guides decisions→</p>	<p>What categories of indicators are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the downtown revitalization plan/strategy or efforts made to revitalize downtown? Please choose as many as are relevant. → <u>Economic indicators</u></p>



etc).	effectiveness not always the goal. Hard to evaluate. Seasons, 2003. P. 435.  -Tolerance of Risk/Acceptance of Failure doesn't run deep in local governments (are change averse, avoid criticism, content with status quo) Seasons, 2003. P. 436.	→ <u>Social indicators</u> → <u>Environmental indicators</u>  What data sources are used for monitoring and/or evaluation? Please choose as many as are relevant. → Municipal databases → National census → Provincial or local census → Municipal assessment roles → Municipal special purpose surveys → Industry databases, provincial or federal statistics, NGO's, special purpose bodies
<b>Does the size of planning department have an impact on the presence/application of a revitalization program?</b>	-Size not major factor in monitoring and evaluation practice (Seasons, 2003)	How many persons work for the planning department? → Less than 5 → 5-10 → 10-15 → 15-30 → More than 30
<b>What factors impede or facilitate the use of these tools? (i.e. city size, size of planning department, organizational culture)</b>		

The survey was designed as fixed response, where the respondent's answers were provided for them. The survey was designed to illicit comments with respect to (a) municipal profile, including the state of downtown; (b) the presence of a downtown revitalization plan/strategy/effort, tools which compose the downtown revitalization plan/strategy/effort, as well as the objective of such plan/strategy/effort; (c) monitoring/evaluation of downtown revitalization plan/strategy/effort; (d) data sources and associated challenges pertaining to downtown revitalization monitoring/evaluation; and (e) questions relating to

department size and persons responsible for conducting downtown revitalization plan/strategy/effort monitoring.

### ***3.3.3 Case Study***

The final research method undertaken was a case study of downtown revitalization documents authored by City of London staff. London was chosen based on the results of the web-survey, and London's history of progressive downtown revitalization efforts. London, Ontario had the largest downtown revitalization strategy in terms of financial obligation. London's downtown revitalization plan has also been in place for longer than 5 years. Further, not being identified as a successful small metropolitan downtown (Filion et al., 2004), understanding the state of downtown London within the context of a large revitalization strategy on one hand, and heavy suburbanization on the other hand, was of interest.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS**

### ***4.1 Survey Results***

Of the 28 mid-sized cities within Ontario, survey responses were obtained from 20 municipal staff, representing a response rate of 71%. The first four questions related to the respondent's willingness to participate in the survey, sought permission to use personally anonymous, municipality identifying quotations, and willingness to participate in a follow-up, 10 minute, open ended interview, and finally, sought to identify the municipality the respondent was answering for.

Question 5 asked respondents to identify the municipality that they worked for. As noted in at the beginning of this section, there were 20 respondents from 20 different cities. The list of Ontario's mid-sized cities and identification of which municipalities participated in this survey is outlined in Table 3 below.

**Table 3: Survey Participation of Ontario's Mid-sized Cities**

<b>Municipality</b>	<b>Survey Participation</b>	<b>Population</b>
Barrie	Yes	50,000 to 149,999
Brantford	Yes	50,000 to 149,999
Burlington	Yes	150,000 to 199,999
Cambridge	Yes	50,000 to 149,999
Greater Sudbury	Yes	150,000 to 199,999
Guelph	Yes	50,000 to 149,999
Kingston	Yes	50,000 to 149,999
Kitchener	Yes	250,000 to 299,999
London	Yes	300,000 to 349,999
Newmarket	Yes	50,000 to 149,999
Niagara Falls	Yes	50,000 to 149,999
Oakville	Yes	150,000 to 199,999
Peterborough	Yes	50,000 to 149,999
Pickering	Yes	50,000 to 149,999
Richmond Hill	Yes	150,000 to 199,999
Sault Ste. Marie	Yes	50,000 to 149,999
Thunder Bay	Yes	50,000 to 149,999
Waterloo	Yes	50,000 to 149,999
Whitby	Yes	50,000 to 149,999
Windsor	Yes	200,000 to 249,999
Ajax	No	
Brampton	No	
Markham	No	
North Bay	No	
Oshawa	No	
Sarnia	No	
St Catharines	No	
Vaughan	No	

Mid-sized cities within larger metropolitan regions were targeted in this survey, as well as mid-sized cities which serve as regional centres for surrounding communities. Both sets of mid-sized cities seek to address declining downtowns, as both forms of mid-sized cities physically have downtowns. In linking planning theory with planning practice, it is important to recognize that municipalities do not ignore their downtowns as a result of their particular location within a larger metropolitan region, and understanding revitalization efforts is important to bridging the gap between theory and practice.

Of the 20 respondents, 65% (13) work for municipalities with 50,000 to 149,000 residents. Another 20% (4) of respondents work for municipalities with 150,000 to 199,000 residents, with 1 respondent working in each of the following categories:

- 200,000 to 249,000;
- 250,000 to 299,000; and,
- 300,000 to 349,000.

Question 7 sought to identify the geographical area the municipality was located in. 45.0% of respondents represented municipalities within Central Ontario, which spans from St Catharines to Whitby, 30.0% represented municipalities within Southwestern Ontario, covering Wellington County in the East to Windsor to the West, bound by Lake Erie to the South. Northeastern Ontario and Eastern Ontario represented 10.0% of the responses each; whereas Northwestern Ontario was the location of one respondent (5.0%), representing Thunder Bay. Finally, 10.0% of the respondents represented municipalities in Eastern Ontario.

#### ***4.1 Utilization of a Downtown Revitalization Plan/Strategy***

Questions 8-12 sought to assess the use of a formal downtown revitalization plan and/or strategy, details on the financial obligations of downtown revitalization plans, as well as reasons for municipalities not having formal revitalization plans and/or strategies.

Question 8 found that fully 85% (N=20) of the respondents answered, “Yes” when asked if their municipality has a formal revitalization plan and/or strategy. As indicated through question 9, 52.9% (N=17) of respondents indicated that their downtown revitalization plan/strategy was put into place more than 5 years ago, with 23.5% indicating their plan/strategy was 2-5 years old. Nearly 24% of respondents indicated their plan/strategy was put into place within the last 2 years. Downtown revitalization is therefore not a newly practiced concept within Ontario’s mid-sized cities, with 85% of municipalities having some form of formal plan, and 52.9% of those plans being more than 5 years old. Conversely, 47.1% of respondents indicated that their plans were less than 5 years old, which indicates, at the very least, that formalized plans are being viewed as more useful.

Question 10 sought to quantify the financial obligation associated with downtown revitalization plans/strategies. To these ends, 47.1% (N=17) of respondents indicated that their revitalization plan/strategy carried a financial commitment of less than \$10 Million (Cambridge, Greater Sudbury, Newmarket, Peterborough, Sarnia, Sault Ste. Marie, Thunder Bay, Whitby) , with 34.3% of the respondents answering either “Not sure” (11.8%; Richmond Hill and Waterloo) or “Hasn’t been calculated” (23.5%; Barrie, Guelph, Windsor). Finally, 1 respondent indicated that their revitalization plan/strategy had a financial commitment of \$10 Million to \$20 Million (Niagara Falls), with 1 other indicating a \$70 Million-\$80 Million (municipal identification not authorized) commitment, and 1 respondent also indicating a financial commitment of over \$100 Million (London). Of the municipalities that were aware of the financial commitments associated with their

downtown revitalization plan/strategy (a total of 11 municipalities), nearly 73% responded that their commitments were under \$10 Million. This result is not surprising, given the population size of mid-sized municipalities.

Question 11 was only asked of respondents that indicated that their municipality did not have a downtown revitalization plan/strategy. This question sought to understand the reason(s) why the municipality did not have a downtown revitalization plan/strategy. 1 respondent (N=2) indicated they did not have a downtown revitalization plan/strategy, answered that downtown was already being targeted, and a plan/strategy was not required to do so. The other respondent to this question (representing Pickering) indicated that they are, “Developing a work plan to complete a downtown intensification program”. Thus, while 1 municipality might not see enough merit in a formal plan/strategy, the survey has indicated that formal plans/strategies are certainly popular within Ontario’s mid-sized cities.

Question 12 was also only asked of respondents that indicated that their municipality did not have a downtown revitalization plan/strategy. This question asked respondents if they still directed resources to the downtown, regardless of their lack of downtown revitalization plan/strategy. Of the 2 respondents, only 1 (Pickering) indicated that they do not direct some resources to downtown revitalization. Again, Pickering is developing a work plan to complete a downtown intensification program, and is thus readying themselves to direct resources to downtown.

Questions 13 to 19 sought to identify which specific tools are used within each municipality, while at the same time have respondents indicate how effective the tool was in facilitating downtown revitalization. The likert scale available to respondents was:

- (1) Very effective;
- (2) Effective;
- (3) Somewhat effective;
- (4) Ineffective;
- (5) Effectiveness unknown;
- (6) Not used; and
- (7) Not applicable (intended to only be used when that tier of municipality did not legislatively have ability to use such tools)

Respondents were asked how the tools identified in each question performed, if used by their municipality. The performance of each tool has been ranked such that a response of 1, 2, or 3 has been equated to an indication that the tool performs in a positive manner (i.e. is useful), whereas 4 (“ineffective”) indicates that the tool performs negatively, with responses of 6 (“not used”) and 7 (“not applicable”) being a class onto themselves. Responses of 5 on the likert scale are interpreted such that the respondent is not sure as to the performance of the tool, but the tool is used within the municipality for which they work.

Question 13 focused on the use of “New Business Attraction - Financial” tools. Such tools are generally of financial benefit to an incoming business or development. Specifically, these tools either directly save businesses money through the planning and development stages, or indirectly save businesses money by providing services that such businesses use. Eight tools were identified within this category:

- Acquisition and rehabilitation of lands for resale to private sector;



- Business facilities construction for private sector use;
- Elimination of city development charges in downtown;
- Elimination of park dedications fees in downtown;
- Elimination of regional development charges in downtown;
- Major strategic infrastructure construction in downtown; and,
- Rebates for planning and building permit fees in downtown.

As is evident from Table 4 below, “Major strategic infrastructure construction in downtown” was used by nearly 79% (N=19) of respondents, with “Elimination of city development charges” (52.6%, N=19), and “Rebates for planning and building permit fees in downtown” (47.4%, N=19) rounding out the top three responses from a participation perspective. “Major Strategic Infrastructure” was the favoured tool within the “New Business Attraction – Financial” category, with 86.7% (N=15) of municipalities that use the tool deeming it useful, and 73.3% (N=15) of municipalities that use the tool indicating its performance is either “very effective” or “effective”. “Elimination of City Development Charges”, and “Elimination of Regional Development Charges” was deemed to be “very effective” or “effective” by 50% of municipalities using such tools (N=10, N=6 respectively). In all cases, “Acquisition and rehabilitation of lands for resale to private sector” had the lowest use percentage (27.8%, N=18), highest “effectiveness unknown” response (60%, N= 5) and ranked low in effectiveness categories, suggesting that it generally is not an effective tool for downtown revitalization.

**Table 4: New Business Attraction - Financial**

Tool	Percent Used, of respondents	Percent of municipalities using such tool that deemed tool useful (very effective, effective, somewhat effective)	Percent of respondents using such tools that indicated tool was “very effective” and “effective”	Percent of respondents using such tools that responded “ineffective”	Percent of respondents using such tools that responded “effectiveness unknown”
Acquisition and rehabilitation of lands for resale to private sector	27.8% (5/18)	40% (2/5)	20.00% (1/5)	0% (0/5)	60.0% (3/5)
Elimination of city development charges in downtown	52.6% (10/19)	50.00% (5/10)	50.00% (5/10)	10% (1/10)	30.0% (3/10)
Elimination of regional development charges in downtown	31.6% (6/19)	50% (3/6)	50.00% (3/6)	16.7% (1/6)	33.3% (2/6)
Rebates for planning and building permit fees in downtown	47.4% (9/19)	33.3% (3/9)	33.33% (3/9)	11.1% (1/9)	44.4% (4/9)
Elimination of park dedication fees in downtown	36.8% (7/19)	42.8% (3/7)	14.29% (1/7)	0% (0/7)	42.9% (3/7)
Major Strategic infrastructure construction in downtown	78.9% (15/19)	86.67% (13/15)	73.33% (11 of 15)	0% (0/15)	13.3% (2/15)
Business facilities construction for private sector use	31.6% (6/19)	50%	15%	16.7% (1/6)	33.3% (2/6)

Question 14 sought to understand the perceived performance of tools used to attract new business by altering planning and/or development processes, or using information to illuminate business opportunities. Three tools were identified within this category:

- Expedited review of development approvals in downtown;
- Expedited review of building approval/inspection in downtown; and,
- Land inventories.

Within this category, land inventories were used by the largest number of municipalities, with 66.7% (N=18), with the other two tools being used by 38.9% (N=18) of municipalities. In terms of perceived performance, “Land inventories” were not seen as having a large impact on attracting new businesses, with only 25% (N=12) of municipalities that use the tool responding that the tool’s performance is either “very effective”, or “effective”. Further, 41.7% (N=12) of responding municipalities which use this tool noted that the effectiveness is unknown. Finally, “Expedited Review of development approvals in downtown”, and “Expedited review of building approval/inspection in downtown” were seen as performing well by municipalities that use these tools, with 71.4% (N=7) of municipalities which use such tools responding that they are useful (either very effective, effective, or somewhat effective). However, inferences regarding these two tools are limited, given that only 7 of 18 responding municipalities use this tool.

**Table 5: New Business Attraction - Planning**

Tool	Percent Used, of respondents	Percent of municipalities using such tool that deemed tool useful (very effective, effective, somewhat effective)	Percent of respondents using such tools that indicated tool was “very effective” and “effective”	Percent of respondents using such tools that responded “ineffective”	Percent of respondents using such tools that responded “effectiveness unknown”
Expedited review of development approvals in downtown	38.9% (7/18)	71.4% (5/7)	57.1% (4/7)	0% (0/7)	28.6% (2/7)
Expedited building approval / inspection in downtown	38.9% (7/18)	71.4% (5/7)	42.9% (3/7)	0% (0/7)	28.6% (2/7)
Land inventories	66.7% (12/18)	41.7% (5/12)	25.00% (3/12)	16.7% (2/12)	41.7% (5/12)

Question 15 focused on regulatory incentives used to attract new business. Regulatory incentives generally involve municipalities using their legal authority to alter the framework that developers work within. Four incentives were identified, two of which are more established, traditional tools (being “Flexible parking requirements”, and “Relaxation of zoning in downtown”. The other two tools are generally big-city incentives, used by Toronto for decades, but generally not utilized in mid-sized cities:

- Flexible parking requirements;
- Relaxation of zoning in downtown;
- Transfer of density rights; and,
- Use of bonusing provision in Planning Act (S. 37).

With regard to responses, the traditional tools were used by a greater number of municipalities, were believed to perform better, and had performance that was generally better understood. “Flexible parking requirements”, used by nearly 78% (N=18) of respondents, was viewed as performing the best, with 71.4% (N=14) of municipalities that use the tool ranking its performance as either “very effective”, “effective”, or “somewhat effective”. “Relaxation of zoning in downtown” was used by 61.1% of responding municipalities (N=18), and viewed as having a positive performance by nearly 55% (N=11) of responding municipalities. Neither “Use of bonusing provision in Planning Act (Section 37)” or “Transfer of density rights” performed well in any category. These tools are not traditional tools, have historically been used by only large urban municipalities, and generally require a successful development market to be relevant. It is worth noting that many municipalities, through Official Plan Reviews to conform to

recent planning reform (including the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe), are examining the appropriateness of bonusing within the local context.

**Table 6: New Business Attraction – Regulatory**

Tool	Percent Used, of respondents	Percent of municipalities using such tool that deemed tool useful (very effective, effective, somewhat effective)	Percent of respondents using such tools that indicated tool was “very effective” and “effective”	Percent of respondents using such tools that responded “ineffective”	Percent of respondents using such tools that responded “effectiveness unknown”
Relaxation of zoning in downtown	61.1% (11/18)	54.6% (6/11)	45.5% (5/11)	10.0% (1/10)	36.4% (4/11)
Flexible parking requirements	77.8% (14/18)	71.4% (10/14)	50.0% (7/14)	9.1% (1/11)	21.4% (3/14)
Use of bonusing provision in Planning Act (S. 37)	33.3% (6/18)	33.3% (2/6)	16.7% (1/6)	0% (0/6)	66.7% (4/6)
Transfer of density rights	16.7% (3/18)	33.3% (1/3)	33.3% (1/3)	0% (0/3)	66.7% (2/3)

Question 16 sought to understand the use of financial incentives designed to stimulate local business. Three tools were identified in this category:

- Financial incentives directly to an owner;
- Grants/loans through a Community Improvement Plan; and,
- Tax increment financing in downtown.

Of the three tools identified within this category, use of one tool was high, with the other two falling below 50% participation. “Grants/loans through a Community Improvement Plan” was used by 83.3% (N=18) of respondents. Furthermore, 73.3% (N=15) of municipalities who used this tool indicated that the tool’s performance was useful, with nearly half (46.7%, N=15) of respondents indicating that the tool’s performance was either “very effective” or “effective”. 1 respondent found the tool’s performance to be ineffective, with the remaining 20% (N=15) of respondents indicating that the tool’s performance was unknown.

