2020
STATE OF DOWNTOWN

Presented By downtown Kamloops
Foreword

The State of Downtown Report aims to create an accurate picture of downtown so that all who read it are aware of the success, opportunities, and future plans for this area. The State of Downtown Report showcases the success, opportunities, and future development plans in the heart of Kamloops.

Downtown is a critical part of what makes Kamloops the city it is. Within downtown there is a sense of community with new connections being made every single day. Kamloops continues to grow and evolve because of the downtown. The core of Kamloops is downtown. The Kamloops Central Business Improvement Association follows three primary goals to help the downtown in the best ways possible. Firstly, it is very important to us that we maintain the current culture and vibe of the downtown core to sustain current businesses. Additionally, we would like to create and foster an environment that enhances businesses currently downtown. Finally, we would like to encourage and attract new and existing businesses to the core. These ideals are what guide us to make the core of our city as great as it can possibly be.

Summary of the Report
Keywords: Downtown, Residential, Commercial, COVID-19, Employers, Education, At-Risk Population
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Introduction

_Downtown Kamloops is located on the traditional, unceded lands of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc within Secwepemcúlecw; the traditional territory of the Secwépemc people._

A strong core is essential for a city’s businesses to continually develop and thrive over time. A city is built around it’s downtown core, without a strong core, it is unable to fully thrive. The Kamloops Central Business Improvement Association (KCBIA)’s mission is to bolster the strength of our downtown core through the promotion, and upkeep of business development. During the global pandemic it has been made abundantly clear that we need to support local, live local, and shop local.

There are over 10,000 people who work downtown, some of the larger employers include: Interior Health, BCLC, and the City of Kamloops. There are many small businesses that make up the 10,000+ workers downtown, with new businesses appearing frequently there is always something new to explore. Starting a local business has never been so easy, there are many programs in place to help new entrepreneurs turn their idea into a reality. As for leisure and activity, the core has many different opportunities. There are nightclubs, microbreweries, restaurants and bars all across downtown. Additionally there is a full movie theatre, riverfront beach access, water parks, connections to The Rivers Trail, and much more to explore.
The downtown core is composed of many diverse environments, all of which are committed to being sustainable. With coordination from the City of Kamloops sustainability department, downtown is adapting, changing with the times to become more green. Kamloops aims to become net-zero ready by 2032. The change will start with the residential sector and then move to the commercial sector. The adaptations are in progress to change from a residential standpoint into a sustainable business model. Additionally, supporting global sustainability, located inside of the downtown is Lansdowne Transit Exchange. The exchange creates an opportunity hub so people can access all of Kamloops without making a large carbon footprint.

It would be remiss if this report were to not include the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 Pandemic. Throughout 2020, everyone has had to adapt to the rapidly changing times with minimal preparation in order to uphold regulations and public health orders that came into effect as they were announced. The pandemic caused a large number of businesses to allow employees to work from home. While some businesses did not survive the impact of the pandemic, the majority of downtown businesses successfully pivoted and have continued to operate, adapt and thrive. As everyone continues on a path approaching normalcy of restrictions, downtown will inevitably spring back to life with it. Currently in 2021, the restrictions are starting to relax, so the full recovery of the downtown is not expected to be represented until the 2022 State of Downtown report.
Downtown Kamloops strives to create an inviting and entertaining environment for individuals on a professional and personal basis. Furthermore we want to bolster the sense of community throughout the core. The ways we achieve these goals are through the promotion of businesses. In each instance of a promotion, there was a full campaign that was designed to showcase the vibrancy of the business, and in turn, the downtown community. Through our campaigns we focused on marketing, business development, communication, and community safety. These four ideas comprised the pillars of a successful business campaign. The KCBIA is confident these initiatives will be able to create lasting change in the community, and aid in the pursuit of more social engagement. We invite you to take part in Downtown Kamloops’ business excellence by sharing in the accomplishments of the past, present, and future objectives.
Geographical Boundaries

The area below indicates the reach of the KCBIA. The area is primarily from 1st Avenue to 10th Avenue, and from Columbia Street to Riverside Park. The information collected and presented is primarily from this geographical boundary. This zone will be referred to as the Downtown Core or the KCBIA area throughout this report.

