

VISION FOR DOWNTOWN ST. ALBERT

VISION STATEMENT

St. Albert's economic prosperity is a major outcome of City Council's priorities. With the downtown viewed as the heart of our community, and considered a key driver in reaching our goals; Council has created a vision that we as a city will strive to achieve.

Downtown St. Albert is an exciting, vibrant place where residents, visitors and businesses come together. It's a place to shop, celebrate history and the arts, and enjoy outstanding events and entertainment.

OBJECTIVES

The following eight objectives for the downtown provide direction for Council, the corporation and the community over the next ten years as we strive to achieve our vision for the downtown. The objectives guide our collective action and help us make decisions for the downtown. By achieving our objectives we move towards our vision.

1. Establish a geographic boundary for downtown that provides focus yet maximum potential for amenities, liveability and business.
2. Increase the desirability of our downtown as the place to live for people of all ages.
3. Create a mix of businesses that ensures growth and sustainability within our downtown.
4. Create a central gathering place that supports the downtown's year round attractions and events.
5. Offer convenient transportation connections to downtown that are safe, walkable and accessible to all.
6. Establish an architectural theme in the downtown that captures the eclectic nature of St. Albert.
7. Strengthen the look and feel of the downtown through beautification, signage and infrastructure enhancements.
8. Improve the Sturgeon River as an attraction for year round activities.

FOCUS GROUP IDEAS (REQUIRE FEASIBILITY ASSESSMENT)

The following ideas for the downtown have not been approved by Council.

To achieve each of the above eight objectives, substantial effort will be required. The objectives will be met by implementing many initiatives. Through the Mayor's Taskforce, residents and Council many great ideas were identified that should be considered to improve the downtown. The ideas are presented below with the specific objective(s) they support. Some will be considered by a variety of stakeholders (Council, staff, community, businesses) while most will be assessed for feasibility through a comprehensive review of the Downtown Area Redevelopment Plan.

1. Establish a geographic boundary for downtown that provides focus yet maximum potential for amenities, liveability and business.

a. Geographic Boundary

To allow for focus of resources and greater clarity between 2009 to 2020 the downtown geographic boundary may be best defined as the area which includes Perron Street, St. Thomas Street, St. Joseph, St. Michael, St. Anne Street and Millennium Park. Furthermore this area needs to be solidified as an Arts and Heritage District.

b. Millennium Park

Changes to the tree line, access, egress and other inclusive-like changes should be made such that Millennium Park becomes an integral park within the downtown – and a natural gateway to Lion's Park and the Sturgeon River. Millennium Park should become the downtown green space where outdoor activities occur and are coordinated for the downtown.

c. Boardwalk

While the Boardwalk area (south side of Mission Avenue from Perron Street to St. Albert Trail) is currently deemed to be a part of the downtown footprint, no work should be done in this area at this time and removal from DARP may be an appropriate step at this time.

2. Increase the desirability of our downtown as the place to live for people of all ages.

a. Land Use

Land use policies need to be updated to reflect the desire to provide improved downtown commerce while also making the downtown a desirable place to live.

b. Buildings

Building height standards for the newly established boundaries need to remain consistent in the years ahead with the standards that are in place as of January 1/09. Views and vistas are important for both fronts and backs of buildings to celebrate equally the direction that is faced.

c. Playground

A playground would attract more families to live and spend time in the downtown; perhaps along the riverbank.

3. Create a mix of businesses that ensures growth and sustainability within our downtown.

a. Land Use

Land use policies need to be updated to reflect the desire to provide improved downtown commerce while also making the downtown a desirable place to live.

b. St. Thomas Street – City owned lot

One option is that St. Albert Place be expanded onto the vacant property on St. Thomas Street. The library could relocate here to a 60,000 square foot area within this building and the new building could also include some main floor commerce and substantial underground parking. This lot could temporarily be transformed into a parking area.

c. Brand

The City of St. Albert brand will need to be evident downtown and in fact will be a key feature in demonstrating the model that persists throughout the city.

d. Downtown Businesses

Attraction and retention of businesses within the downtown core is the entire community's responsibility and marketing of such will be important for the benefit of all stakeholders and must be shared by many.

4. Create a central gathering place that supports the downtown's year round attractions and events.

a. St. Anne Street

North St. Anne Street could be closed and the newly created area could become a downtown plaza. South St. Anne Street could remain open for vehicular traffic. Intersections at St. Thomas Street and Perron Street would need to be reconstructed to reflect changed traffic patterns; therefore, traffic studies are required.

b. Civic Plaza

The existing parking lot east of St. Albert Place could be converted into an open-air plaza with underground parking and street level open space.

c. Amphitheatre/Central Pavilion

A rain-protected amphitheatre could be constructed in the plaza.

d. Farmers' Market

Both the indoor and outdoor Farmers' Markets should continue in the downtown on Saturdays. Additional activities to supplement the Farmers' Markets will be required.

e. Activities

Additional activities and festivals will be encouraged and planned for within the downtown core. Growth of the current activities will be encouraged and nurtured.