“Grants/loans through a Community Improvement Plan” is a broad category of tool. Many different grants and/or loans can exist with this tool, such as façade improvement grants/loans, grants/loans for the conversion of the second story of retail buildings to residential uses, grants/loans for improvement of designated heritage properties, or grants for various technical studies relating to defined development projects. While this tool is broad, it is clear that municipalities use grants/loans within Community Improvement Plans in their downtown, and are likely tailoring this incentive to addresses downtown revitalization within the local context.

**Table 7: Local Business Stimulation – Financial**

Tool	Percent Used, of respondents	Percent of municipalities using such tool that deemed tool useful (very effective, effective, somewhat effective)	Percent of respondents using such tools that indicated tool was “very effective” and “effective”	Percent of respondents using such tools that responded “ineffective”	Percent of respondents using such tools that responded “effectiveness unknown”
Tax Increment Financing in Downtown	38.9% (7/18)	42.9% (3/7)	42.9% (3/7)	14.3% (1/7)	42.9% (3/7)
Financial incentives directly to an owner	47.1% (8/17)	75.0% (6/8)	50.0% (4/8)	0% (0/8)	25.0% (2/8)
Grants/loans through a Community Improvement Plan	83.3% (15/18)	73.3% (11/15)	46.7% (7/15)	6.7% (1/15)	20.0% (3/15)

Question 17 focused on planning incentives used to stimulate local business. Three tools were identified within this category:

- Business improvement areas in the downtown;
- “Buy local” programs; and,
- Provision of time-limited, free on-street parking.

Within this category, “Business improvement areas in downtown” had the highest participation rate (88.9%, N=18), highest usefulness score (75%, N=16), and lowest percentage of respondents that indicated that the tool’s performance was unknown (18.8%, N=16). “Provision of time-limited, free on-street parking” (a complicated way of saying ‘free, on-street parking for patrons of local businesses’) was also highly used by respondents (81.25%, N=16). It is worthy to note that nearly 39% (N=13) of municipalities that use on-street parking responded that its effectiveness was unknown. Finally, “Buy local programs” was used by less than 40% of respondents (N=18), and ranked very low in any effectiveness score. Further, the large majority of municipalities that use this tool were unsure of its effectiveness. This tool is definitely not a highly regarded tool in assisting in downtown revitalization, whereas “Business improvement areas in downtown” scored well in use and perceived performance.

**Table 8: Local Business Stimulation - Planning**

Tool	Percent Used, of respondents	Percent of municipalities using such tool that deemed tool useful (very effective, effective, somewhat effective)	Percent of respondents using such tools that indicated tool was “very effective” and “effective”	Percent of respondents using such tools that responded “ineffective”	Percent of respondents using such tools that responded “effectiveness unknown”
Provision of time-limited free on-street parking	81.25% (13/16)	61.5% (8/13)	61.5% (8/13)	0.00% (0/13)	38.46% (5/13)
Business improvement areas in the downtown	88.9% (16/18)	75.0% (12/16)	50.0% (8/16)	6.25% (1/16)	18.8% (3/16)
“Buy local” programs	38.9% (7/18)	14.3% (1/7)	14.3% (1/7)	14.29% (1/7)	71.4% (5/7)



Question 18 focused on marketing initiatives used by municipalities to achieve downtown revitalization goals. Five tools were identified within this category:

- Downtown business directories;
- Local image management in downtown;
- Marketing partnerships with designated local businesses;
- Marketing to attract new business in downtown; and,
- Tourism and convention marketing in downtown.

This grouping of incentives ranked consistently high in terms of usage from municipalities. “Local image management in downtown”, and “Downtown business directories” both received a high score of usefulness (71.4%, N= 14; 62.5%, N=18, respectively). The other three marketing tools were nearly split between being “useful” and “effectiveness unknown”. It may be that marketing tools are harder to align with any indicator, resulting in performance that is subjective.

Of the five tools identified, “Downtown business directories” was the most used (88.9%, N= 18), followed by “Tourism and convention marketing in downtown” (77.8%, N= 18) and “Local image management in downtown” (77.8%, N= 18), then “Marketing to attract new business in downtown” (70.59%, N= 17). “Marketing partnerships with designated local businesses” was used the least (39%, N= 18), far below the other four tools.

**Table 9: Marketing**

Tool	Percent Used, of respondents	Percent of municipalities using such tool that deemed tool useful (very effective, effective, somewhat effective)	Percent of respondents using such tools that indicated tool was “very effective” and “effective”	Percent of respondents using such tools that responded “ineffective”	Percent of respondents using such tools that responded “effectiveness unknown”
Tourism and convention marketing in downtown	77.8% (14/18)	50.0% (7/14)	35.7% (5/14)	0.0% (0/14)	50.0% (7/14)
Marketing to attract new business in downtown	70.59% (12/17)	58.3% (7/12)	25.0% (3/12)	0.0% (0/12)	41.7% (5/12)
Local image management in downtown	77.8% (14/18)	71.4% (10/14)	57.14% (8/14)	7.1% (1/14)	21.43% (3/14)
Marketing partnerships with designated local businesses	38.9% (7/18)	57.1 (4/7)	28.6% (2/7)	0.0% (0/7)	42.9% (3/7)
Downtown business directories	88.9% (16/18)	62.5% (10/16)	25.0% (4/16)	6.3% (1/16)	31.25% (5/16)

Question 19 sought to understand the link made between quality of life and downtown revitalization. Methods to improve the quality of life within downtown were deemed to include:

- Emphasis on the functional city (transportation, public safety);
- Provision of cultural and recreational amenities (operation of cultural facilities, museums, galleries); and,
- Urban design for the public realm.

Quality of life tools generally correspond to initiatives that municipal governments are responsible for. It is therefore not surprising that “Provision of cultural and recreational amenities (operation of cultural facilities, museums, galleries)” and “Emphasis on the functional city (transportation, public safety)” garnered high participation rates (100%, N=18; 93.8%, N= 16 respectively). Similarly, “Urban design for the public realm” was used by a large majority of respondents (82.4%, N=17). All three tools also received high effectiveness scores, indicating that these tools are used heavily by municipalities, and are also perceived to perform well.

**Table 10: Quality of Life**

Tool	Percent Used, of respondents	Percent of municipalities using such tool that deemed tool useful (very effective, effective, somewhat effective)	Percent of respondents using such tools that indicated tool was “very effective” and “effective”	Percent of respondents using such tools that responded “ineffective”	Percent of respondents using such tools that responded “effectiveness unknown”
Urban design for the public realm	82.4% (14/17)	78.6% (11/14)	57.1% (8/14)	0.0% (0/14)	21.43% (3/14)
Provision of cultural and recreational amenities (operation of cultural facilities, museums, galleries)	100% (18/18)	83.3% (15/18)	72.2% (13/18)	0.0% (0/18)	16.7% (3/18)
Emphasis on the functional city (transportation, public safety)	93.8% (15/16)	80.0% (12/15)	66.7% (10/15)	7.1% (1/15)	20.0% (3/15)

Question 20 asked participants to identify any other tools that were used within their municipality for downtown revitalization. Tools include:

- Facade Improvement Grant, no applications received. Commercial Building loan is being changed to a grant, no applications received (Niagara Falls);
- Promoting the environmental and creative attributes of the downtown (Guelph);
- Waterloo is a community that is engaged, works in partnerships, and collaborates to accomplish high standards for the collective good (Waterloo); and,
- Code compliance helps upgrade existing buildings (Barrie).

Question 21 asked “What 3 objectives drive your downtown revitalization plan, strategy or efforts?” The objectives have been sorted to reflect responses.

**Table 11: Downtown Revitalization Objectives**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Increase residential population levels in the downtown	72.2%	13
Increase general activity in the downtown	72.2%	13
Increased employment in the downtown	38.9%	7
Increased retail in the downtown	33.3%	6
Other (please specify)	27.8%	5
Increased night activity in the downtown	22.2%	4
Increased entertainment in the downtown	11.1%	2
We haven't specified any	11.1%	2
We haven't specified any	11.1%	2
We haven't specified any	5.6%	1
Increased office space in the downtown	0.0%	0

It is clear that municipalities are interested in increasing population and activity levels in the downtown, with increasing employment representing the third most common choice. Question 22 asked participants if their municipality had a monitoring program or strategy to understand key trends in the community as a whole. This question sought to distinguish monitoring of the community as a whole to monitoring of the downtown. Roughly 67% (N=18) of respondents (or 12 respondents) indicated that their municipality did have a program or strategy to

monitor the community as a whole, with 16.7% (total of 3 respondents) responding “No”, and another 16.7% responding “Not sure”.

Question 23 asked the 12 respondents that answered “Yes” in question 22 why they monitor key trends in the community as a whole. Seven responses were provided, including “Other”. The sorted responses can be found below.

**Table 12: Reasons for Community Monitoring**

<b>Reasons for Monitoring</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Information directs future resources decision	50.0%	6
Monitoring is conducted as part of implementation of Official Plan	41.7%	5
Other (please specify)	33.3%	4
Reporting requirements (i.e.: Municipal Performance Measurement Program)	25.0%	3
Transparency to public	25.0%	3
Innovative leadership	16.7%	2
Council directive	0.0%	0

Responses identified as “Other” included the following responses:

- Maintains Council and public awareness of downtown initiatives, provides an annual check-in on accomplishments and positioning for future projects;
- Annual specific monitoring report for downtown;
- Community Strategic Plan; and,
- Monitoring of Financial Incentives.

Question 24 asked participants if their municipality evaluates the effectiveness of their downtown revitalization plan/strategy or efforts. While wording was different from question 22, the question seeks to understand parallel question for downtown revitalization. To those ends, 77.8% (N=18) of respondents (or 14 respondents) answered “Yes”, with 5.6% (1 respondent) responding “No” and 16.7% (3 respondents) respondents answering “Not sure”. Responses to this question, when contrasted with question 22, illustrate that 2 municipalities do not monitor the community as a whole, but do monitor their

downtown revitalization efforts. It is encouraging that nearly 80% of responding municipalities evaluate the effectiveness of their downtown revitalization plan/strategy or efforts. However, this does not shed light on the quality of evaluation, which will be explored in the following questions.

Question 25 was asked of the 14 respondents that answered “Yes” in question 24. Question 25 sought reasons for evaluating the effectiveness of the downtown revitalization plan/strategy or efforts. Six responses were provided, including an “Other” response. This question permitted all relevant answers to be chosen.

**Table 13: Reasons for Evaluating Downtown Revitalization Efforts**

<b>Reasons for Evaluation</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Information directs future resource decisions	92.9%	13
Evaluation was a component to the document that set forth the downtown revitalization plan/strategy or effort	50.0%	7
Transparency to public	35.7%	5
Council directive	35.7%	5
Innovative Leadership	14.3%	2
Other (please specify)	0.0%	0

As is evident from Table 13 above, “Information directs future resource decisions” ranks as the most common response. The same was true for responses for why municipalities monitor the community as a whole, which is a positive trend as it indicates that municipalities are looking back to understand how well their efforts are performing, and basing future decisions on this data.

Question 26 was asked of the 14 respondents that answered “Yes” in question 24. Question 25 sought to understand how strategic municipalities were in setting up monitoring programs for their downtown revitalization plan/strategy

or efforts. Four potential responses were provided, one being “Other”. The responses are sorted below.

**Table 14: Downtown Revitalization Strategies**

<b>Response</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
An evaluation strategy is not in place, evaluation is performed based on experience	35.7%	5
An evaluation strategy is not in place, the data dictates the comprehensiveness of the evaluation. We use all available data	35.7%	5
An evaluation strategy has been created and is adhered to	21.4%	3
Other (please specify)	7.1%	1

The “Other” response was that the municipality “monitored success of financial incentives”. This response cannot be categorized into any other category above, but indicates that monitoring of the entire downtown revitalization strategy is not entirely strategic, but rather focuses on the success of the City’s financial incentives.

The clear trend from the responses is that, of 14 municipalities that evaluate the effectiveness of downtown revitalization, only 3 municipalities (or 21.4%) have evaluation strategies. Moreover, 71.4% of municipalities have indicated that an evaluation strategy is not in place in their municipality. Municipalities that do not have evaluation strategies may be at risk of not properly understanding if their downtown revitalization objectives are being achieved through the use of tools or incentives. This phenomenon will be explored further in Section 5 below.

Question 27 asked participants to identify who was responsible for conducting monitoring for downtown revitalization. Nearly 60% of municipalities that evaluate the effectiveness of downtown revitalization strategies assign the

evaluation responsibilities to the planning department, with economic development staff having the responsibility roughly 21% of the time. Other responsible parties include the Community Improvement Plan manager, which garnered two responses in the “Other” category, and a planner responsible for managing the downtown, in conjunction with the Business Improvement Association.

**Table 15: Downtown Revitalization Monitoring - Responsibility**

<b>Responsible Party</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
A cluster within the planning department	57.1%	8
Economic development staff	21.4%	3
Other (please specify)	21.4%	3
Office of the CAO	0.0%	0

Question 28 asked the same 14 respondents to identify all groups of people who use the information that is collected as part of the downtown monitoring efforts. Given that planning staff are responsible for conducting the monitoring in nearly 60% of the responding municipalities, it is not surprising that the most common response to question 28 was that planning staff use the information. One half of respondents indicated that the information is shared throughout the organization, with “Council” receiving the same percentage of responses. Economic development staff ranked fourth with nearly 43% of responses choosing this answer, with citizens ranking fifth at 28.6%. “Other” was sixth with 21.4% of respondents choosing this answer. In all three “Other” responses, Business Improvement Associations” was the response. Finally, “Office of the CAO” was chosen by 1 respondent (7.1%).



**Table 16: Downtown Revitalization Monitoring – Target Audiences**

<b>Group Using Information</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Planning staff	78.6%	11
It is shared throughout the organization (actively shared)	50.0%	7
Council	50.0%	7
Economic development staff	42.9%	6
Citizens	28.6%	4
Other (please specify)	21.4%	3
Office of the CAO	7.1%	1

Question 29 – 31 sought to identify the specific sources of data that municipalities use to evaluate the effectiveness of downtown revitalization plans/strategies or efforts. Question 29 focused on economic indicators, with question 30 focusing on social indicators, and question 31 focusing on environmental indicators.

Economic indicators were the most heavily used category of indicators, with “Building permit statistics” being used by nearly 85% of the 14 respondents. “Retail/commercial vacancy rates” ranked second in use with 69.2% of respondents indicating use of this data, and “Business start-ups/closures” ranked third with 46.2% usage from respondents. Table 17 illustrates the responses, sorted to reflect predominance of use.

**Table 17: Economic Indicators Used - Downtown Revitalization Monitoring**

<b>Statistic</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Building Permit Statistics	84.6%	11
Retail/commercial vacancy rates	69.2%	9
Business start-ups/closures	46.2%	6
Residential vacancy rates	38.5%	5
Development permit statistics	38.5%	5
Other (please specify)	38.5%	5
Office Vacancy Rates	30.8%	4
Average housing prices	23.1%	3
Office absorption rates	23.1%	3
Retail sales per capita	7.7%	1
Unemployment rates	7.7%	1
Employment by industry	0.0%	0

The five responses of “Other” including the following:

- Take up on financial incentives;
- Parking utilization rates;
- Activity associated with Facade Grant Program - number of projects and multiplier effect;
- Population Change; and
- Employment estimates related to new construction.

The use of social indicators lagged behind economic indicators. Whereas a few municipalities used a robust series of economic indicators (such as London and Sault Ste Marie, which used 8 economic indicators), no municipality used more than 3 social indicators, with Waterloo and Windsor using 3 social indicators. This question was also skipped by half of respondents that indicated their municipality evaluates downtown revitalization. This may indicate that this group of non-respondents do not use social statistics, or use them sparingly. Table 18 below has been controlled for non-respondents, assuming that this group does not use such statistics.

**Table 18: Social Indicators Used - Downtown Revitalization Monitoring**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Population by sex and age	28.6%	4
Crime rates	21.4%	3
Education attainment levels	14.3%	2
Other (please specify)	14.3%	2
Homeless statistics	7.1%	1
Ethnicity	7.1%	1
Social services usage rates	0.0%	0
Recreation expenditures per capita	0.0%	0

Similar to the trend in question 30, respondents to question 31 were very sparse, with only 2 respondents answering this question. Oakville used two of the indicators below, with Thunder Bay indicating use of one. The “Other” response was very vague; being that “Feedback from the Parks & Recreation Division” was one of the environmental indicators. Generally, this would not be considered an indicator, but rather may involve subjective responses based on anecdotal evidence. Table 19 below has been controlled for non-respondents, assuming that this group does not use such statistics.