It is important to recognize that the City Centre is not the same as the Downtown Core. The City Centre includes neighbourhoods south of Columbia and east of 10th Avenue. Statistics Canada will refer to the City Centre to a larger, generalized area. To eliminate confusion, the area in question will be indicated whether the specific statistic is referencing the City Centre or the Downtown Core. Even though some of the sources include data that extends slightly beyond the KCBIA’s area, it will serve to reinforce an accurate analysis of the state of downtown.

Red is KCBIA, Blue and Red is the City Centre. Kamloops, BC. Google Maps, 2021.
Strategic Goals

1. Strategic Goal
   Maintain the current culture and vibe of Downtown Kamloops to sustain current business

2. Strategic Goal
   Create and foster an environment that enhances businesses currently located in downtown Kamloops

3. Strategic Goal
   Encourage, facilitate, and attract new and existing businesses to locate Downtown Kamloops.

OUR MISSION
The Kamloops Central Business Improvement Association provides value to our members through advocacy, beautification, promotion, development and preservation of Downtown Kamloops.

OUR VISION
A vibrant and livable Downtown that is the focal point of Kamloops.
Environments Downtown

In the downtown core there are many unique environments, each of which offer something unique and different than the last. The key flourishing environments that will be focused upon in this report are: Working, Shopping, Living, Business, Leisure & Entertainment, and Education. Each environment helps to add diversity to downtown, and will overall improve the core to benefit all locals and tourists. Each of the environments give people another reason to come explore downtown. City hall is located in the core, as well as key banking and professional services. Additionally there are many small businesses throughout. Each business owner, employee, visitor and resident brings a unique story and perspective into Kamloops, further enhancing and diversifying the downtown.
Working Downtown

The core employs over 10,000 people and is home to 1162 businesses, varying from retail to corporate, home to office. With thousands of employment positions in the core, there are noticeably busier times like lunch and coffee breaks. These times end up being peak hours for restaurants and bistros. There are many different types of positions available for workers due to the four largest employers all operating within the core. Interior Health, The City of Kamloops, BC Lottery Corporation, and CN Rail comprise these four employers. They all uniquely focus on Health and Safety, Municipal Governance, Gambling and Gaming, and Industrial Transport. In total there are more retail and service positions, however they are spread throughout many small businesses. All jobs offer a unique and individual experience of working in the core.

Many people enjoy the high energy environment that comes naturally with working downtown, an employee at a local small business gave a recount of their experiences. “I love to work downtown because of all the hustle and bustle, meeting new people. So many restaurants and businesses to enjoy, walking distance to everything I need. Whether it’s a stroll in the park, dinner, dancing, shopping, or maybe just sitting back and relaxing on a patio with a cup of coffee and a slice of pie. The downtown core is the place to be for everything anyone needs.”. As stated in the recount there are many activities to do before or after work, and many places to relax or socialize during breaks.
Starting a Downtown Business

Downtown Kamloops is a heavily foot trafficked area that allows businesses to thrive economically and sustainably. In addition, there are many resources in place to help new business owners actualize their ideas.

Resources Available:

Venture Kamloops (VK) Accelerate Program -
VK Accelerate aims to support entrepreneurs during all phases from startup to post-launch while allowing creativity to shine.

Small Business Buzz Program -
The Small Business Buzz is offered through Community Futures Thompson Country (CFTC). It is a 10-week course that targets those who are interested in opening a business.