5. Offer convenient transportation connections to downtown that are safe, walkable and accessible to all.

a. St. Anne Street

North St. Anne Street could be closed and the newly created area could become a downtown plaza. South St. Anne Street could remain open for vehicular traffic. Intersections at St. Thomas Street and Perron Street would need to be reconstructed to reflect changed traffic patterns; therefore, traffic studies are required.

b. Perron Street

Perron Street could possibly be narrowed to allow for wider sidewalks, better shopping convenience, two lanes of traffic and perhaps we should accommodate angle parking.

c. St. Thomas Street

St. Thomas Street could be reconstructed to better serve two lanes of traffic and could have angle parking.

d. Parking

Underground parking in a parkade should be considered.

e. Pedestrian & transit

Pedestrian-friendly approaches will need to be included in all changes such as the elimination of unnecessary curbs, addition of sidewalk bulbs, lighting, signs, ramps etc. Transportation improvements should be made to enhance public transit use and walkability such as an upgraded bus stop shelter and bicycle parking racks.

f. Sidewalks

Perron Street sidewalks could be widened and additional sidewalk bulbs could be constructed. St. Anne Street sidewalks should be added near the courthouse and be changed substantially around St. Albert Place to allow for a plaza design and configuration. Linkages to the Red Willow Trail system and Founders Walk are all considerations in design and changes.

6. Establish an architectural theme in the downtown that captures the eclectic nature of St. Albert.

a. St. Albert Place

St. Albert Place must remain unaltered and unchanged with respect to its architecture. Uses within should allow for more arts and cultural activities and amenities. The current library location could become the home of the relocated or new St. Albert museum if another library were added elsewhere.

b. Architectural Theme

Residences and businesses should be required to conform to an updated architectural theme. Storefronts should move toward perpendicular signage and numerous standards would be included within a new set of architectural guidelines that provides for the continued brick and stucco appearances to the downtown – similar to that which has been constructed between 1995 and 2009.

c. Community Hall

The Profiles Art Gallery and the Community Hall frame the architecture of their time and should be protected. The Community Hall may be able to be preserved and maintained as a heritage building and in the future could be integrated with the Profiles Gallery to provide for a large area for artists. The appearance of the building outside and inside would need to be upgraded and the parking area upgraded.

d. Heritage

The *Community Recognition Tribute* and the *Founders Walk* will be constructed and maintained as two infrastructural components that contribute to the celebration of our past.

e. Brand

The City of St. Albert brand will need to be evident downtown and in fact will be a key feature in demonstrating the model that persists throughout the city.

f. Anchor building

Consider having a feature building in the downtown that can become an anchor to attract visitors and businesses.

7. Strengthen the look and feel of the downtown through beautification, signage and infrastructure enhancements.

a. Sidewalks

Perron Street sidewalks could possibly be widened and additional sidewalk bulbs constructed. St. Anne Street sidewalks should be added near the court house and be changed substantially around St. Albert Place to allow for a plaza design and configuration. Linkages to the Red Willow Trail system and Founders Walk will all be considerations in design and changes.

b. Environment

Specific improvements that reflect environmental stewardship are necessary. Garbage receptacles, foliage, drainage and signage are all examples of what need to be improved.

c. Public Art

Public Art should be added to further enhance and to articulate the downtown. Our past should be celebrated in part through art. Our branding needs to become more clearly articulated through our art. Privately owned and public buildings and businesses must be encouraged to display local art and historical photographs showcasing our past to everyone.

d. Street Furniture and beautification

Additional functional and artistic street furniture will need to be strategically added within the downtown. Businesses should be encouraged to beautify their businesses both front and back.

e. Landscaping, maintenance, and appearance standards

A standards guide will need to be developed to ensure a consistent standard of excellence in the overall appearance of the downtown. Snow, grass and debris maintenance standards must be developed to allow for improved overall appearance, use and safety. Overhead power lines should be moved underground in the future.

f. Signage within downtown

A standard for all signage within downtown will be developed such that it is visible, trilingual, effective, consistent, and reflective of the chosen City brand. Posters should not be allowed in the downtown. Banners and signage for activities, venues, directions and education is all required.

g. Signage at entrances

Entrance signage should be featured at key entrances into the downtown. The extra large signage will need to be reflective of the chosen city brand and should establish clearly when one is entering or leaving the downtown. Specifically, signage at the intersection of St. Albert Trail and St. Anne Street is required. Signage on/off Sir Winston Churchill and downtown is required to distinguish the downtown area.

h. Ambiance

Christmas lights, tree lighting, art, lampposts and other appearance-related improvements must be implemented. Standards will need to be established for adherence to be assured.

i. Brand

The City of St. Albert brand will need to be evident downtown and in fact will be a key feature in demonstrating the model that persists throughout the city.

8. Improve the Sturgeon River as an attraction for year round activities.

a. Environment

Specific improvements that reflect environmental stewardship are necessary. Garbage receptacles, foliage, drainage and signage are all examples of what will be improved.

b. Sturgeon River

The study that is planned for the Sturgeon River will establish the plan for its future and the potential for summer or winter recreation will be determined once the overall river study is completed. Additionally, there are opportunities for "river edge" improvements within the downtown core that would allow for a more embracing approach of the river by the downtown. A playground is one example.

c. Activities

Additional activities and festivals will be encouraged and planned for within the downtown core. Growth of the current activities will be encouraged and nurtured.