**Table 19: Environmental Indicators Used - Downtown Revitalization Monitoring**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Amount of natural areas (wetlands, ANSIs, ESAs, woodlands, etc)	7.1%	1
Amount of impervious surfaces	7.1%	1
Other (please specify)	7.1%	1
Quality of natural areas (Groundwater/surface water monitoring data, etc)	0.0%	0
Air Quality	0.0%	0
Soil contamination	0.0%	0
Noise pollution	0.0%	0
Combined sewer overflows	0.0%	0
Amount of riparian vegetation	0.0%	0

Question 32 asked how often the sets of indicators were used for information purposes regarding downtown revitalization. Of the 13 responses, nearly 70% (or 9 of 13 respondents) indicated that they use the indicators “Once a year”, which is illustrated in Table 20 below. Generally, it can be concluded that the majority of municipalities which evaluate the effectiveness of downtown revitalization rely on the data collected once a year.

**Table 20: Frequency of Use – Downtown Revitalization Monitoring Outputs**

<b>Question 32: How often are the above indicators used for information purposes regarding downtown revitalization, either for internal or external purposes? Please choose the most relevant answer.</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Once a year	69.2%	9
Once a month	7.7%	1
3 times a year (every 4 months)	7.7%	1
Every two years	7.7%	1
More than every two years	7.7%	1
4 times a year (every three months)	0.0%	0
2 times a year	0.0%	0
Other (please specify)	0.0%	0

Question 33 asked participants to identify the data sources that are used for downtown revitalization monitoring or evaluation. Table 20 below indicates that “Municipal databases” are the most consistently used data source, followed by Statistics Canada “Census”, with “Municipal special purpose surveys” being ranked third in use. This trend is not surprising, given that municipal databases can be tailored by municipalities and altered to suit a given purpose, whereas Census is a robust, reliable set of data that is used by many municipalities for numerous initiatives. Although there were 13 respondents to this question, as can be seen from the column furthest to the right, not all respondents fully answered

this question. It appears that some respondents may have chosen to not indicate any answer for some data sources.

**Table 21: Data Sources Used – Downtown Revitalization Monitoring**

<b>Question 33: Using a scale of 1-7 (1 = data source that is relied upon the most, 7 = least used data source/not used), please indicate how often the following data sources are used for monitoring and/or evaluation?</b>								
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Most Used Data Source</b>					<b>Least Used Data Source/not used</b>	<b>Rating Average</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Municipal databases	5	3	2	0	0	0	1.7	10
National census	3	2	2	1	0	1	2.555556	9
Municipal special purpose surveys	1	3	2	0	1	2	3.333333	9
Provincial or local census	0	1	1	1	1	1	4	5
Municipal assessment roles	1	0	1	1	2	1	4	6
Industry databases, provincial or federal statistics, NGO's, special purpose bodies	1	1	0	1	1	4	4.5	8

Question 34 asked respondents to identify all factors that affect their municipality's ability to monitor and/or evaluate downtown revitalization efforts. As this question was relevant to all municipalities that have a downtown revitalization plan/strategy or undertake some efforts for revitalization, the 18 respondents were asked for their participation.

“Staff with proper expertise” was the single most common response, with 66.7% (N=18), followed by “Sufficient fiscal resources” (55.6%) and “Commitment to monitoring and evaluation” (55.6%). Having “Evaluable plans and policies” ranked fourth, with 50% of respondents indicating this is a factor in their ability to monitor or evaluation downtown revitalization progress.

**Table 22: Factors Affecting Ability to Monitor Revitalization Efforts**

<b>Question 34: Please identify all factors that affect your municipality's ability to monitor and/or evaluate downtown revitalization progress. Please choose all that apply.</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
Staff with proper expertise	66.7%	12
Sufficient fiscal resources	55.6%	10
Commitment to monitoring and evaluation	55.6%	10
Evaluable plans and policies	50.0%	9
Community-based support	44.4%	8
Senior administrative support	38.9%	7
Other (please specify)	33.3%	6
Political support	27.8%	5
Supportive corporate culture	27.8%	5

Given the population size of mid-sized cities, having appropriate staff and a sufficient budget are logical constraints, as identified in responses to question 34 above. Question 35, the final question of the survey, sought to understand the staffing levels of planning departments of the mid-sized cities.

**Table 23: Number of Persons in Planning Department**

<b>How many persons work for the planning department?</b>		
<b>Answer Options</b>	<b>Response Percent</b>	<b>Response Count</b>
More than 30	27.8%	5
15-30	27.8%	5
10-15	22.2%	4
5-10	16.7%	3
Less than 5	5.6%	1

## CHAPTER 5: ANALYSIS OF WEB-SURVEY

### ***5.1 What financial, planning and regulatory tools are used by Ontario's mid-sized city municipal planning departments to facilitate downtown revitalization?***

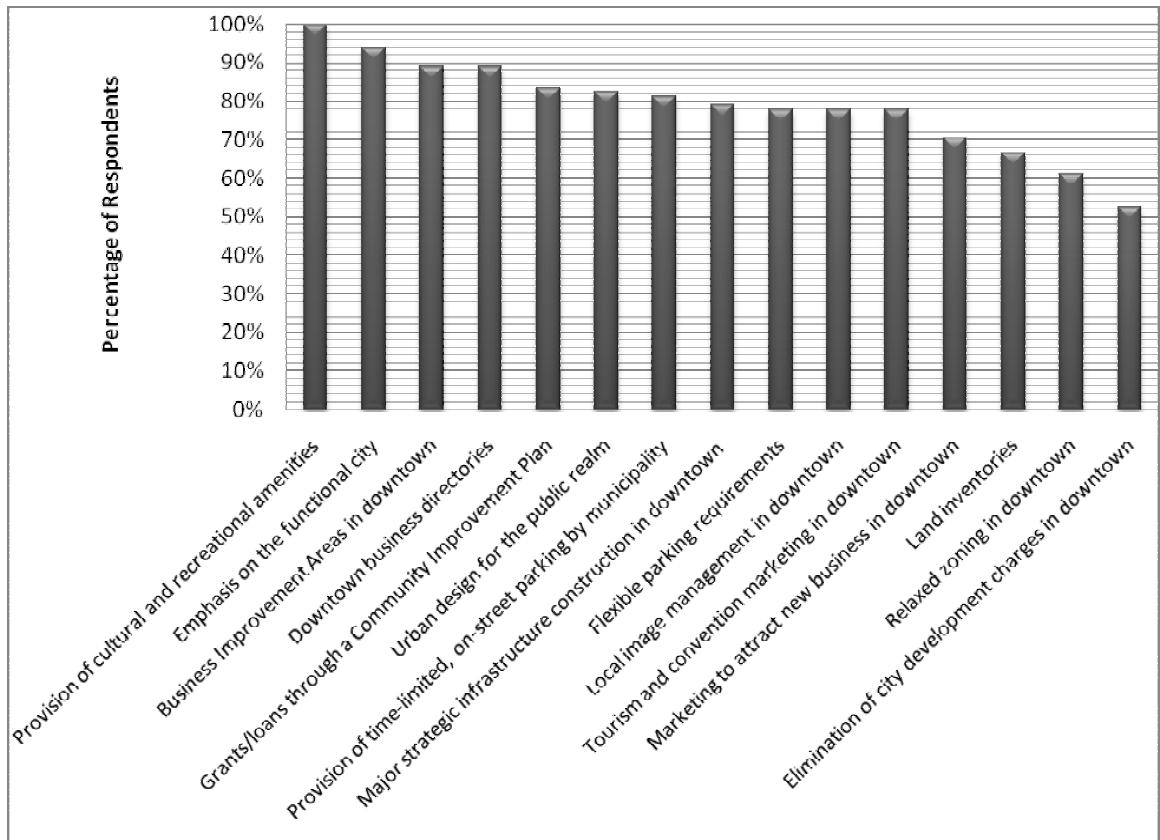
#### ***5.1.1 Which tools are most consistently used by municipalities in downtown revitalization?***

There are 15 tools that are used by more than 50% of the web-survey participants, which are ranked by percentage of use in Figure 1 below. The web-survey provided a total of 28 tools from which participants were asked to indicate usage. Thus, 53.6% of the tools identified in the web-survey are used by more than half of the participants. With regard to the prevalence of financial, planning or regulatory tools, no subset stood out more than another. However, “Marketing” and “Quality of Life” tools were highly used by municipalities. In fact, 7 of 8 “Marketing” and “Quality of Life” tools are used by more than half of the responding municipalities. This indicates that in fact, municipalities may view marketing and increasing quality of life as most appropriate for downtown revitalization strategies. It may also be the case that quality of life and marketing strategies are closely aligned with traditional municipal responsibilities.

The strong presence of marketing tools reflects a municipal decision making model that is increasingly entrepreneurial in nature (Carmon, 1999; Filion et al., 2004), and uses partnerships with business to fully provide programs or services (Constantine & Gee, 2003; Haque, 2001; Leo, 1994; McNeal & Doggett, 2003). Further, with the provision of infrastructure, services and programs that support a high quality of life becoming increasingly popular (Filion & Gad, 2006;

Florida, 2002; Lederer, 2002), the high proportion of municipalities which stated they use such tools, and the high effectiveness scores each quality of life tool received is not surprising, and supports the literature.

**Figure 1: Financial, Planning and Regulatory Tools: Usage Greater Than 50%**



Taking a broad view of the use of tools, financial, planning and regulatory tools appear to be directed at private industry or their customers. Specifically, the following tools are directed at stimulating new business:

- “Business Improvement Areas in downtown” (used by 88.9% of respondents);
- “Provision of time-limited, on-street parking” (used by 81.25% of respondents);
- “Flexible parking requirements” (used by 77.8% of respondents);
- “Marketing to attract new business downtown” (used by 70.59% of respondents);
- “Land inventories” (used by 66.7% of respondents);



- “Relaxed zoning in downtown” (used by 61.1% of respondents); and,
- “Elimination of city development charges in downtown” (used by 52.6% of respondents).

Another 4 tools in Figure 1 are traditionally directed toward customers of businesses:

- “Downtown business directories” (used by 88.9% of respondents);
- “Major strategic infrastructure construction in downtown” (used by 79% of respondents);
- “Local image management in downtown” (used by 77.8% of respondents”); and,
- “Tourism and convention marketing in downtown” (used by 77.8% of respondents).

Looking at downtown revitalization programs with this lens, it appears that an overwhelming majority of popular tools are used to stimulate business either directly or indirectly through their customer base. This business-like approach directed primarily at the private sector confirms the concept put forward by Carmon (1999) and Harvey (1989), which is that municipalities have shifted focus in their downtown revitalization efforts from neighbourhood-based programs to more pro-business approaches which seek to increase investment. Many financial arguments have been made for revitalizing downtown. For example, McCarthy (199) argues that revitalization can diversify the tax base and stimulate business growth, whereas Logan and Molotch (1987) argue that a robust downtown and its features (shopping, dining, employment, etc) increase property values and sales tax collections. Given the financial arguments made for revitalizing downtowns within the literature, it is not surprising that the survey discovers municipalities are using tools that either stimulate new business or target customers of businesses.

Another trend from the web-survey that appears to be at work relates to the use of traditional tools over less traditional (or well-understood tool). To these ends, well-established, traditional tools, such as “Business Improvement Areas”, “Business Directories” and “Grants/loans through a Community Improvement Plan” appear to be common components to downtown revitalization. Such tools may be more entrenched within the process of downtown revitalization due to the significant levels of experience all stakeholders have with such tools. Tools that are less conventional, such as “Use of bonusing provision in *Planning Act*”, or “Tax increment financing in downtown”, are not utilized by municipalities to the same extent as traditional tools. In short, there seems to be a knowledge bias, where tools which are well-known today are used most commonly. Given that this survey found the top three impediments to evaluation to be staff expertise and financial resources, it follows that these same constraints influence the tools used by municipalities. It should be noted that London used a greater range of tools within its downtown revitalization efforts, although these tools were not noted in the City’s downtown revitalization literature.

Finally, accommodating parking within downtowns is still an important consideration for municipalities. Tools that seek to accommodate parking or address parking considerations are both highly used by municipalities, and rank highly in terms of effectiveness. In the case of London, transportation and parking supply has been an issue in every major downtown revitalization document. Accommodating automobiles is consistently identified as part of London’s

revitalization strategy. At the same time, London openly battles with a significant amount of surface parking lots within its downtown.

The need to accommodate automobiles within the downtown is not surprising given the automobile-oriented culture in North America. Accommodating automobiles within the downtown was a phenomenon developed after WWII, as home ownership of automobiles increased. Accommodating automobiles in this era was a method to ensure consumers could use their favoured mode of transportation to reach downtown. It also reflected the increasing distances that residents were living from downtown. It appears that the desire to accommodate the automobile is still relevant in Ontario's mid-sized cities. Faulk (1995) and Robertson (1995) identify transportation enhancement as a downtown revitalization tool. These authors were both concerned with larger, American centres. Given that mid-sized cities feature a dispersed form which relies to a great extent on the personal automobile, that municipalities focus on transportation issues is not surprising.

## ***5.2 Do municipalities commonly have programs geared to revitalization of the downtown?***

Fully 85% of web-survey participants indicated that the municipality they represented did indeed have a program geared to revitalization of downtown. While a high usage rate, 47.1% of respondents of the web-survey indicated that a formal downtown revitalization plan/strategy is less than 5 years old. Thus, municipalities do have programs geared to revitalization of the downtown, but if

the same question was asked 5 years ago or more, the proper conclusion would have been “no”.

Downtown revitalization appears to be gaining in popularity in mid-sized Ontario Cities. Downtown revitalization may be part of a larger trend whereby citizens are becoming more aware of the growth trends of their cities and towns, reflecting on the environmental impacts of growth, and calling for forms of growth witnessed in previous decades. Thus, it may be that municipalities are creating downtown revitalization plans or strategies much like municipalities created “affordable housing” strategies in the 1990s – that is, that downtown revitalization plans or strategies are today’s cause.

The literature is not clear on the predominance of downtown revitalization programs as part of local government actions. While the literature speaks to specific strategies to address downtown decline (Burayidi, 2001; Faulk, 2006; Filion & Bunting, 2001; Filion et al., 2004; Means, 2002; Robertson, 1995; 1999), there is no significant body of literature that seeks to understand the predominance of revitalization strategies.

### **5.3 *What impacts do municipalities seek in the use of these tools?***

When respondents were asked to identify 3 objectives that drive their downtown revitalization plan, strategy or efforts, two objectives stood out from the web-survey:

- “Increase residential population levels in the downtown”; and,
- “Increase general activity in the downtown”.

In both cases, 72.2% of respondents indicated these were top-three objectives for their municipality. The responses were scattered beyond these two responses, with the third most common response (“Increased employment in the downtown”) receiving an affirmative response rate of 38.9%. It can therefore be concluded that overwhelmingly, downtown revitalization efforts within Ontario’s mid-sized cities strive to achieve increased population levels in the downtown, and increased general activity. It is clear that planning practitioners in Ontario’s mid-sized cities favour increased population levels over increased employment within the downtown. This finding is consistent with the position put forward by Bunting et al (2000), that whereas the introduction of “large-scale retail, business and mixed-use development” has been tested and generally has not been successful in reversing CBD decline (pg. 148), housing as a downtown revitalization tool may be effective, as additional residents would provide support to local retail, as well as cultural and entertainment attractions. The literature also argues that strong downtowns generally contain a range of activities and land uses that are able to attract different groups of people at different times of the day (Burayidi, 2001; Robertson, 1999; 2001), and that downtown revitalization strategies should focus on multi-dimensionality. Given that the top-three objectives were population, general activity, and employment, a combination of objectives which are multi-dimensional, it appears that mid-sized municipalities are seeking multi-dimensional downtowns, with particular attention paid to increasing population levels and increasing general activity.

In summary, the majority of municipalities are seeking to first increase population levels, as well as position downtown as a destination for various activities, including additional employment.

**5.4 *What tools are seen by planning departments as having the greatest impact?***

The six tools which received the highest effectiveness ranking were:

1. Major strategic infrastructure construction in downtown (86.7%; Financial Tool);
2. Provision of cultural/recreational amenities (83.3%; Quality of Life Tool);
3. Emphasis on the functional city (80.0%; Quality of Life Tool);
4. Urban design for the public realm (78.6%; Quality of Life Tool);
5. Business improvement areas in the downtown (75.0%; Planning Tool);  
and,
6. Financial incentives directly to an owner (75.0%; Financial Tool).

Respondents favoured all three quality of life tools that were available to rank in the survey, indicating that municipalities generally view such tools as effective components to downtown revitalization in Ontario. Five of the six tools were used by a large majority of respondents, whereas “Financial incentives directly to an owner”, with usage at 47.1%, was the exception.