Start Here 3.0 -
Venture Kamloops and CFTC partnered with Open Door Group, Thompson Rivers University Generator, and Kamloops Innovation. The program provides business planning, employment skills training, finance connections and access to local business resources.
The KCBIA, and the City of Kamloops are committed to conserving the history of our community. Downtown Kamloops is home to many key historical parts of not only the development of Kamloops, but British Columbia as a whole. The Downtown Core is home to the Kamloops Museum & Archives, the Old Courthouse Cultural Centre, and many other historical buildings that still support commerce today. To help preserve the history, Kamloops has the “Heritage Tax Incentive Program” which assists with the costs of preservation, restoration, and rehabilitation of heritage sites and buildings. This commitment has allowed for upkeep and restoration of the historic buildings. All changes must undergo careful consideration so as not to disrupt the value that they bring to the community. If you start a business in the core, you will be directly helping keep our heritage facilities open and in good condition.

There are additional resources and benefits available outside of this highlight, the downtown core has many programs and benefits in place to help new businesses thrive. Downtown is a central location in Kamloops that connects to many other areas of the city. The Lansdowne Exchange is located within the Downtown Core and connects transit services to different areas in town. This exchange is admirable and can be beneficial for business owners as it creates accessibility for employees and customers who may not have other means of transportation. They are able to hire employees who may have otherwise been unable to make the commute to and from work.

With the combination of programs, sustainability, and accessibility, downtown is highly sought out when considering starting a business; a perfect place to start a local business.
A secondary benefit for those looking to create new developments downtown is the revitalization tax exemption bylaw. Regarding Section 226 of the Community Charter of British Columbia, this bylaw allows tax exemption to exist and states that any city council has the power to exempt a new development from taxes for up to ten years providing that the development is aimed at revitalization of an area.

As aforementioned, owning and operating a business in the downtown core has various benefits and supports to allow all your creative concepts to reach their full potential. The downtown core has many programs and benefits in place to help new businesses thrive.
Social Media

The KCBIA has always been dedicated to promoting downtown business as much as possible. In 2020 our Instagram followers increased by 8599 followers, Twitter by 4226, and Facebook by 7342. Because of this growth we are better able to promote downtown business and keep all downtown visitors, residents, and business owners informed on what is happening downtown. On Instagram alone we reached over 437,000 people, and #downtownkamloops was used in 29.7 thousand posts. Using this social media platform, we were able to inform people on how certain businesses changed to align with the COVID-19 restrictions.

348% INCREASED INSTAGRAM REACH
Since 2019

29k UNIQUE INSTAGRAM POSTS USED
#DowntownKamloops in 2020

502% INCREASED WEBSITE CLICKS
Since 2019
Education

According to the 2016 Canadian Census, the City Centre has 3180 people who have completed a form of post secondary education. In which 2315 of those people were certified in British Columbia. Since 2011, that is a 3.4% increase in total post secondary graduates and a 11.7% increase in the number of graduates who were certified in British Columbia. Out of the total City Centre population, slightly above 50% of them have a form level of higher education lots of opportunities to graduate and find work with kamloops expanding

Many academics are able to call the Downtown Core their home because of its location. A perk of being downtown there are many leisure opportunities to create a work life balance. Thompson Rivers University is only a short bus ride while Sprott Shaw College is within walking distance. Additionally there are smaller post secondary educational institutions such as Interior Academy and Sternberg, catering to more specific needs.
Due to the global pandemic the service, retail, and restaurants downtown were not operating to a normal capacity. Business decreased in 2020 as a result of the lockdown, however the entrepreneurial spirit did not. Businesses adapted and overcame challenges, pivoting into alternative service deliveries. Clothing stores moved to digital catalogues, food delivery was in high demand, and contactless pick-up was the new normal. The community made these changes in quick succession following Dr. Bonnie Henry’s order to immediately close all personal service establishments. 2020 provides an excellent example of just how strong and adaptable businesses in the core are.

