



- City Centre Boundary
- Belleville BIA Area

West Hill

Belleville Business Improvement Area

East Hill

Downtown Belleville

Bay of Quinte

Purpose

The historic downtown can best reveal the authentic spirit of a town or city. It is in the downtown that the vestiges of a community's historic roots can be found, and where the defining image that makes a place special and memorable is captured in distinct block patterns, roads, buildings and landmarks.

It is recognizing the value of the discovery and protection of these characteristics that is at the heart of the movement to rediscover and revitalize downtowns across North America. This resurgence is not just about enhancing civic identity and pride, although these objectives are valuable in and of themselves, it is also very much about a community's economic development and prowess.

Healthy downtowns facilitate vibrant cultural activities and industries, attract tourists, incubate local independent businesses, accommodate a variety of lifestyle choices and make efficient use of municipal services and infrastructure. These attributes are unique to downtowns because they have the necessary density of people, mix of uses, variety of activities, pedestrian charm, built quality and sense of place that enable this vitality.

Downtown Belleville has all the hallmarks to become a success, including:

- a proud and distinct history that remains evident in its built character,
- an inviting and charming scale,
- a growing and healthy surrounding region,
- remarkable natural features, and
- room for growth.

However, as with many similarly scaled cities, the historic function of the downtown as the primary retail and employment centre has diminished. This decline over many years has adversely impacted the area's aesthetic quality, urban vitality and perceived image. Fortunately, Downtown Belleville's treasured assets remain intact and it is well positioned to seize upon emerging opportunities to revitalize and transform its image.

This Master Plan is no less than about charting a course for the transformation of Downtown Belleville. It provides Belleville with a long-term physical vision that can be used to guide public improvements and private investments. It defines strategies that can capitalize on strengths and opportunities that will serve to bring the vision for the Downtown to fruition. However, the scope of the Master Plan and the magnitude of its potential, holds the capacity to have a profound impact on the entire City of Belleville.

Defining the Downtown

Downtown Belleville has traditionally been associated with a concentration of civic, business and retail uses that comprise "The Village" and correspond to the Belleville Business Improvement Area (BBIA). As the historic and symbolic core of the City, this is a primary area of focus for improvements and initiatives. However, the physical extent of the Downtown subject to the Master Plan appropriately encompasses a far larger area of influence.

For the purposes of the Master Plan, the Downtown area corresponds to the entire "City Centre" designation in the Belleville Official Plan (left). Downtown Belleville includes both sides of the Moira River, extending south to include the waterfront, as far north as Memorial Park, as far west as Hwy 62, and as far east as Charles Street.

Downtown Belleville Master Plan: The Guiding Framework

Introduction

Background and Process

In the spring of 2005, Office for Urbanism was retained by the City of Belleville to undertake the Downtown Master Plan. Following on the heels of the BBIA's "Vision for the Village" document, the Master Plan is to provide a physical framework and clear direction for actions to be undertaken by the City and BBIA over the next ten to fifteen years.

The Master Plan process was completed over three phases. During the first phase, we sought to understand opportunities, constraints, and the unique character of this area. Further, Office for Urbanism hosted a series of interviews with stakeholders representing broad interests in the Downtown and wider community.

In August, the second phase of the study began with an intensive Visioning Workshop that was held over three consecutive days in a vacant Downtown storefront. The Workshop served to facilitate discussion, debate and the generation of ideas by involving the consultant team, Steering Committee, stakeholders and members of the public. This was a dynamic event that served to stimulate energy and enthusiasm about the potential of the Downtown. Walking tours, focused meetings, presentations, working group sessions and nightly open houses all served to facilitate discussion and debate.

During the third and final phase of this study the ideas and feedback generated at the Visioning Workshop were consolidated into a Draft Master Plan. This was submitted for review in October and was subsequently presented at a final Public Open House in November for feedback. This document is the final Downtown Belleville Master Plan and culminates what has been a truly outstanding planning process.



Master Plan Visioning Workshop

How to Use the Master Plan

A Master Plan is most effective when it can compel, inspire and bring about the intended outcomes. To do so, it must be rooted in the realm of possibilities, be legible to a broad spectrum of users and provide clear and concise direction to decision-makers. To be credible, the Master Plan must also be substantiated through technical analysis, be a product of a well documented public engagement process, and define concisely the appropriate tools or mechanisms for implementation.

For ease of reference and manageability, the Downtown Belleville Master Plan is divided into the following three documents:

The Guiding Framework

This is the long-term physical plan and concept for the Downtown. It presents the intended physical structure that will guide decisions regarding the character of uses, open spaces, and the built form over the next ten to fifteen years. Of the three documents, The Guiding Framework will have the most longevity, given that it defines a vision for the Downtown to work towards.

This will be most useful for directing planning policies and public improvements, guiding investments by land owners and developers, as a reference to assess development applications and as an economic development tool.

A red arrow pointing from the "This Document" box to the "The Guiding Framework" section.