There were a series of tools which received an effectiveness ranking that is significantly different than the usage ranking. To scope the conversation to tools

which are used by a significant number of municipalities, tools which are also used by at least 35% of respondents are discussed below:

**Potentially Underused Tools:**

<b>Tool</b>	<b>Usage</b>	<b>Effectiveness</b>
Financial incentives directly to an owner	47.1% (7 municipalities)	75.0% (6/8)
Expedited review of development approvals in downtown	38.9% (7 municipalities)	71.4% (5/7)
Expedited building approval / inspection in downtown	38.9% (7 municipalities)	71.4% (5/7)

**Usage Not Justified by Effectiveness:**

<b>Tool</b>	<b>Usage</b>	<b>Effectiveness</b>
Land inventories	66.7% (12 municipalities)	41.7% (5/12)

**Highly Used Tools with a Low Effectiveness Rating:**

<b>Tool</b>	<b>Usage</b>	<b>Effectiveness</b>
Tourism and convention marketing in downtown	77.8% (14 municipalities)	50.0% (7/14)
Elimination of city development charges in downtown	52.6% (10 municipalities)	50.0% (5/10)

This information should be used by municipalities that are intending to review the effectiveness or appropriateness of their downtown revitalization plan/strategy or efforts, or municipalities intending to create a downtown revitalization plan/strategy. Further, these responses indicate that planners believe that some tools are not performing well in their downtown revitalization plans/strategies or efforts. Proper monitoring and evaluation strategies, combined with staff input, could result in some municipalities altering their plans/strategies or efforts in response to outcomes.

**5.5 *Do municipalities evaluate and monitor the effectiveness of downtown revitalization programs & the tools used therein?***

At first blush, it would appear that municipalities do monitor the effectiveness of downtown revitalization programs, with 78% of municipalities that have a downtown revitalization plan/strategy indicating they do monitor their program. However, upon closer examination, there are some troubling, but unsurprising trends. Specifically, only 3 of the 14 municipalities that indicated they monitor their downtown revitalization program have a strategy in place to evaluate the effectiveness of their plan/strategy. Approved monitoring strategies are likely a strong indicator for higher-quality evaluation, as such strategies require municipal staff to identify study objectives as well as data sources. Without such strategies, municipalities may not be capable of discerning whether their plan/strategy or efforts is moving them closer to their downtown revitalization objectives. In short, there may be a gap between goals and outcomes that is disguised by a lack of robust monitoring and evaluation, a phenomenon which is supported by planning literature (Baum, 2001; Berke and Conroy, 2000; Bernstein, 2000; Madsen, 1983; Poulin et al., 2000; Seasons, 2003a).

In summary, municipalities indicated they do indeed monitor and evaluate their downtown revitalization plan/strategy or efforts. However, their methods and comprehensiveness of such monitoring and evaluation is weak, with few municipalities having a formal strategy for monitoring and evaluation.



**5.6 *What evaluation processes do these municipalities apply (i.e. indicators, roles or responsibilities, etc)?***

Economic indicators are the most heavily-used set of indicators. Most commonly used economic indicators include building permit data, vacancy rates, and business start-ups. The survey made obvious that municipalities are not using social or environmental indicators for monitoring and evaluation of downtown revitalization plans/strategies. Fully 50% of the municipalities that indicated they do monitor downtown revitalization programs skipped the question asking about the use of social indicators, and 86% did the same for environmental indicators.

With regard to roles and responsibilities, it is clear that planning departments are most commonly charged with downtown revitalization duties, with nearly 60% of municipalities indicating such. Further, it appears that planning staff are also the largest consumer of monitoring outputs, with 78% of municipalities indicating that planning staff use the monitoring information. Fully 50% of respondents indicated that the information is shared throughout the organization, with 50% of respondents also indicating that Council uses the information.

With respect to downtown revitalization monitoring, it appears that municipalities are undertaking high-level, performance measurement monitoring exercises that focus on readily available, quantitative data, with a principle focus on economic data. Economic data is well-suited to downtown revitalization monitoring. However, it is surprising that social indicators, which shed light on population levels and demographics, are not used more given the common

objective of increasing population levels through downtown revitalization efforts. This indicates that municipalities may not have evaluation programs that are soundly tied to the downtown revitalization objectives. To these ends, Seasons (2003a) found there to be a gap between the knowledge of indicators and use/practice, with effectiveness of tools not always the goal. Participants in the study by Seasons (2003a) noted that effectiveness of tools can be hard to evaluate, particularly given the time constraints that municipal staff work within.

**5.7 *Does the size of planning department have an impact on the presence or application of a revitalization program?***

There was no discernible cause and effect with respect to size of planning department and monitoring of downtown revitalization plan/strategy or effort. Given the even distribution of planning departments within the size categories (i.e. >5, 5-10, 10-15 persons in the planning department, etc) provided, it is difficult to impossible to make any conclusions.

**5.8 *What factors impede or facilitate the use of these tools?***

Responses from this survey identified traditional impediments to plan monitoring and evaluation, with the top four factors being staff expertise, financial resources, commitment to monitoring and evaluation (i.e. organizational culture), and evaluable plans and policies. This survey has confirmed that conventional pressures plague the full-scale evaluation of downtown revitalization

plans/strategies or efforts in Ontario's mid-sized cities, and produce similar findings as noted by Seasons (2003a).

## **CHAPTER 6: CASE STUDY - LONDON ONTARIO DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION EFFORTS**

The web-survey sought to understand specific aspects of downtown revitalization efforts in Ontario's mid-sized cities. Sections 5.1- to 5.8 above provide an analysis of the web-survey that addresses the research questions of this thesis. These questions seek to understand:

- Which downtown revitalization tools are used in Ontario's mid-sized cities;
- The predominance of formal downtown revitalization strategies;
- Objectives of downtown revitalization efforts;
- Perceived performance of downtown revitalization tools;
- Predominance of downtown revitalization monitoring and evaluation processes;
- Downtown revitalization monitoring and evaluation styles; and,
- Factors affecting the use of downtown revitalization tools.

With regard to these questions, the web-survey identified trends that can be explored through a case study. These trends and issues are:

### Use of Tools

- Marketing and quality of life tools are highly used by municipalities in downtown revitalization;
- Traditional tools appear to be favoured over newer tools;
- Municipalities appear to be tailoring their downtown revitalization programs or efforts to stimulate business;
- Accommodating parking appears to be important for municipalities

### Objectives

- Increase residential population and increase general activity are common top-two objectives

### Monitoring

- Lack of evaluation strategies of downtown revitalization efforts. This may lead to inefficient use of tools;
- Majority of municipalities indicated that evaluation was completed annually.

Using London's downtown revitalization efforts as a case study will provide an opportunity to explore the finer details of downtown revitalization, and understand the local context that has formed the largest downtown revitalization strategy (in terms of financial obligations) in Ontario.

### ***6.1 Introduction to London Ontario: Economy and Growth***

London, Ontario is located in southwestern Ontario, approximately halfway between Toronto and Windsor, Ontario. The 2006 population of the city proper was 352,395. London is the largest southwestern Ontario City, and serves as a regional centre for surrounding communities.

#### *(a) Economy*

The four largest clusters of employment in 2006 reflect London's automotive manufacturing focus, presence of regional-scale hospitals, two large post-secondary institutions and a retail market that draws consumers from surrounding communities. The four largest economic clusters are:

- Manufacturing (providing 25,020 jobs in 2006);
- Health Care and Social Assistance (providing 24, 060 jobs in 2006);
- Retail trade (providing 22,020 jobs in 2006); and,
- Education Services (providing 16,570 jobs in 2006) (City of London, 2008a).

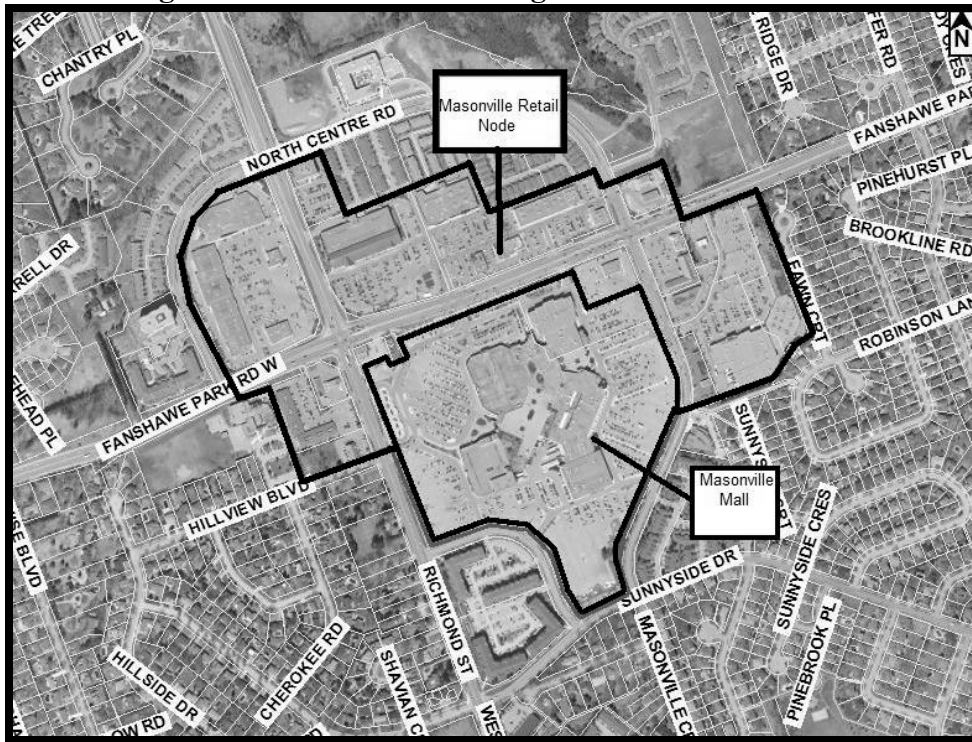
London's manufacturing economy has historically been focused on the automotive industry, both traditional as well as military vehicles. London is also home to the University of Western Ontario, Fanshawe College and three major

hospitals. The post-secondary institutions and hospitals have contributed to London's reputation as a research centre.

*(b) Growth*

London has traditionally relied on suburbanization as the chief means to accommodate increases in population, and has a history of annexing surrounding rural communities to accommodate this suburban growth. The first significant annexation occurred in 1961, which included the communities of Byron and Masonville (north and northwest portions of the City). This annexation enlarged the City from just over 8,000 acres to over 42,000 acres. The construction of low-density subdivisions such as Stoneybrook, Pond Mills, Westmount, Whitehills, and White Oaks (City of London, 2009a) has been the prevalent form of growth on these annexed lands. This suburban residential growth was accompanied by significant retail growth outside of the inner core areas. Several large shopping centres were developed to support the suburban population, such as the White Oaks mall and Masonville mall (Cobban, 2003). Masonville mall in particular, has become the City's most successful mall at over 500,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of space within the mall itself, and attracting significant big-box commercial growth just north of the mall, on Fanshawe Park Rd E. This retail node, recognized as a regional mall, contains over 1.2 Million ft<sup>2</sup> of commercial space (UrbanMetrics et al., 2007) and with a vacancy rate of 0.8%, is an extremely successful retail node.

**Figure 2: Masonville Mall Regional Mall Retail Node**



Annexation occurred again in 1993 through the *London-Middlesex Act*, with another 64,000 acres brought into the City of London. This annexation included the international airport and two major inter-city highways, which were enthusiastically viewed by business leaders as engines to reverse the losses from global economic restructuring of the 1980s and 1990s, where London lost significant financial head offices, manufacturing plants, and experienced significant levels of downtown decline (Bradford, 2008). The *London-Middlesex Act* required the City of London to undertake a long-term planning exercise to forecast future growth, and plan for the use of the annexed land within this context. The resulting Official Plan Amendment proposed by the City sought to establish a tight urban boundary to control suburbanization more strictly than in the past. However, appeals of the Official Plan Amendment to the Ontario

Municipal Board resulted in a significantly larger urban boundary than originally proposed and provided opportunities for significant growth on the annexed lands (Ontario Professional Planners Institute, 2003), further accommodating growth by expanding outward.

## **6.2 *Downtown London Decline***

### **6.2.1 *Downtown London Population***

Much like other cities and downtowns across North America, where cities accommodated significant levels of population and employment growth on raw land and downtowns became less significant to resident's needs, downtown London has undergone significant levels of decline. Given that London has relied on suburbanization and annexation to accommodate population growth, it is not surprising that downtown London has a residential population of just 3,500, or roughly 1% of the City of London population (UrbanMetrics et al., 2007). This level of population, combined with Londoner's preferences for suburban shopping experiences (UrbanMetrics et al., 2007) such as Masonville and White Oaks malls, has severe implications for the downtown retail market and overall private sector investment confidence.

### **6.2.2 *Downtown London Retail and Service Market***

With a downtown retail and service space vacancy rate of 21.6% in 2005 (Malone, Given Parsons, 2005), major downtown streets are showing signs of blight. As noted by the City of London's "State of the Downtown Report" (2006),



“Downtown’s major retail streets, Dundas Street and portions of Clarence and Richmond Streets, continue to struggle. Vacancies persist and there are several marginal land uses at key locations” (pg ii). Figure 3 below illustrates the visual impact such vacancies can have on a streetscape. This series of buildings is located on Dundas Street, approximately 100 metres from the intersection of Dundas Street and Richmond Street – the undisputed centre of downtown London.

**Figure 3: Vacancy in Downtown London**



Photo by: Adam Lauder

### ***6.2.3 Downtown London Office Market***

London has been very successful in targeting office developments to the downtown, and has used the Official Plan and Zoning By-laws to restrict office

developments over 5000 m<sup>2</sup> to the downtown only. Today, 80% of London's office jobs are located within the downtown. The 24,000 office workers coming to downtown London helps to compensate for a small downtown population base. These workers provide support for retail uses, limited services and restaurants from 9am to 5pm. However, they also create demands for parking, which is a significant issue in downtown London. Downtown London had a parking supply of 14,268 spaces in 2008. Temporary surface parking lots are a major concern in London, as they create gaps in the streetscape, and represent an unproductive use (i.e. non-building, with lower tax rates) within a downtown area. Finally, despite London's strong regulation of office development, downtown London's office market also faces high vacancy levels. The average vacancy rate from 1993 to 2008 in downtown London's office market is 17.24% (City of London, 2009b).

It is clear that downtown London does not have a sizable population base to support many retail and service uses, and faces high vacancy rates in commercial and office markets. Further, it appears that the demand for parking space has led to building demolition for surface parking lots, which creates gaps in the streetscape, and affects downtown's sense of place. The next section will focus on the City's efforts to reverse decline.

### ***6.3 Response to Downtown Decline***

The City of London has a strong history of planning for an improved downtown, and has conducted a number of studies in order to reverse decline, from the Central London urban renewal scheme, written in 1967, numerous

studies conducted from 1982 to 1985 as part of the Central Business District Plan, to the Mayor's Task Force on Downtown Revitalization of 1993.

In 1994, London Council received "A Summary of Potential Strategies for Revitalizing London's Downtown". This document represents the foundation from which current downtown revitalization efforts are based, and signified the increasing business-like approach governments have applied to improving downtowns (City of London, 2009a). Many reports and initiatives have their roots in this 1994 study. These reports and initiatives will be explored below.

### ***6.3.1 Downtown London Community Improvement Plan***

The Downtown Community Improvement Plan (City of London, 1995) was a response to the 1994 "Summary of Potential Strategies for Revitalizing London's Downtown" study, and included financial incentives that were designed to provide direct financial support to developers of projects within the downtown. The Downtown London Community Improvement Plan recognized that downtown London had lost a large portion of its population base to the suburbs, and that commercial needs were increasingly being met outside of the downtown.

The Community Improvement Plan's chief goal was to

"...to stimulate private investment and property maintenance and renewal in the Downtown. The focus of these initiatives, and of the Community Improvement Plan, is to foster an environment that will increase the supply of residential units within the Downtown to ensure a viable Downtown population, and to encourage the provision of unique or specialized attractions and public facilities, and the location of community events and public improvements such as streetscape improvements and pedestrian amenities to make the Downtown an attractive place for these types of investment to occur" (City of London, 1995. pg 2)

The Downtown Community Improvement Plan of 1995 introduced 3 initiatives designed to stimulate investment:

- The Downtown Rehabilitation and Redevelopment Grant: A grant that was designed to share the financial benefits of development with developers. This program granted a portion of the increased taxes, which would result from (re)development, back to the land owner over a 10 year period. The grant usually granted 90% of the increased taxes in year one, reaching a grant amount of 0% in year 10. This program was the first of its type in Ontario (City of London, 2009c), and signifies the progressive approach taken by the City in enticing development to the downtown.
- Downtown Urban Design Guidelines and Streetscape Improvements: Urban design guidelines were developed that identified standards for both public and private projects in the Downtown. These guidelines also identified different streetscape improvement expectations for specific areas of the downtown, a concept that was intended to develop and enhance character (or sense of place) throughout the downtown.
- Initiatives to Stimulate Residential Development, which included:
  - Removal of development charges for residential development within downtown;
  - Waiving all planning and building application fees for all development in the downtown;
  - Removal of parking requirements for residential projects in the downtown;and,

- Identifying a downtown building inspector, with experience in historical buildings.

As will be discussed in section 6.3.3, these programs have been carried forward to present time.