Source: KCBIA, 2020
In order to combat climate change, Downtown Kamloops and the City of Kamloops are committed to sustainability. Here at the KCBIA we promote the Bike to Work Week and the Participaction Community Better challenge which both promote a healthy lifestyle and eco-friendly methods of transportation. Kamloops is home to the “Renovate Smart” program which facilitates connections between sustainability experts and Kamloops homeowners. The expert will guide the home owner so they can formulate a plan on how to make their property more energy efficient. Property owners and sustainability professionals work one on one to explore eco-friendly options available. This program is directed towards households, however it plans to target commercial spaces in the near future. The program is free for anyone to join and has plenty of resources to ensure that Kamloops progresses to be a more sustainable place to live.

The Hive, an in-construction sustainability minded building, will provide the city with a unique premium business space. Construction of the First Phase is set to be completed in 2022. The goal of the building is to re-activate Lansdowne and 5th, and has plans for more buildings to be added to the surrounding areas around the first in the coming years. The Hive will feature electric vehicle charging and bicycle storage which further encourages those who work in the office to adapt more eco-friendly lifestyle changes.
The City of Kamloops is committed to ensuring that new buildings are future-proofed for the changes coming to BC. By 2032 new buildings throughout the province must be “Net-Zero Ready” and until then it will get progressively closer to Net-Zero Ready. The graph (Fig.1) displays the steps that will be taken, and Kamloops aims to be one step ahead of where the province mandates.

Fig.1 (Source: https://energystepcode.ca)

$6.5M WAS SPENT ON SUSTAINABILITY IN 2020.
- THE CITY OF KAMLOOPS
There are many reasons why someone would choose to live in any downtown core: being able to walk to businesses, the ease of accessing other portions of the city through a bus station, the numerous parks and recreational programming that happens in downtown cores. If someone works downtown they may feel more inclined to use alternate methods of transportation such as walking and can even walk to and from their place of work.

Kamloops has major projects in the downtown core right now that will allow for hundreds more to experience the benefits of downtown living through new apartment complexes. The cost of living anywhere has increased during the pandemic, and downtown Kamloops is no exception. The city as a whole experienced a 12% increase in home prices from 2019 to 2020. In 2019, the average price of a single bedroom apartment was $316,107 compared to 2020 where that number rose to $353,676. Additionally the average cost for a single family dwelling was $572,594, and the cost for all living accommodations averaged out to $434,463. Taking a look at Fig. 2, which displays the average rent cost for a single bedroom apartment there is a clear upward trend through 2020.
The rise in home prices and rent demonstrates that Kamloops, more specifically downtown Kamloops, has a rapidly growing market that is showing no signs of stopping.

New Developments Downtown

2020 saw building permits for 174 new residential units issued in the downtown area. These will account for 19% of the total residential units, and are valued at $198.8M. Throughout 2020 there were 10 residential building permits that were completed, totaling 1.6% of all active permits.

Venture Kamloops, a local economic development office, has partnered with Community Futures, Open Door Group, Kamloops Innovation, and TRU Generator to “launch a collaborative entrepreneurship resource program. The program is called Start Here 3.0, and will encourage new developments in the downtown core. It’s dedication is centered around providing business planning, employment skills training, finance connections, and access to local business resources”.

Executive Director of Venture Kamloops, Jim Anderson, added “The topic of ‘downtown revitalization’ is a common one in virtually every city and town in Canada. For most, it remains an item in a strategic plan, or a future hope. The difference here in Kamloops is that downtown revitalization is actually underway. Major commercial and residential projects are providing new, exciting opportunities for business in the downtown core. New businesses are opening at a record pace in Kamloops and the city is emerging from the pandemic even stronger than it was before.”
With this current plan in motion, Kamloops is well underway into revitalizing the downtown. As more and more people take advantage of the Start Here 3.0 program, the downtown core will continue to become more vibrant.

Homelessness and poverty is an ongoing social issue across our province. Since the pandemic began many have fallen onto hard times and are currently experiencing homelessness, mental health, or substance use disorders. The pandemic has forced many into poverty or homelessness for various reasons, The Downtown Core has many resources for those who are considered At Risk or Vulnerable Population. Each organization has multiple programs in place in order to support those in the community facing these challenges. to best serve the individual, and Kamloops. More information can be found about each organization on their respective websites.