This Document

The Implementation Strategy

This is the implementation plan and recommended actions. It sets out the potential projects, programs, policies and strategies to move the Plan towards fruition. With an emphasis on initial capital improvement projects, this document addresses the current conditions of the Downtown by defining the necessary actions that will advance the long-term vision presented in The Guiding Framework.

The Implementation Strategy document will be most useful in guiding the City and BBIA in defining programs, setting priorities, allocating finances and assessing achievements. Over time, this section of the Master Plan should be revisited and updated to ensure that the strategies remain relevant and current to the Downtown as it evolves.

The Background Report

The documentation of the analysis and process that is the basis of the Master Plan. This document provides a summary of the outcomes of the research, analysis and consultation that supports the vision contained in the Master Plan and the potential strategies to bring it to fruition.

The Background Report will be useful to trace how decisions were made and how the stakeholders and public were engaged in that decision-making.

Guiding Principles

Through the consultation process, a vision for Downtown Belleville emerged as a result of consensus on the following ten key guiding principles:

- Preserve and enhance the historical, architectural, cultural and natural resources that distinguish the Downtown and are its most treasured assets.
- Encourage infill and development that is compatible with the heritage character and pedestrian scale of the Downtown and that is of the highest possible quality architecture and materials.
- Expand and improve upon the public realm including parks, squares, streetscapes, and gateways.
- Expand and enhance pedestrian and cycling amenities including recreational trails, sidewalks, and mid-block connections.
- Balance the distinct pedestrian scale and charm of the Downtown with the need to accommodate car movement and parking.
- Encourage an increased residential and working population within the Downtown.
- Establish and reinforce connections between the Downtown and the riverfront, waterfront and surrounding neighbourhoods.
- Enhance the sense of comfort, safety and security for all users of the Downtown.
- Maintain and enhance the Downtown's role in the City and Region and ensure that it appeals and attracts a broad spectrum of the population in all seasons and throughout the day and evening.
- Promote the role and function of the Downtown as a benefit for the entire City; build a culture of citizenry and political support for the necessary investments and policy framework to enable it to flourish.

The following objectives have shaped the development of the Belleville Downtown Master Plan Framework and are derived from the outcome of the planning process including public consultation, research, analysis and design.

- To define and create vibrant and appealing mixed-use Downtown Neighbourhoods and Districts that reinforce or capitalize on the unique attributes of the distinct areas that comprise the Downtown.
- To provide an appealing high quality public realm framework including a network of parks, squares and streetscapes that can enhance the attractiveness of the Downtown for private investment, tourism and residential intensification.
- To identify strategic and highly visible sites for potential civic buildings and attractions, as well as sites that should incorporate special architectural, landscape or public art treatments.
- To enhance east-west visual and physical connections to better link commercial areas, to link both sides of the river, and to facilitate greater pedestrian movement.
- To expand the recreational trail network so as to enhance the connectivity of the Downtown to the rest of the City for pedestrians and cyclists.
- To enhance connections to the Waterfront and to establish more direct links for Downtown neighbourhoods on the west side of the Moira River.
- To develop a vibrant and appealing urban frontage along the riverfront.
- To create clearly identifiable gateways into the Downtown using open spaces, built form, landscaping and signage.
- To maintain and expand the fine grain and human scale character of the block structure and built form.
- To maintain the visual prominence of the Downtown's historic landmarks.
- To define appropriate built form approaches to siting, massing and parking in order to ensure compatibility with the historic context and to maintain and enhance the pedestrian environment.
- To define appropriate open space and built form design, utilizing Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles and strategies in order to maximize public safety and security .
- To introduce traffic calming measures throughout the Downtown in order to ensure a safe and comfortable pedestrian environment necessary to facilitate a vibrant street life and livable neighbourhoods.



- Existing Buildings
- Landmark Buildings
- Potential Buildings
- Community Parks
- Greens and Squares
- Plazas
- Public Art Sites
- Mid-Block Connections
- Recreational Trails
- Special Streetscapes
- Promenades
- Crosswalks

The Concept Plan

Bay of Quinte

The Concept Plan is a demonstration of the long-term improvement and development of the Downtown (see opposite page or the last page of this document which provides a larger fold-out of the plan). This plan illustrates the key structuring elements that will guide and shape the physical character of the Downtown over the next fifteen years and beyond. These elements include:

- Districts and Neighbourhoods
- Plazas, Squares, Greens and Parks
- Streetscapes and Promenades
- Trails and Mid-Block Connections
- Public Art locations
- Existing Landmark Buildings
- Existing and potential Buildings

The following section of the Master Plan Framework describes the concept plan in greater detail according to defined Neighbourhoods and District. This is followed by the Open Space Framework and Built Form Guidelines which provide the over-arching principles to guide capital improvements, investments and the overall growth and development of the Downtown area.



Downtown Belleville Master Plan: The Guiding Framework