### **6.3.2 *Downtown Millennium Plan***

Interest in improving downtown's future prospects continued after the adoption of the Downtown London Community Improvement Plan. City Council formed a committee of Council in May, 1998 to examine potential initiatives to revitalize the downtown area. The committee released the Downtown Millennium Plan in November 1998. The Downtown Millennium Plan identified priorities and timing for public investment, including new incentive programs within the downtown. The underlying goal of the Downtown Millennium Plan was to stimulate private sector investment and build confidence in the downtown. The City identified a three-pronged approach to achieving this goal, which was:

- Lead by example;
- Provide investment Incentives; and,
- Initiate a Main Street Program (City of London, 2009d)

In leading by example, the Downtown Millennium Plan identified a number of projects that the City was committed to constructing or funding. These projects appear to have been on the City's agenda prior to the development of the Downtown Millennium Plan, and don't appear to have been chosen strategically. Nevertheless, these projects were put forward in the Downtown Millennium Plan as components of revitalizing the downtown. Specifically, funding for an arena was proposed (see Robertson, 1995; 1999 on activity generators), as were downtown street lighting improvements (see Robertson, 1999 on pedestrianization), improvements to the fork of the Thames river (pathways and added amenities) which represent waterfront improvements (see Robertson, 1995), improvements to Victoria Park, representing open space improvements

(see Hodge, 2003; Robertson, 1999), and finally parking was addressed through a free weekend parking program (see Faulk, 2006; Filion et al., 2004; Robertson, 1999 on transportation improvements).

The City's largest capital project was the construction of the John Labatt Centre (JLC), which functions as a hockey arena, convention centre and concert hall, and is located in the downtown core. A partnership with the private sector, the City's financial commitment to the JLC totaled \$52 Million. It partially owns the JLC, and does not operate it. London's Junior "A" hockey team – the London Knights relocated from their old arena, which was situated at the southern tip of London at a Highway 401 interchange, to the JLC. With a capacity of 9,000 to 10,500 (depending on the type of event), the JLC has attracted large musical entertainers, and other world-class performing arts acts. The City viewed the construction of the JLC, seen in Figure 4 below, as a catalyst capable of attracting private sector investment downtown.

**Figure 4: The John Labatt Centre**



Photo by: Adam Lauder

The JLC has led to improvement of adjacent private sector properties, particularly to the south. The properties in Figure 5 below are immediately south of the John Labatt Centre, and have been redeveloped with the use of financial incentives offered by the City. However, there are properties within 200 metres of the JLC that are still in need of redevelopment.

**Figure 5: Improved Properties Adjacent to John Labatt Centre**



Photo By: Adam Lauder

Another major capital investment was the construction of the Covent Garden Market, located across the street from the JLC on the north east corner of King Street and Talbot Street (see Figure 4 and Figure 5 for illustrations of Covent Garden Market). Covent Garden Market is open 7 days a week, and has permanent retailers who offer prepared food (such as sandwiches, pizza, coffee, etc) or limited selection of raw food (such as fresh fruit, vegetables, and specialty condiments). The City constructed Covent Garden Market for \$17 Million, and owns and operates the facility.



**Figure 6: Covent Garden Market (Outside)**



Photo by: Adam Lauder

**Figure 7: Covent Garden Market (Inside)**

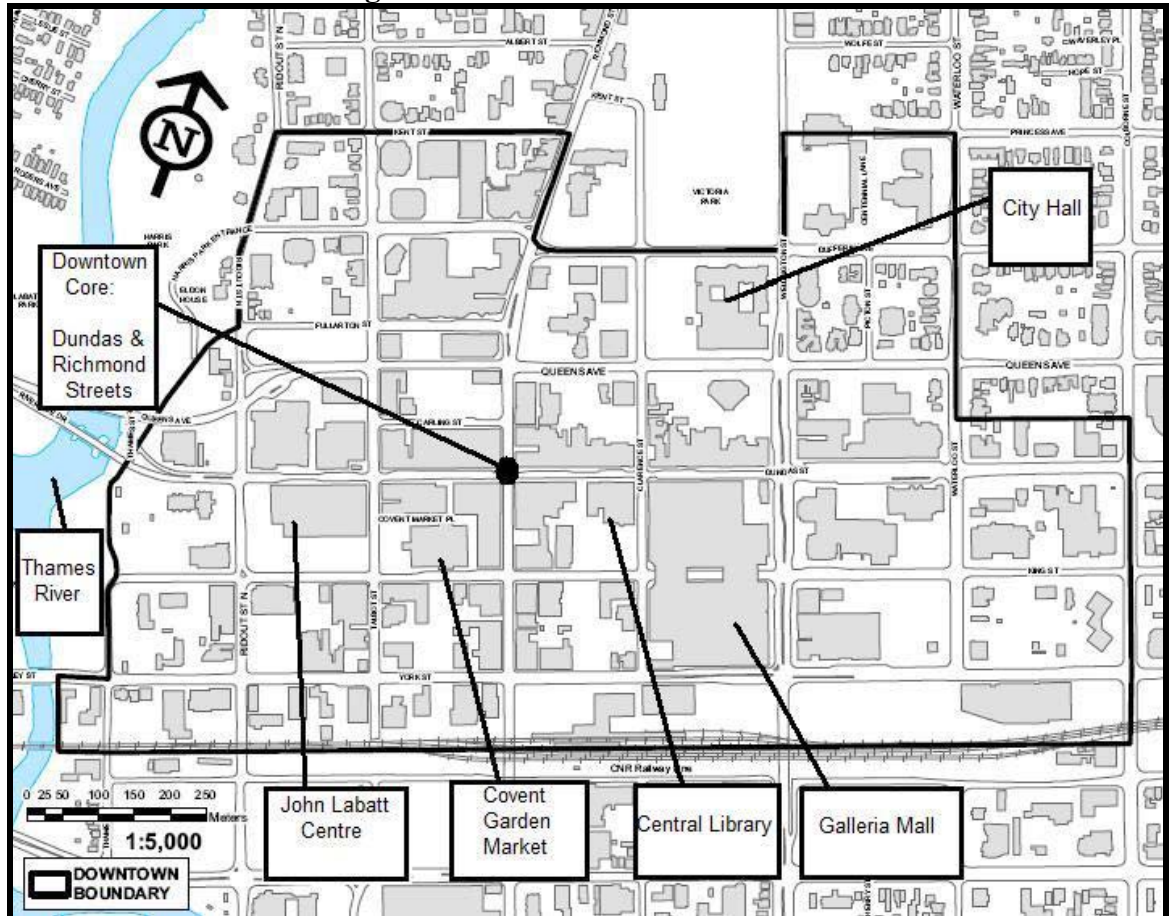


Photo by: Adam Lauder

Another major investment identified in the Downtown Millennium Plan included the relocation of the Central Library to the downtown core (from the

periphery of the core). Figure 6 identifies these buildings within the context of Downtown London.

**Figure 8: Downtown London**



With respect to investment incentives as part of the Downtown Millennium Plan, the City made modifications to its Downtown London Community Improvement Plan and introduced a new loan program for developers. The loan program provided a 0% interest loan, amortized over 10 years, for 50% (maximum \$50,000) of eligible costs to improve properties in meeting existing Building Code and Fire Code standards. The City also “topped up” its existing façade improvement loan program (City of London, 1998).

The City also committed to funding, in partnership with the London Downtown Business Association, the creation and operation of a Main Street Program. Main Street London has a mandate that crosses into other financial, planning or regulatory tools discussed in this thesis, including:

- Local image management in downtown;
- Marketing to attract new business to downtown; and,
- Downtown business directories.

London's Main Street Program acts as an 'on-the-ground' organization that is routinely in direct contact with business owners and prospective business owners. Main Street London actively promotes City of London incentives, and routinely liaises with City staff on development applications seeking use of City incentives. The most important role Main Street London provides relates to marketing downtown London to new businesses.

The Downtown Millennium Plan charts a way forward for downtown, and is strategic to a degree. However, it does not identify any monitoring mechanisms, which are key elements of the rational comprehensive model. Fortunately, as the Downtown Millennium Plan was created by Council, funding commitments were aligned with identified programs, and thus has been implemented.

### ***6.3.3 City of London Revitalization Program Today***

The City of London continues to have a suite of active programs directed toward downtown revitalization, as indicated through to the content analysis exercise. The majority of the City of London's efforts to revitalize downtown

London fall under the category of grants and loans within the Community Improvement Plan.

(a) Financial Tools

The City has 10 different grants and loans geared toward downtown development projects. Some of the loans have been in place since 1998. The City introduced new grants and loans, as well as partially-forgivable loans in 2008 to further entice development. Prior to 2008, London’s financial tools were directed toward improvements in the building stock (loans for façade improvement, awning improvements, upgrading buildings to meet building or fire code standards), or the creation of new units (waiving development charges for residential projects, waiving planning and building fees downtown, rehabilitation and redevelopment grant). In 2008, the City introduced incentives that are designed to assist owners of heritage properties, in recognition that a significant portion of downtown’s building stock is older, in need of repair, with a high vacancy rate (City of London, 2008). Tables 24 and 25 identify the financial tools used by the City of London.

**Table 24: City of London Financial Tools (New Business Attraction)**

<b>Tool</b>	<b>Perceived Effectiveness</b>	<b>Top 15 Tool (See Figure 1)</b>
Elimination of city development charges in downtown	Very Effective	Yes
Rebates for planning and building permit fees in downtown	Very Effective	No
Major Strategic infrastructure construction in downtown	Somewhat Effective	Yes

**Table 25: City of London Financial Tools (Local Business Stimulation)**

<b>Tool</b>	<b>Perceived Effectiveness (London's Response)</b>	<b>Top 15 Tool (See Figure 1)</b>
Tax increment financing in downtown	Very Effective 1. Through London's CIP (see below)	No
Financial incentives directly to an owner	Very Effective 1. Through London's CIP (see below)	No
Grants/Loans through a Community Improvement Plan	Very Effective 1. Facade Improvement Loan Program (1998) 2. Upgrade to Building Code Loan Program (1998) 3. Rehabilitation and Redevelopment Grant Program (1998) 4. Forgivable Facade Improvement Loan Program (2008) 5. Awning Signage and Lighting Grant Program (2008) 6. Non-street Front Facade Improvement Loan Program (2008) 7. Forgivable Upgrade to Building Code Loan Program (2008) 8. Tax Holiday Grant Program (2008) 9. Heritage Building Assessment Grant Program (2008) 10. Heritage Building Improvement Grant Program (2008)	Yes

(b) Planning Tools

The City of London does not discuss planning tools within downtown revitalization documents. The City does utilize a large proportion of the planning tools that are generally available to cities for downtown revitalization efforts. London also uses tools which are not commonly used by other municipalities. In

particular, the City of London uses an expedited review and approval process for downtown projects, and promotes buy local programs.

As will be noted later, because none of the planning tools are found within downtown revitalization documents, they are not monitored and evaluated in a systematic manner by City of London staff. The impact of these tools are therefore unknown, but rather their performance relies strictly on staff that use these tools.

**Table 26: City of London Planning Tools (New Business Attraction)**

<b>Tool</b>	<b>Perceived Effectiveness (London’s Response)</b>	<b>Top 15 Tool (See Figure 1)</b>
Expedited review of development approvals in downtown	Effective	No
Expedited building approval / inspection in downtown	Effective	No
Land inventories	Effective	Yes

**Table 27: City of London Planning Tools (Local Business Stimulation)**

<b>Tool</b>	<b>Perceived Effectiveness (London’s Response)</b>	<b>Top 15 Tool (See Figure 1)</b>
Provision of time-limited, free on-street parking	Effectiveness Unknown	Yes
Business improvement areas in the downtown	Very Effective	Yes
Buy local programs	Very Effective	No

(c) Regulatory Tools

As is the case with planning tools discussed above, the City of London does not discuss any regulatory tools within documents related to downtown revitalization, save and except for “flexible parking requirements”. It appears that regulatory tools are viewed as supplementary to downtown revitalization tools. Given the City’s downtown revitalization goal of attracting investment, the fact that regulatory tools (such as the use of bonusing (Section 37 of the *Planning Act*)

or transfer of density rights) are not noted in downtown revitalization documents, represents lost opportunity to market such programs, as they would be of interest to some developers.

As is the case with planning tools, the City of London uses two regulatory tools which are not commonly used by other municipalities. London is demonstrating a willingness to stray from “traditional” tools in attempts to revitalize their downtown.

**Table 28: City of London Regulatory Tools (New Business Attraction)**

<b>Tool</b>	<b>Use (London’s Response)</b>	<b>Top 15 Tool</b>
Flexible parking requirements	Effective	Yes
Use of bonusing provision in Planning Act (S. 37)	Effective	No
Transfer of density rights	Effective	No

(d) Marketing Tools

The City of London heavily markets the downtown to developers and potential businesses. Through the creation and co-funding (in partnership with the London Downtown Business Association) of the Main Street Program, marketing efforts are tailored to business needs. Main Street’s head office is at the intersection of Dundas and Richmond Streets, and has many programs that directly reach out to existing and potential businesses. This model is much more interactive than conventional City-business models in attracting businesses.

**Table 29: City of London Marketing Tools**

<b>Tool</b>	<b>Use (London's Response)</b>	<b>Top 15 Tool</b>
Tourism and convention marketing in downtown	Effective	Yes
Marketing to attract new business in downtown	Effective 1. Uses Main Street Program (in partnership with LDBA)	Yes
Local image management in downtown	Effective	Yes
Downtown business directories	Effective	Yes

(e) Quality of Life Tools

The City created urban design guidelines for the downtown in 1991. This document was used by planning staff to evaluate the urban design details of development applications. However, without an urban design professional within the organization, combined with an urban design guideline that is approaching 20 years old, the guideline's role has been limited. The City has recently brought an urban design professional into the planning department and is reviewing the urban design guidelines, and potentially updating them. The fact that the City does not know how effective urban design is (as indicated in Table 29 below) may be a reflection of the age and use of the guidelines.

Finally, London's downtown has image challenges, with concerns of safety and security consistently reported in the media and voiced by London residents. Addressing such concerns is often the responsibility of many stakeholders, including municipalities. That London is a single-tier City allows efforts to be more streamlined. That said, these perceptions were noted in the Downtown Millennium Plan, and have been noted more recently as well, indicating that efforts to address such issues often move trends slowly.



**Table 30: City of London Quality of Life Tools**

<b>Tool</b>	<b>Use (London’s Response)</b>	<b>Top 17 Tool</b>
Urban design for the public realm	Effectiveness Unknown	Yes
Provision of cultural and recreational amenities (operation of cultural facilities, museums, galleries)	Very Effective	Yes
Emphasis on the functional city (transportation, public safety)	Effectiveness Unknown	Yes

**6.4 City of London Downtown Revitalization Monitoring Program**

In 2003, the City produced a report that established benchmarks to measure downtown revitalization, and represented the first “State of the Downtown” report (City of London, 2003). State of the Downtown reports were again produced in 2006 and 2009, and focused on providing a snapshot of the downtown, examined issues relating to:

- Commercial and office vacancy rates;
- Private sector investment, expressed through value of construction;
- Public sector investment through the Community Improvement Plan and associated incentives;
- Number of new residential units created;
- Current value assessment trends, or property values;
- New/growing businesses in Downtown; and
- Length of street frontage not occupied by a building.

As found in the web-survey, the City of London focuses its monitoring efforts on economic trends. The City is using vacancy rates, building permits (which provides construction value, number of new units created), and business start-ups as key indicators. As indicated in Table 16, these are the three most prevalent indicators identified in the web-survey.

London’s use of social indicators is secondary to tracking economic indicators, but these social indicators are extremely useful for the City. The City

uses Census Canada data to understand the demographics (age, education level, income) of new residents within the downtown, and contrasts downtown trends with planning district and city-wide trends.

London indicated in the web-survey that monitoring is completed annually, completed by planning staff, and shared throughout the organization. The content analysis shows that monitoring reports have been completed in 2003, 2005, 2006 and 2009. Thus, if monitoring is conducted annually, it appears that the public and Council as a whole are not receiving these reports.

#### **6.5 *Recent Trends in Downtown Revitalization - City of London***

Within downtown London, 1,731 residential units have been constructed from 1998 to 2007, representing \$150 Million in construction value. This trend is encouraging, as the population base within downtown will support retail and commercial uses within the downtown. The City notes that these units are attracting young residents, and seniors (City of London, 2009b), which are target populations.

Assessed property values are increasing within the downtown. While it is not clear if these increases can be attributed to inflation and natural property value increases, assessed property values were declining in the 1990s. Increased property values are therefore seen as a positive trend, and represent increased tax assessment for the City.

Ground floor vacancies have declined since 2006. Vacancies have been a concern in all monitoring reports, and it appears that City's efforts have not been

able to reverse negative trends thus far. Office vacancies are also of concern in downtown London. Office vacancies have been below 15% (2000) just one year from 1993 to 2008. Given that London strongly regulates the location of office development within the City, and prohibits large office development outside of the downtown, it is apparent that downtown London's office market is relatively weak.

## **6.6 Conclusions - City of London**

It is clear that the largest revitalization program has been the construction of catalyst projects. Even so, these projects have not been silver bullets for downtown London, but rather have illustrated the bleak view taken by Filion et al., (1999) in reversing downtown decline in mid-sized cities. With a plethora of suburban housing choices, and commercial opportunities following these customers, immense sums of money spent on catalyst projects are not a magic bullet for mid-sized cities.