Ask Wellness, a Downtown Kamloops organization, focuses on helping the at risk population. The organization has many initiatives, with the list continuing to grow. They have a street outreach section where their “staff collaborates with other agencies such as Community Living BC (CLBC), City of Kamloops By-Law Services, and the RCMP to provide supportive outreach services to vulnerable people who are homeless or at-risk of homelessness in the communities that we serve.” (Ask Wellness, 2021).
The Canadian Mental Health Association operates in Kamloops and Logan Lake. They offer many services for those experiencing homelessness mental health / substance use. Since the onset of the pandemic they have been leaders to our community for the creation of temporary homeless shelters and going above and beyond the COVID-19 guidelines. The Memorial Arena and the Kamloops Curling Club have both been transformed into temporary shelters for those who are experiencing homelessness due to the pandemic. Due to CMHA’s leap to action and organization, they were able to organize and have provided over 100 additional beds for Kamloops’ vulnerable population. In addition to their housing opportunities, they have many programs geared towards the ongoing support of those afflicted with chronic mental illness, and the recovery of those experiencing mental injury or drug addiction substance use. “As the nationwide leader and champion for mental health, CMHA facilitates access to the resources people require to maintain and improve mental health and community integration, build resilience, and support recovery from mental illness.” (CMHA National, 2021).

The KCBiA has a unique prevention strategy: prevention through presence. The CAP Team operates throughout the year and assists with the cleaning of downtown, picking up and disposing of drug paraphernalia, and acts as an additional set of eyes and ears on the streets. The CAP Team is a bridge between those who are at risk and the services they need. Members of the team are educated on services available and are able to connect people to the resources they may need. The CAP customer care and patrol or CAP Team also assists our businesses within the core. Our team helps address any questions or concerns business owners might have and initiates conversations on improvements. They are also involved in event planning and execution to help draw locals and tourists to the downtown core. The CAP Team takes pride in assisting the community In order to help create a safe and fun space downtown for everyone in the community to enjoy.
There are many organizations in addition to the few that have been listed, and they all are extremely helpful and resilient. Most of them operate downtown and every day are actively attempting to better all of Kamloops. The at-risk services are interconnected so that an individual’s specific needs can be met with someone who has expertise in their specific situation, whatever that may be. Social issues have become more apparent in BC but Downtown Kamloops has strategies in action to help support those in need in our community while continuing to recover economically from the pandemic. It is no surprise that homelessness has increased over the pandemic, it is how the downtown core deals with this moving forward that is much more important.
The Future

The State of Downtown report showcases a depiction of downtown in an accurate way, this report being no different. As expected it comes as no surprise that 2020 was a difficult year for all aspects of the core, however that does not mean it was a bad year. There are many new projects on the horizon, businesses are starting to reopen and are seeing great customer engagement, and these trends will only continue to grow as we keep approaching living without a pandemic. The downtown residential sector is exploding with multiple projects ongoing to create new housing options for those who wish to live and enjoy the benefits of the core.

Looking into 2021 and 2022 there are many opportunities for growth in all fields as we all come out of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is likely that the report produced in 2022 will have full results on the economic recovery of downtown. In the fourth quarter of 2021, The Hive will be ready for occupancy which will help revitalize the Lansdowne area. The City of Kamloops is planning a bicycle lane going up 5th avenue to help activate that space, while simultaneously promoting no emissions commutes.

Downtown Kamloops is progressing towards a return to normalcy and we at the KCBIA are so excited to help with this transition. With many unique environments, and such rapid growth it is exciting to see how the core will continue to develop.

Downtown welcomes you.
Works Cited

- Venture Kamloops
- Stats Can
- City of Kamloops
- Google Maps
- Downtown Kamloops
- Private Conversations with local downtown workers
- KCBIA