London's approach to downtown revitalization has not been static. Since 1995, there have been three iterations of financial incentives introduced within the downtown. London's downtown revitalization efforts centre on the use of grants and loans through a Community Improvement Plan. These grants and loans in turn revolve around five concepts

- Encouraging residential development within the downtown;
- Improving the aesthetics of buildings (focusing on façade, signage and lighting of buildings);
- Ensuring buildings meet building and fire codes;
- Assisting owners of heritage properties; and

- Encouraging development generally.

These grant and loan programs are well used by developers, and given the trends within downtown (with less than desirable vacancies, a small residential population, a weak retail market and an office market that presents challenges and has a high vacancy rate), downtown London would likely not be able to compete with suburban locales in the future without these programs. While there is no evidence to support it, it may be that City initiatives throughout time have been the reason why downtown London has not declined further. Put another way, one cannot help but wonder what would happen to downtown London if it did not enjoy the level of support it does have.

The City of London relies on the London Downtown Business Association and Main Street London to actively market the downtown. These organizations have visible locations within downtown London, and Main Street London in particular provides a very hands-on approach in liaising with prospective businesses or businesses with growth aspirations. Main Street London is often the point of first contact for existing businesses who wish to redevelop property and utilize City incentives.

The City undertakes numerous initiatives that have not been linked with downtown revitalization efforts. The most obvious example revolves around attracting the creative class to downtown London. The City has recently developed a strategy to attract the creative class to the City, and has identified the different quality of life amenities that the creative class may be interested in. However, this initiative does not appear to link strongly into the City's downtown

revitalization efforts, as the City seems to understand its downtown revitalization efforts as providing grants and loans through its Community Improvement Plan. Further, the City does not track certain financial incentives. In particular, the following revitalization tools are not monitored:

- waiving of development charges for residential development downtown;  
and,
- waiving of planning and building fees for all development downtown.

Further, “Use of the bonusing provision in the *Planning Act*”, and “Transfer of density rights” are not identified in any downtown revitalization documents, included monitoring reports, but are rather operationalized in the official plan and zoning by-law. In short, it appears that the City’s incremental approach to developing downtown revitalization strategies has led to some oversight.

## CHAPTER 7: COMPARING CASE STUDY TO WEB-SURVEY

### 7.1 *Use of Downtown Revitalization Tools*

Responses to the web-survey indicated that marketing and quality of life tools are highly used by municipalities in downtown revitalization. London relied on partnerships with its downtown business association to create a separate entity (Main Street London) that marketed business opportunities in downtown London. Further, London's Main Street organization provided business with information on City of London downtown building improvement programs. With regard to the use of quality of life tools, while London does have urban design guidelines, they are outdated and are not complemented with an urban design professional at the City of London.

The web-survey also indicated that traditional tools appear to be favoured over newer tools. London certainly uses a number of traditional tools, such as grants/loans through a Community Improvement Plan, Business Improvement Areas, and Downtown Business Directories. However, London also uses newer tools in attempts to revitalize downtown, such as the use of Height and/or Density Bonusing through Section 37 of the *Planning Act*, and Transfer of Density Rights. However, as discussed in Section 6.3.3 above, it appears that regulatory tools are viewed as supplementary to downtown revitalization tools in London. Given the City's downtown revitalization goal of attracting investment, the fact that regulatory tools (such as the use of bonusing (Section 37 of the *Planning Act*) or transfer of density rights) are not noted in downtown revitalization documents

represents lost opportunity to market such programs, as they would be of interest to some developers.

As suggested through the web-survey and supported through the case-study, municipalities appear to be tailoring their downtown revitalization programs or efforts to stimulate business. London provided a plethora of financial tools that were designed to stimulate investment, and generally shared the risks of redeveloping properties within downtown. These tools were directed at property owners within downtown.

The web-survey also highlighted the importance of adequate parking in Ontario's mid-sized city downtowns. Consequently, municipalities directed a portion of their revitalization efforts to ensure sufficient parking opportunities existed. London struggles with the large number of surface parking spaces that exist downtown, and may be a prime example of the need to balance opportunities for parking with other land uses. As a result of London's struggles with parking, London does not require any parking for residential projects within the downtown. In practice, developers always provide parking with residential projects. However, London has decided that developers understand parking needs better than the City and likely hope to entice developers to reduce the number of parking spaces they provide. Given that parking is an issue in downtown London, this permissive parking standard may be seldom used. Finally, London provides time-limited, free on-street parking within the downtown, as do many municipalities, which likely targets consumers rather than existing residents of downtown.

As it relates to this thesis, Filion et al. (2004) noted that common strategies found within municipalities with successful downtowns included:

- Initiatives to stimulate development;
- Erection of public buildings in downtown;
- Transportation and Parking programs, such as municipal parking programs; and,
- Marketing and promotion of downtown.

The web-survey confirmed that Ontario's mid-sized cities are undertaking initiatives to stimulate development. Such initiatives can be financial, planning or regulatory initiatives. Further, erection of public buildings was illustrated through the relocation of London's Central Library to the downtown core. Transportation and parking was an identifiable issue from the web-survey, as tools that seek to accommodate parking or address parking considerations are both highly used by municipalities, and rank highly in terms of perceived effectiveness. Finally, according to the web-survey, the majority of municipalities use marketing programs to promote the downtown. This web-survey suggests that successful mid-sized cities may not be alone in the use of the tools noted above. Further work needs to be done to understand the relationship between use of tool and success of downtown in mid-sized cities.

The web-survey and case study have also confirmed the final phase of downtown revitalization that was highlighted by both Filion et al. (2004) and Carmon (1999), whereby municipalities are increasingly taking an entrepreneurial, business-like approach to revitalization city centres. Many



strategies in London are designed to stimulate investment of the private sector. Further, the construction of large the John Labatt Centre in London has been the product of public-private-partnerships, which is a risk-reducing venture with private capital.

Transportation featured prominently in downtown revitalization efforts within Ontario's mid-sized cities. Parking in particular, was an element that was planned for as part of downtown revitalization. While the scholarly literature tends to recognize the apparent contradiction between downtown revitalization and planning for the automobile (Abott, 1993; Bunting and Millward, 1999; Filion, 2006), Ontario's mid-sized cities appear to have a real need to plan for the automobile in order to effectively attract customers. This was certainly the case in London, Ontario.

The Case study illustrated a clear example of the construction of a special activity centre (John Labatt Centre) as part of downtown revitalization efforts. Special activity centres are noted in the literature as projects designed to attract visitors to the downtown, build investor confidence (Ford, 2003; Robertson, 1995; 1999). London has also constructed a festival marketplace as part of its downtown revitalization strategy, which is a common revitalization strategy (Abbott, 1993; Filion et al., 2004; Hodge, 2003; Listokin, Listokin and Lahr, 1998; Faulk, 1995).

Finally, stimulating the local downtown housing market was of primary importance to Ontario's mid-sized cities. The literature consistently notes the extreme importance of housing as a downtown revitalization strategy over time. It appears that Ontario's mid-sized cities prescribe to the theory that downtowns

cannot truly function and become centres with strong retail markets, and activity hubs with synergistic uses within proximity without housing. Further, Ontario's mid-sized cities appear to be increasingly seeking to stimulate the private sector in constructing housing, a phenomena which is noted in the literature (Birch, 2002; Faulk, 2006; Wagner et al., 1995).

## **7.2 *Downtown Revitalization Objectives***

Increase Residential Population and Increase General Activity are the most prevalent objectives of downtown revitalization in Ontario's mid-sized cities. This rings true in the case of London's response to the web-survey, and for good reason. London's downtown residential population is just 1% of the City's total population, and signifies Londoners' preference for suburban living. Downtown London's retail and commercial markets are struggling, and staff has targeted increasing the population base as their prime objective to reverse these trends. The trends uncovered in London (of a small downtown population base and weak retail and commercial markets) may in fact be replicated throughout Ontario's mid-sized cities.

Bunting et al (2000) note the importance of housing as a downtown revitalization tool, and conclude that additional residents would provide support to local retail, as well as cultural and entertainment attractions. The literature also argues that strong downtowns generally contain a range of activities and land uses that are able to attract different groups of people at different times of the day

(Burayidi, 2001; Robertson, 1999; 2001), and that downtown revitalization strategies should focus on multi-dimensionality. Given that the top-three objectives of the web-survey were increasing population within the downtown, increasing general activity within the downtown, and increasing employment within the downtown, a combination of objectives which are multi-dimensional, it appears that mid-sized municipalities are seeking multi-dimensional downtowns, with particular attention paid to increasing population levels.

### ***7.3 Monitoring and Evaluation Efforts***

The web-survey identified a lack of evaluation strategies of downtown revitalization efforts within Ontario's mid-sized cities. This trend is problematic, as it may lead to inefficient use of tools. For example, municipalities which do not have evaluation strategies may use inappropriate data sources, or may evaluate downtown revitalization efforts at a superficial level. Another trend identified in the web-survey was annual evaluation of downtown revitalization plan/strategy or effort.

While London indicated that they do not have a formal strategy in the web-survey, they have taken steps to understand on a semi-annual basis (i.e. 2003, 2005, 2006 and 2009 reports) the effect of some financial incentives geared toward downtown revitalization efforts. As noted earlier, this monitoring does not include all financial incentives, nor does it comprehensively analyze the effect of other City efforts to improve downtown (i.e. the impact of reduced parking standards, the interest in using height and/or density bonusing in the downtown,

etc). Finally, as London focuses its monitoring efforts on some financial incentives, little feedback is being collected from downtown residents, businesses or developers. A comprehensive monitoring and evaluation strategy may identify the need to conduct surveys of this type. Turning to the web-survey, only 3 responding municipalities indicated they have an evaluation strategy. Evaluation strategies are likely a strong indicator for higher-quality evaluation, as such strategies require municipal staff to identify study objectives as well as data sources. For example, an evaluation strategy in London may lead to a more complete monitoring and evaluation program of all downtown revitalization tools, rather than just financial tools. Further, the web-survey illustrated that social and environmental data is not well used.

Although London indicated that it did not have an evaluation strategy, it does use social indicators (Census Canada data) to understand the demographics (age, education level, income) of new residents within the downtown, and contrasts downtown trends with planning district and city-wide trends. This is likely very helpful for staff in understanding trends in attracting new residents to downtown.

London indicated in the web-survey that monitoring is completed annually, completed by planning staff, and shared throughout the organization. The content analysis shows that monitoring reports have been completed in 2003, 2005, 2006 and 2009. Thus, if monitoring is conducted annually, it appears that the public and Council as a whole are not receiving these reports.

The web-survey and content analysis did not concretely confirm or deny the literature with regard to monitoring and evaluation. However, the web-survey and content analysis do suggest that plan evaluation is not a particularly robust element of downtown revitalization efforts in Ontario's mid-sized cities. The literature does note that plan evaluation is not particularly strong within the field of urban planning (Brody & Highfield, 2005; Laurian et al., 2004; Talen, 1996; 1997).

## **CHAPTER 8: RECOMMENDATIONS & CONCLUSIONS**

This research seeks to understand which financial, planning and regulatory tools are used by Ontario's mid-size city municipal planning departments to facilitate downtown revitalization. Further, this research explores how well municipalities use monitoring and evaluation to link revitalization goals and objectives in identifying the appropriate tools within the local context. While local context and trends matter greatly in revitalizing downtowns, general recommendations can be made for planners within Ontario's mid-sized cities.

### ***8.1 Implications for Practitioners: Recommendations for Ontario's mid-sized cities***

#### ***8.1.1 Mid-Sized Cities: Successful Downtowns vs. Other Downtowns***

This thesis has indicated that Ontario's mid-sized cities utilize similar downtown revitalization tools as mid-sized cities with successful downtowns, as per Filion et al., (2004). It stands to reason that downtown revitalization tools cannot reverse downtown decline alone. Rather, successful downtowns have special characteristics that make these communities attractive locales for investment. Such special characteristics were also identified by Filion et al., (2004).

Planners within mid-sized cities need to recognize the limits of downtown revitalization tools, and express these limitations to decision-makers. As Filion et al., (1999) noted, significant public sector investment may be required to reverse decline in most mid-sized cities. As suggested through the case study of London Ontario, even significant levels of public sector investment cannot necessarily

reverse decline in a municipality where consumer preferences and private sector investment largely favour and support suburban lifestyles. Planners need to recognize that only a select few mid-sized municipalities will have outstanding downtowns. Even fewer mid-sized municipalities will be able to reverse decline to a significant degree.

### ***8.1.2 Structure of revitalization programs***

In order to maximize results, a framework to developing, implementing, monitoring, and evaluating downtown revitalization plans or strategies should be developed. Using the rational comprehensive decision making model as a foundation, common elements of developing a downtown revitalization plan or strategy should include:

- (a) Define goals and objectives: Downtown revitalization plans/strategies should be rooted in goals and objectives. The ultimate goal of downtown revitalization plans/strategies is enhancement of the downtown (or revitalization, as defined by the municipality). The objectives may vary throughout Ontario, based on local context. Based on the results of the web-survey, it would appear that increasing the population base and increasing general activity are the most common objectives within Ontario's mid-sized cities.
- (b) Define the problem, and system (which includes constraints, possible inputs, outputs, values): This step is critical, and requires municipal staff to take stock of the baseline conditions within the downtown, incentives that may assist in addressing the objectives, the resource inputs that are available within the municipality (i.e. staff resources, financial resources, organizational buy-in, etc). Public consultation should occur at this stage to assist in understanding the baseline conditions and identify local actors. While the rational comprehensive model would dictate that evaluation criteria would be identified at this stage, it is not appropriate to do so at this time.
- (c) Generate, analyze and evaluate solutions: Solutions are the incentives or other interventions of the downtown revitalization

plan/strategy. To act strategically, municipal staff must ensure that tools within the revitalization plan/strategy are consistently tied to the stated objectives. With respect to incentives, this research indicates that some are more effective than others, and should be given a first look.

As incentives are anticipated to be used in response to desired outcomes (achieving objectives and goal), any tool identified must be based on local context. Further, some revitalization tools have very different implementation requirements, from legal, staff and financial standpoints. Local context will identify what incentives are affordable (politically and financially) to the municipality.

For illustration purposes, it has been assumed that a theoretical municipality wishes to increase the population base of its downtown, but has limited staff and/or financial resources. Municipal staff would be left to understand which incentives the organization could support financially and otherwise, and would rank incentives from most to least desirable at this stage.

	<b>Incentive</b>	<b>Type of Incentive</b>	<b>Supports Objective?</b>
1	Provision of cultural and recreational amenities	Quality of Life Improvement	Yes
2	Emphasis on the functional city	Quality of Life Improvement	Yes
3	Business Improvement Areas in downtown	Planning	Yes
4	Downtown business directories	Marketing	Not needed
5	Grants/loans through a Community Improvement Plan	Financial	Yes
6	Urban design for the public realm	Quality of Life Improvement	Yes
7	Provision of time-limited, on-street parking by municipality	Planning	Not needed
8	Major strategic infrastructure construction in downtown	Financial	Not needed
9	Flexible parking requirements	Regulatory	Yes
10	Local image management in downtown	Marketing	Yes
11	Marketing to attract new business in downtown	Marketing	Yes
12	Relaxed zoning in downtown	Regulatory	Yes
13	Elimination of city development charges in downtown	Financial	Yes
14	Tourism and convention marketing in downtown	Marketing	No

(d) Develop revitalization plan/strategy:

Building on the ranked incentives, municipal staff should begin developing a revitalization plan. The plan itself will be a hard document that identifies all steps taken thus far, flushing out the process followed. At



this point, consultation with key stakeholders should occur. Liaising with the building industry would help staff understand which incentives will work well and others that may need to be modified. Staff should begin to draft various information primers, identify any legal agreements and other implementation document for various incentives.

This stage also requires the identification of an evaluation plan. Details to be explored include:

- Data sources and indicators to be used: The web-survey has shown that “Municipal databases”, “National census”, and “Municipal special purpose surveys” are the three most commonly used data sources. Municipal databases likely provide quantitative data such as building permit data which can be a very rich source of data, as it details the type of building activity (residential, commercial, etc), construction value, the number of units constructed, etc. Further, this data can provide an estimate of the number of jobs created within non-residential units, provided municipal staff use an appropriate “square feet per employee” metric to the constructed space. Metrics should also be developed based on the “up-take” of any financial incentives.
- National census data will provide less frequent data relating to population change, educational attainment levels, and ethnicity. Finally, surveys can provide qualitative data from customers, businesses, and developers associated with the downtown. Surveys will likely be the largest source of environmental data.
- Frequency of evaluation and monitoring: Realistically, municipal staff can likely not evaluate and monitor more often than once a year.

(e) Presentation of draft plan to the public: This stage requires municipal staff to outline the full extent of the draft plan, receive input from the public and make necessary adjustments based on the input.

(f) Presentation to Council for consideration: This stage involves presentation to municipal Council for their consideration. The process may repeat itself or move into implementation, based on the Council’s decision. The draft information primers, legal agreements and other implementation document for incentives should be included in the Council package.

(g) Implementation: Operationalizing the plan is the primary objective of this stage. Evaluation and monitoring is critical to properly implementing the plan. For quantitative methods, data sources that were identified in the “Develop revitalization plan/strategy” phase should be used to understand the trends affecting downtown. Qualitative methods, such as surveys, should also be used to gain input from developers,

businesses and residents. The results of the surveys, combined with the quantitative analysis, should be combined in monitoring reports. These monitoring reports should be created at least semi-annually, and be tabled with Council for their information. These monitoring reports may also be the focus of open houses or round-table discussions with stakeholders, and be used to gain further input on the effectiveness of the current program.

### ***8.1.3 Comprehensive downtown revitalization efforts***

Municipalities need to integrate all revitalization efforts into downtown revitalization literature. As noted earlier, London appears to view regulatory tools as supplementary to downtown revitalization tools. Given the City's downtown revitalization goal of attracting investment, the fact that regulatory tools (such as the use of bonusing (Section 37 of the *Planning Act*) or transfer of density rights) are not noted in downtown revitalization documents, represents lost opportunity to market such programs, as they would be of interest to some developers. Municipalities should be providing comprehensive downtown revitalization literature to interested parties.

### ***8.1.4 Foundations to improving downtowns***

Below are recommendations for Ontario's mid-sized cities that are based on this research, professional experience, and frequent contemplation while experiencing different downtowns in Ontario:

- **Progress is incremental:** Given that many factors contribute to the success of a downtown, it may take decades to turn around a downtown's fortunes. Municipalities should not strive for silver bullets, nor should they expect quick fixes. Moving incrementally is less dramatic for downtowns, but can still instill confidence in the downtown (Burayidi, 2001; Filion et al., 2004; Robertson, 1999, 2001) as a place to live, shop, play, and invest. Downtown revitalization plans/strategies

should state intentions to move incrementally in order to ensure create realistic expectations.

- It appears that municipalities' approaches to downtown planning are reactionary and piecemeal. For example, London has invested a significant amount of time, money and energy in improving the downtown. However, London has focused largely on financial incentives to improve downtown, and has not linked existing initiatives to its downtown revitalization agenda. Further, London's evaluation and monitoring strategy has overlooked some existing incentives, suggesting that London's piecemeal approach has left some programs forgotten.
- The literature has consistently noted that the practice of planning does not monitor and evaluate efforts (Brody & Highfield, 2005; Laurian et al., 2004; Talen, 1996; 1997). As noted by Bauer (1997) and Talen (1996), monitoring and evaluation is based on the rational comprehensive decision making model, while Alkin & Christie (2004) note that monitoring and evaluation can address accountability concerns. For all of these reasons, municipalities should systematically introduce evaluation and monitoring efforts to understand the effectiveness of revitalization efforts.
- Perception is a powerful disincentive: Kitchener has the second largest investment fund from this survey (followed by London), which is utilized to strategically attract developments to their downtown. The fact that Kitchener downtown is perceived to be unsafe, and populated by a target population that does not easily support new, higher quality, higher cost developments, is likely a deterrent for private industry. In order to gain momentum and increase the chances of Kitchener becoming a multi-dimensional downtown, a multi-pronged approach is needed, including marketing initiatives, heavy use of financial incentives (including a strong Community Improvement Plan which seeks to increase the population base), and quality of life improvements for customers and residents. Kitchener should do more to incent property owners to improve the housing stock. London experiences similar safety and security perception challenges, and provides grants/loans to improve the housing stock.
- Utopia can't be achieved: Downtown revitalization goals should be realistic. It is not realistic to expect a slow-growth municipality to have a fully vibrant downtown if the baseline conditions are not already promising within the downtown. In some cases, downtown revitalization strategies may be able to slow decline or halt decline rather than create a fully functional, vibrant downtown.

- Context matters: What works in a municipality depends on context. For example, attract higher quality, higher cost developments to a downtown that is populated by lower-income individuals may not succeed. In such situations, municipalities should look to attract more affordable housing developments, while ensuring a high standard of urban design.

## **8.2 *Implications for Scholars: Linking Theory and Practice***

In conducting this research, it became apparent that very little is understood about *how* municipalities should improve conditions within downtown. Just as planning practice should seek to utilize common theories found within the scholastic realm, planning scholars would do well to focus some attention on understanding how municipalities might be able to achieve a desired downtown vision. Just as scholars have studied the effectiveness of heritage conservation districts in maintaining neighbourhood character, planning scholars should study tools to achieve successful downtowns.

## **8.3 *Suggestions for further study***

- Conducting a study to understand which tools are attractive to residential developers. What mix of land uses are residential developers looking to build beside in downtowns? What do residential developers think municipalities should do in mid-sized cities to attract investment?
- Conducting a similar study to understand the downtown revitalization efforts that mid-sized cities (as found by Filion et al., 2004) employ. Are the successful few lucky because of outstanding circumstances (i.e. waterfront, legislature, etc), or are these municipalities also outperforming other municipalities in attracting development? Do these successful few have strict regulatory controls relative to other mid-sized cities? Do they have hindrances to growing outward, or other circumstances?
- Further study into innovative grant and loan programs within Community Improvement Plans. Given that Community Improvement Plans can be very broad in scope, understanding effective programs within Community

Improvement Plans would further the literature with respect to specific tools to assist revitalization.

- Further study into innovative methods to attracting the creative class. Conduct a survey into the elements creative individuals are looking for in a city. Is the creative class sharing the same values, or are those that settle in mid-sized cities aspiring for other elements (versus big city creative individuals)?

#### **8.4 Conclusions**

Mid-sized cities are definitely under immense strain. Most often, they cannot compete with suburban portions of the City, and may not be capable of competing in the future. Municipalities must do a better job at planning for a robust downtown for mid-sized city downtowns to have any hope in the future. However, municipalities cannot attract people and jobs downtown on their own, and it may be that mid-sized city downtowns will serve a limited role as a housing and employment hub in the short and medium term.

This study and research was conducted to understand the myriad tools utilized as part of downtown revitalization plans, strategies or efforts in Ontario's mid-sized cities, what impacts municipalities are seeking in their downtown revitalization plans, strategies or efforts, and the implications for planning theory and practice.

This study and research involved a mixed methods research strategy – known as triangulation- which included a literature review, a web-survey directed to municipal staff within each of Ontario's mid-sized cities, and a case study of London Ontario's downtown revitalization strategy.

Mid-sized cities appear to be expanding the scope of downtown revitalization, and focusing significant efforts toward attracting private sector investment. The private sector will rely on market preferences, and quality of life and marketing downtown is critical to convincing the market that downtown is a place to live, work, learn, shop and play. Finally, more needs to be done by municipalities to understand what impacts their efforts are having. Proper monitoring of downtown revitalization programs can inform municipal staff on the effectiveness of the tools within such programs, and act as a significant component of the implementation phase of plans. To effectively monitor downtown revitalization programs, municipalities need to set specific monitoring goals, select data based on the ability to inform the reporting process. Economic data, such as building permit data, is heavily relied upon by municipalities. Other data sources should be used, including the use of surveys targeted to developers, businesses, and residents to provide other perspectives on downtown living, working, shopping as well as downtown as a location for investment. Done correctly, monitoring of programs engages planners into an evidence-based decision making model, which allows programs to be modified and finely tuned to meet the goals and objectives of programs. Under such scenarios, downtown revitalization programs are not static, and are improved as a result of monitoring and reporting of outcomes.

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## **APPENDIX 1: ETHICS & WEB-SURVEY**

### **INFORMATION CONSENT LETTER FOR SURVEY RECRUITMENT**

Dear Planning Commissioner/Director/Manager:

I am conducting a study on the use of financial, planning, and regulatory incentives in downtown revitalization efforts as part of my Master of Arts (Planning) degree under the supervision of Professor Mark Seasons of the School of Planning. I am requesting participation from each of the 28 mid-size municipalities in Ontario. The survey can be completed by you or any suitable Planning staff member (i.e.: who has knowledge of the components of your municipality's downtown revitalization plan, strategy or efforts, and is aware of any monitoring being conducted as part of the downtown revitalization plan, strategy or efforts). If you choose to have a suitable member of your Planning staff participate other than yourself, please forward this email message and attachments to the department planner. Finally, if you choose a member of your Planning staff other than yourself, please forward me their name as long as they provide permission to do so.

Below, you will find information about this project and what involvement would entail should a member in your department decide to participate.

#### **Project Details:**

As part of my thesis research, I am administering a web-based survey that is targeting public sector professionals who have intimate knowledge regarding downtown revitalization and evaluation of such programs. I am seeking to discover their perspectives on:

- The use of financial, planning, and regulatory tools in downtown revitalization programs in mid-size cities;
- How effective these tools are in facilitating downtown revitalization;
- What monitoring and evaluation processes and methods municipalities use to assess the effectiveness of these tools; and
- The implications for planning practice and theory.

#### **Web-Survey and Telephone Interview:**

##### *10 Minute Survey:*

It is my intention to illicit a completed web-based survey from a knowledgeable member of each planning department in Ontario's 28 mid-size cities. The survey will take approximately 10 minutes to complete and can be completed at the participant's leisure between August 20<sup>th</sup>, 2007 and September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2007. I am

also seeking recruitment for a possible 10-minute follow up interview to expand upon information provided in the web-survey. Participants will be asked in the survey whether they would be willing to be interviewed further based on individual responses. Participants may decline further participation.

Participants will be asked to answer questions that have been prepared and will be made available once a participant has been identified. The type of questions participants will be asked will be similar to the following:

- Describe the residential population levels in your downtown:
  - Stable population levels with residential units being constructed
  - Stable population levels, but residential unit construction is definitely not occurring
  - Some, but not serious declines in population levels
  - Major declines with severe loss of population
  - Our downtown population is nearly gone, only a few opportunities to live downtown exist

#### **Participation and Confidentiality:**

Participants may decline to answer any of the survey or interview questions if they so wish. Further, participants may decide to withdraw from this study at any time.

All information participants provide is considered completely confidential. Personal names will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study. However, with the participant's permission, quotations from the interview may be used that identify the municipality from which the response originated. Furthermore, survey data will be presented in both aggregated and disaggregated format. Any disaggregated information will be personally anonymous, municipality identifying quotations. Personally anonymous, municipality-identifying quotations will be used to identify responses that are unique in nature from the 28 municipalities.

Data collected during this study will be retained for two years in the School of Planning. Electronic data will be kept for two years on a personal computer, and a memory stick accessed only by the student researcher, then deleted. There are no known or anticipated risks to participants in this study.

#### **Benefits and Risks to Participation:**

Potential benefits to participants include an increased awareness of components/tools of downtown revitalization strategies in Ontario, and reflection of how unique downtown revitalization components/tools may be adopted to local planning efforts. The information obtained from this research may also provide

best management practices in terms of use of financial tools in Ontario's mid-size cities as well as which tools work the best. Furthermore, the results will explore the different evaluation techniques used in municipalities for downtown revitalization programs, which may be beneficial to you and your colleagues.

There are no known or anticipated risks from participating in this study.

**Questions and Ethics Clearance:**

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at (519) 885-9400 or by email at [clauder@fes.uwaterloo.ca](mailto:clauder@fes.uwaterloo.ca). You can also contact my supervisor, Professor Mark Seasons at (519) 888-4567 ext. 35922 or email [mseasons@fes.uwaterloo.ca](mailto:mseasons@fes.uwaterloo.ca).

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes of this office at (519) 888-4567 Ext. 36005.

I very much look forward to speaking with a member of your department and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Yours Sincerely,

C. Adam Lauder  
MA (Planning) Candidate  
School of Planning  
Faculty of Environmental Studies  
University of Waterloo  
E-mail: [clauder@fes.uwaterloo.ca](mailto:clauder@fes.uwaterloo.ca)

University of Waterloo

**Information Letter for Web-based Survey**

My name is Adam Lauder, and I am conducting a study on the use of financial, planning, and regulatory incentives in downtown revitalization efforts as part of my Master of Arts (Planning) degree under the supervision of Professor Mark Seasons of the School of Planning. As part of my thesis research, I am administering a web-based survey that is targeting public sector professionals who

have intimate knowledge regarding downtown revitalization and evaluation of such programs. I am seeking to discover their perspectives on:

- The use of financial, planning, and regulatory tools in downtown revitalization programs in mid-size cities;
- How effective these tools are in facilitating downtown revitalization;
- What monitoring and evaluation processes and methods are used to assess the effectiveness of these tools; and
- The implications for planning practice and theory.

### **Web-Survey and Telephone Interview:**

It is my intention to illicit a completed web-based survey from a knowledgeable member of each planning department in Ontario's 28 mid-size cities. The survey will take approximately 15 minutes to complete. If you decide to participate in this study, you will be asked in the survey whether you would be willing to be interviewed individually based on individual responses. You may decline further participation.

Participants will be asked to answer questions that have been prepared and are available at the following link

([https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=2bG6\\_2bNnd0utQbmufeECuPKQ\\_3d\\_3d](https://www.surveymonkey.com/s.aspx?sm=2bG6_2bNnd0utQbmufeECuPKQ_3d_3d))

. All web-survey questions have fixed-category responses. The type of questions participants will be asked will be similar to the following:

- Describe the residential population levels in your downtown:
  - Stable population levels with residential units being constructed
  - Stable population levels, but residential unit construction is definitely not occurring
  - Some, but not serious declines in population levels
  - Major declines with severe loss of population
  - Our downtown population is nearly gone, only a few opportunities to live downtown exist

### **Participation and Confidentiality:**

Participants may decline to answer any of the survey or interview questions if they so wish. Further, participants may decide to withdraw from this study at any time.

All information participants provide is considered completely confidential. Personal names will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study. However, with the participant's permission, quotations from the interview may be used that identify the municipality from which the response originated. Furthermore, survey data will be presented in aggregated format to at least the

Municipal Service Office district level ((Northwestern Ontario, Northeastern Ontario, Eastern Ontario, Central Ontario, Southwestern Ontario). The district level aggregation will be used to identify responses that are unique in nature from the 28 municipalities.

Data collected during this study will be retained for two years in the School of Planning. Electronic data will be kept for two years on a personal computer, and a memory stick accessed only by the student researcher, then deleted. There are no known or anticipated risks to participants in this study.

### **Benefits and Risks to Participation:**

Potential benefits to participants include an increased awareness of components/tools of downtown revitalization strategies in Ontario, and reflection of how unique downtown revitalization components/tools may be adopted to local planning efforts. The information obtained from this research may also provide best management practices in terms of use of financial tools in Ontario's mid-size cities as well as which tools work the best. Furthermore, the results will explore the different evaluation techniques used in municipalities for downtown revitalization programs, which may be beneficial to you and your colleagues.

There are no known or anticipated risks from participating in this study.

### **Consent**

A consent form appears at the beginning of the web-survey. You do not have to answer yes to any of the consent questions. By answering yes to all questions within the consent form, you agree:

- To participate, of your own free will, in the study;
- To the use of personally anonymous, municipality identifying quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research; and
- To participate in a 10 minute open-ended interview as a follow up to any answers you may provide.

### **Questions and Ethics Clearance:**

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at (519) 885-9400 or by email at [clauder@fes.uwaterloo.ca](mailto:clauder@fes.uwaterloo.ca). You can also contact my supervisor, Professor Mark Seasons at (519) 888-4567 ext. 35922 or email [mseasons@fes.uwaterloo.ca](mailto:mseasons@fes.uwaterloo.ca).



I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethics clearance through the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes of this office at (519) 888-4567 Ext. 36005.

I very much look forward to speaking with a member of your department and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

## DowntownRevitalization

### 1. Consent

The purpose of this page is to ensure you understand what your participation means. You can answer "no" to any and all consent questions, which would result in you refusing participation. You can also participate and/or refuse to (1) allow the use of personally anonymous, municipality identifying quotations or (2) participate in a follow-up interview.

#### Consent

I have read the information presented in the information letter about a study being conducted by C. Adam Lauder of the School of Planning at the University of Waterloo. I have had the opportunity to ask any questions related to this study, to receive satisfactory answers to my questions, and any additional details I wanted.

I am aware that responses from the web-survey may be included in the thesis and/or publications to come from this research, with the understanding that the responses will be personally anonymous, but identify the municipality from which the response originated from (provided that I provide consent).

I was informed that I may withdraw my consent at any time without penalty by advising the researcher. This project has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. I was informed that if I have any comments or concerns resulting from my participation in this study, I may contact the Director, Office of Research Ethics at (519) 888-4567 ext. 36005.

- \* 1. With full knowledge of all foregoing, I agree, of my own free will, to participate in this study

Yes  
 No

- \* 2. I agree to the use of personally anonymous, municipality identifying quotations in any thesis or publication that comes of this research.

Yes  
 No

- \* 3. Would you be willing to be a participant in a 10 minute open-ended interview as a follow up to any answers you may provide? Not all participants of the survey will be interviewed further, but some may be based on responses.

Yes  
 No

4. Please type your name. Under NO circumstances will your name appear in any publications resulting from this survey.

Name:

### 2. Downtown Revitalization Survey

## DowntownRevitalization

The Survey will now begin. Following are general questions.

\* 1. Please indicate the municipality that you work for.

- Ajax
- Barrie
- Brampton
- Brentford
- Burlington
- Cambridge
- Greater Sudbury
- Guelph
- Kingston
- Kitchener
- London
- Markham
- Newmarket
- Niagara Falls
- North Bay
- Oshawa
- Peterborough
- Pickering
- Richmond Hill
- Sarnia
- Saint Ste. Marie
- St. Catharines
- Thunder Bay
- Vaughan
- Waterloo
- Whitby
- Windsor

\* 2. Please indicate the population category for the municipality you work for.

- 50,000 to 149,999
- 150,000 to 199,999
- 200,000 to 249,999
- 250,000 to 299,999
- 300,000 to 349,999
- 350,000 to 399,999
- 400,000 to 449,999
- 450,000 to 999,999

### Downtown Revitalization

\* 3. What geographical Area of Ontario is your municipality located in? This is the same as the Municipal Service Office (MSO) your municipality deals with.

- Northwestern Ontario
- Northwestern Ontario
- Eastern Ontario
- Central Ontario
- Southwestern Ontario
- Not Sure

\* 4. Does your municipality have a downtown revitalization plan/strategy?

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

### 3. Downtown Revitalization Plan/Strategy: Duration

1. If you have a downtown revitalization plan/strategy, when was it put into place?

- Less than 1 year ago (since Bill 51 was given Royal Assent)
- 1 to 2 years ago (since the Provincial government's Planning Reform initiatives)
- 3-5 years ago
- 6 or more years ago

2. What is the financial obligation of your downtown revitalization plan or strategy? Please choose the most appropriate answer.

- Less Than 10 Million
- 10 Million to 20 Million
- 20 Million to 30 Million
- 30 Million to 40 Million
- 40 Million to 50 Million
- 50 Million to 60 Million
- 60 Million to 70 Million
- 70 Million to 80 Million
- 80 Million to 90 Million
- 90 Million to 100 Million
- Over 100 Million
- Not Sure
- Haven't been Calculated

### 4. Municipality Without Downtown Revitalization Plan/Strategy/Effort

## DowntownRevitalization

**1. Please indicate the reason for not having a downtown revitalization plan/strategy. Please check all that apply.**

- Lack of political interest/commitment
- Lack of financial resources
- Not enough staff
- Lack of time
- Lack of public interest/commitment
- We're already targeting the downtown and don't need a strategy to do so.

Other (please specify)

**2. If you DO NOT have a downtown revitalization plan/strategy, do you still direct some resources to downtown revitalization (ie. flexible parking requirements in downtown, reduced/waived development fees, business improvement areas, etc)?**

**If you answer no, you will be directed to the last section of the survey.**

- Yes  
 No

## 5. Tools Available for Downtown Revitalization – Impact of Tools

The Following Section will ask questions about tools available for downtown revitalization, as well as your perception regarding the effectiveness of each tool. If you indicated that your municipality has a downtown revitalization plan or strategy please complete this section.

If you indicated that your municipality does not have a formal downtown revitalization plan or strategy, but still directs some resources to downtown revitalization informally, please complete this section.

Please pay careful attention to the variations in the question. They relate to "New Business Attraction - Financial", "New Business Attraction - Planning", "New Business Attraction - Regulatory", "Local Business Stimulation - Financial", "Local Business Stimulation - Planning", "Marketing", "Quality of Life Strategies", and "Other", respectively.

**Downtown Revitalization**

※ 1. How effective are "NEW BUSINESS ATTRACTION - FINANCIAL" tools in facilitating downtown revitalization within your municipality?

Please use the provided scale of "(1) very effective", "(2) effective", "(3) somewhat effective", "(4) ineffective", "(5) effectiveness unknown".

If the given tools are not used select "(6) not used".

If the given tool is not applicable in your municipality (i.e., waiving regional DCs), please choose "Not Applicable".

	(1) Very effective	(2) Effective	(3) Somewhat effective	(4) Ineffective	(5) Effectiveness unknown	(6) Not used	Not Applicable
Elimination of regional development charges in downtown	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Elimination of city development charges in downtown	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Business facilities construction for private sector use (e.g., sports facilities)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Rebates for planning and building permit fees in downtown	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Acquisition and Rehabilitation of lands for resale to private sector	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Major strategic infrastructure construction in downtown (e.g. support for downtown university campuses, parking solutions)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Elimination of Park Dedication Fees in downtown	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify, and assign 1-5 rating, eg. "Infrastructure Construction: 3")

	3
	3

### Downtown Revitalization

\* 2. How effective are "NEW BUSINESS ATTRACTION - PLANNING" tools in facilitating downtown revitalization within your municipality?

Please use the provided scale of "(1) very effective", "(2) effective", "(3) somewhat effective", "(4) ineffective", "(5) effectiveness unknown".

If the given tools are not used, select "(6) not used".

	(1) Very effective	(2) Effective	(3) Somewhat effective	(4) Ineffective	(5) Effectiveness unknown	(6) Not used
Land inventories	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expedited building approval/inspection in downtown	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Expedited review of development approvals in downtown	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify, and assign 1-5 rating, eg. "Land and Property Management: 3")

<input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>
<input type="text"/>	<input type="radio"/>

**Downtown Revitalization**

\* 3. How effective are "NEW BUSINESS ATTRACTION - REGULATORY" tools in facilitating downtown revitalization within your municipality?

Please use the provided scale of "(1) very effective", "(2) effective", "(3) somewhat effective", "(4) ineffective", "(5) effectiveness unknown".

If the given tools are not used, select "(6) not used".

	(1) Very effective	(2) Effective	(3) Somewhat effective	(4) Ineffective	(5) Effectiveness unknown	(6) Not used
Flexible Parking Requirements	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Use of bonusing provision in Planning Act (S. 37)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Relaxation of zoning in downtown	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Transfer of density rights	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify, and assign 1-5 rating, eg. "Flexible Parking Requirements: 3")

\* 4. How effective are "LOCAL BUSINESS STIMULATION - FINANCIAL" tools in facilitating downtown revitalization within your municipality?

Please use the provided scale of "(1) very effective", "(2) effective", "(3) somewhat effective", "(4) ineffective", "(5) effectiveness unknown".

If the given tools are not used, select "(6) not used".

	(1) Very effective	(2) Effective	(3) Somewhat effective	(4) Ineffective	(5) Effectiveness unknown	(6) Not used
Financial incentives directly to an owner	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tax Increment Financing in downtown	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Grants/Loans through a Community Improvement Plan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify, and assign 1-5 rating, eg. "Parking: 3")



## Downtown Revitalization

\* 5. How effective are "LOCAL BUSINESS STIMULATION - PLANNING" tools in facilitating downtown revitalization within your municipality?

Please use the provided scale of "(1) very effective", "(2) effective", "(3) somewhat effective", "(4) ineffective", "(5) effectiveness unknown".

If the given tools are not used, select "(6) not used".

	(1) Very effective	(2) Effective	(3) Somewhat effective	(4) Ineffective	(5) Effectiveness unknown	(6) Not used
"Buy local" programs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Business improvement areas in the downtown	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provision of time-limited free on-street parking by municipality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify, and assign 1-5 rating, eg. "Buy Local: 3")

**DowntownRevitalization**

6. How effective are "MARKETING" tools in facilitating downtown revitalization within your municipality?

Please use the provided scale of "(1) very effective", "(2) effective", "(3) somewhat effective", "(4) ineffective", "(5) effectiveness unknown".

If the given tools are not used, select "(6) not used".

	(1) Very Effective	(2) Effective	(3) Somewhat effective	(4) Ineffective	(5) Effectiveness unknown	(6) Not used
Local image management in downtown	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Marketing partnerships with designated local business sectors (e.g., film industry, retirement industry)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Downtown business directories	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Marketing to attract new business in downtown	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Tourism and convention marketing in downtown	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify, and assign 1-5 rating, eg. "Downtown Business Directories: 3")

### Downtown Revitalization

7. How effective are "QUALITY OF LIFE" tools in facilitating downtown revitalization within your municipality?

Please use the provided scale of "(1) very effective", "(2) effective", "(3) somewhat effective", "(4) ineffective", "(5) effectiveness unknown".

If the given tools are not used, select "(6) not used".

	(1) Very effective	(2) Effective	(3) Somewhat effective	(4) Ineffective	(5) Effectiveness unknown	(6) Not used
Provision of cultural and recreational amenities (operation of cultural facilities, museums, galleries)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Emphasis on the functional city (transportation, public safety)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Urban design for the public realm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Other (please specify, and assign 1-5 rating, eg. "Cultural Amenity Creation: 3")

8. If there are other incentives (financial, regulatory, or otherwise) used in your municipality that have not been covered, please provide a short description of the nature of these incentives.

### 6. Objectives of Downtown Revitalization

This Section is 1 Question and seeks the top 3 objectives of your downtown revitalization plan, strategy or efforts.

## Downtown Revitalization

\* 1. What 3 objectives drive your downtown revitalization plan, strategy or efforts? Please choose only 3.

- Increase general activity in the downtown
- Increase residential population levels in the downtown
- Increased employment in the downtown
- Increased entertainment in the downtown
- Increased night activity in the downtown
- Increased office space in the downtown
- Increased retail in the downtown
- We haven't specified any
- We haven't specified any
- We haven't specified any
- Other (please specify)


## 7. Monitoring of Trends, Evaluation of Programs

Monitoring refers to continuous assessment/evaluation of programs, policies, plans or processes. Academic literature points out that monitoring is not always a component to implementation of programs, policies, plans or processes.

This section ascertains whether you use monitoring and/or evaluation techniques.

\* 1. Does your municipality have a monitoring program or strategy to understand key trends in the community as a whole? If you answered no, please go to Question 3.

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

## Downtown Revitalization

2. Why do you monitor key trends in the community as a whole? Please choose all that are applicable.

- Monitoring is conducted as part of implementation of Official Plan
- Reporting requirements (i.e.: Municipal Performance Measurement Program)
- Transparency to public
- Innovative leadership
- Information directs future resource decision
- Council directive
- Other (please specify)

\* 3. Does your municipality evaluate the effectiveness of the downtown revitalization plan/strategy or efforts? If no/not sure, you will be directed to the last question of the survey relating to size of the planning department. If your answer is yes, you will be directed to the appropriate section.

- Yes
- No
- Not Sure

## B. Monitoring of Trends, Evaluation of Programs Continued

Monitoring refers to continuous assessment/evaluation of programs, policies, plans or processes. Academic literature points out that monitoring is not always a component to implementation of programs, policies, plans or processes.

This section asks general questions relating to the use of monitoring and evaluation techniques within your municipality.

1. Why do you evaluate the effectiveness of the downtown revitalization plan/strategy or efforts? Please choose all that are applicable.

- Evaluation was a component to the document that set forth the downtown revitalization plan/strategy or effort
- Transparency to public
- Council directive
- Information directs future resource decisions
- Innovative Leadership
- Other (please specify)

## DowntownRevitalization

**2. How does your municipality carry out this evaluation? Please choose the answer that is most appropriate.**

- An evaluation strategy has been created and is adhered to
- An evaluation strategy is not in place, evaluation is performed based on experience
- An evaluation strategy is not in place, the data dictates the comprehensiveness of the evaluation. We use all available data
- Other (please specify)

**3. Who is responsible for conducting monitoring (i.e.: who collects and compiles the information)? Please choose all that are applicable.**

- A cluster within the planning department
- Economic development staff
- Office of the CEO
- Other (please specify)

**4. Who uses the information collected as part of the downtown monitoring? Please choose all that are applicable.**

- It is shared throughout the organization (actively shared)
- Council
- Citizens
- Office of the CEO
- Economic development staff
- Planning staff
- Other (please specify)

## 9. Indicators and Data Sources

An indicator can be used to understand conditions within community. Indicators, when appropriately chosen, can provide information regarding local social, economic, cultural as well as environmental conditions.

This section asks you to identify the "ECONOMIC", "SOCIAL", and "ENVIRONMENTAL" indicators used to evaluate the effectiveness of the downtown revitalization plan, strategy or effort, as well as identify the data sources used for the evaluation.

## DowntownRevitalization

1. What ECONOMIC indicators are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the downtown revitalization plan/strategy or efforts made to revitalize downtown? Please choose as many as are relevant.

- Unemployment rates
- Retail sales per capita
- Employment by Industry
- Business start-ups/closures
- Building Permit Statistics
- Office Vacancy Rates
- Residential vacancy rates
- Retail/commercial vacancy rates
- Office absorption rates
- Development permit statistics
- Average housing prices
- Other (please specify)

2. What SOCIAL indicators are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the downtown revitalization plan/strategy or efforts made to revitalize downtown? Please choose as many as are relevant.

- Ethnicity
- Population by sex and age
- Social services usage rates
- Homeless statistics
- Crime rates
- Education attainment levels
- Recreation expenditures per capita
- Other (please specify)

**DowntownRevitalization**

**3. What ENVIRONMENTAL indicators are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the downtown revitalization plan/strategy or efforts made to revitalize downtown? Please choose as many as are relevant.**

- Amount of natural areas (wetlands, ANSIs, ESAs, woodlands, etc)
- Quality of natural areas (Groundwater/surface water monitoring data, etc)
- Noise pollution
- Air Quality
- Amount of riparian vegetation
- Combined sewer overflows
- Soil contamination
- Amount of impervious surfaces
- Other (please specify)

**4. How often are the above indicators used for information purposes regarding downtown revitalization, either for internal or external purposes? Please choose the most relevant answer.**

- Once a month
- 4 times a year (every three months)
- 3 times a year (every 4 months)
- 2 times a year
- Once a year
- Every two years
- More than every two years
- Other (please specify)



### DowntownRevitalization

5. Using a scale of 1-7 (1 = data source that is relied upon the most, 7 = least used data source/not used), please indicate how often the following data sources are used for monitoring and/or evaluation?

	Most Used Data Source					Least Used Data Source/not used
National census	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Industry databases, provincial or federal statistics, NGO's, special purpose bodies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Municipal special purpose surveys	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Municipal assessment tools	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Municipal databases	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provincial or local census	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

### 10. Miscellaneous

The final section asks questions relating to department size, and the group responsible for conducting monitoring.

1. Please identify all factors that affect your municipality's ability to monitor and/or evaluate downtown revitalization progress. Please choose all that apply.

- Political support
- Senior administrative support
- Community-based support
- Evaluable plans and policies
- Commitment to monitoring and evaluation
- Sufficient fiscal resources
- Supportive corporate culture
- Staff with proper expertise
- Other (please specify)

## DowntownRevitalization

### 2. How many persons work for the planning department?

- Less than 5
- 5-10
- 10-15
- 15-30
- More than 30

## 11. Feedback Letter

### Participant Feedback Letter

I would like to thank you for your participation in this study. As a reminder, the purpose of this project is to understand the range and predominance of financial tools used in Ontario's mid-size cities in efforts to revitalize the downtown. This study also seeks to understand how municipal planning departments evaluate their downtown revitalization programs.

The data collected during interviews will contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics of downtown revitalization in mid-size cities, as well as the role financial incentives play within revitalization efforts. Furthermore, this study will shed light on the monitoring and evaluation being undertaken of revitalization efforts.

Please remember that any data pertaining to you as an individual participant will be kept confidential. Once all the data are collected and analyzed for this project, I plan on incorporating my findings in my Master's thesis and preparing journal articles. If you are interested in receiving more information regarding the results of this study, or if you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at either the phone number or email address listed at the bottom of the page. I will provide a summary of the results once available. The completion date of the study is June, 2008.

As with all University of Waterloo projects involving human participants, this project was reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through, the Office of Research Ethics at the University of Waterloo. Should you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact Dr. Susan Sykes in the Office of Research Ethics at 519-888-4567, Ext., 36005.

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**APPENDIX 2 – EXAMPLE PHOTOGRAPHS OF DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION INCENTIVES IN KITCHENER AND WATERLOO, ONTARIO**

**Figure 8 - Provision of cultural and recreational amenity  
Uptown Waterloo Public Square**



City of Waterloo Public Square (King Street S), Constructed: 2009.  
Photo by Adam Lauder

**Figure 9 – Emphasis on the Functional City  
Uptown Waterloo Walking Tours**



Uptown Waterloo Loop (Erb St & Caroline St), Constructed: 2007.  
Photo by Adam Lauder

**Figure 10 – Provision of time-limited, on-street parking by municipality**  
**On-street Parking**



City of Waterloo Town Square Development (King St S), Constructed: 2006.  
Photo by Adam Lauder

**Figure 11 – Major Strategic Infrastructure Construction in Downtown**  
**Uptown Parkade**



City of Waterloo Parkade – (Regina St S and King St S), Constructed: 1994.  
Photo courtesy of urbantoronto.ca

**Figure 12 – Local Image Management in Downtown  
Uptown Waterloo Gateway Feature**



City of Waterloo Gateway (Erb St & Caroline St), Constructed: 2004.  
Photo by Adam Lauder

**Figure 13 – Elimination of City Development Charges in Downtown  
Kaufman Lofts**



Kaufman Lofts (King St S), Constructed: 2007.  
Kitchener waived \$1.4 Million development charges fee  
Photo by Adam Lauder