

HANOVER DOWNTOWN PLAN

June 2026



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INTRODUCTION

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION

The development of the Downtown Hanover Plan was a decision by the Town of Hanover in collaboration with the Downtown Improvement Area (DIA) to navigate the evolution of the downtown, and define a direction that is authentic, place-based, and rooted in the history, culture, and values of the community. Downtown Hanover is more than a collection of streets and storefronts, it is where local stories are shared, where businesses grow, where people come together and the Town's unique identity is experienced. The Plan builds on local assets and knowledge and is designed to spark renewed interest and investment in the heart of the community. The Downtown Plan is a call to action to strengthen the heart of the community.

Through the crafting of the Plan the focus has been on what is strong, not what is wrong. The Plan is designed to: build local capacity; create a vision and implementation framework that is attractive and investment ready; build on community assets; give agency to citizens and businesses; and for the community to collaboratively reimagine and actively participate in the evolution of their downtown.

The Plan builds on previous initiatives and is framed by a four pillar approach to deliver an actionable and achievable strategy focused on the interconnected areas of: Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion, and Organization.

The Plan establishes framework for the next 5 to 10 years to support active and collaborative stewardship of downtown Hanover, guiding its evolution into a more vibrant centre that attracts businesses and investment, supports community well-being, and is desirable and interesting for visitors alike.

HERE and NOW

Downtown Hanover is centred along 10th St (County Road 4), between 6th Avenue and 14th Avenue. Key sites within the Downtown include Town Hall, the Public Library, Civic Theatre, Heritage Square, the Legion and Curling Club. These uses act as gathering spaces and the cultural and civic heart of the community. There are many events held throughout the year in the downtown, bringing people together including the Farmer's Market, Christmas Market and trick or treat trail.

10th Street functions as a traditional high street with active pedestrian-oriented uses fronting the street in human-scaled buildings that define the streetwall. On-street and public parking lots are located throughout the downtown.

Characteristic of Ontario main streets, buildings are located close to the street and the architecture is reflective of both historic and contemporary time periods in the Town's development history. While the outer edges of the downtown corridor shift toward more residential and suburban auto-oriented forms of development, the core of the downtown has a well-defined street wall with commercial storefronts and continuous sidewalks for pedestrian movement. A few vacant storefronts and underutilized building sites create opportunities for targeted casting of commercial tenancies and infill development.

Meeting the Challenge

Citizens, businesses, home buyers, visitors and the new economy insist on all-ages friendly, dynamic, innovative, walkable and livable communities. We know what they are, but meeting these contemporary challenges requires a shift in culture and the approaches to implementation.

To create and maintain the long-term value and desirability of the downtown, this Plan is focused on a multi-faceted approach to the planning, urban design, programming, management of spaces, and community collaboration and creation of economic opportunities. The Plan provides three clearly defined actionable work plans for downtown revitalization. Additional strategic considerations related to local tourism are also provided, which can be used to augment the work plan actions. These are all based on community insights, analysis, and proven practice; and have been crafted to work within the capacities and opportunities available to the community, including considerations of capital, operations, collaboration, skills, and timing. While the targeted outcomes are ambitious, each work plan is specifically made up of smaller-scaled projects that make it more likely to be able to deliver this positive improvement through manageable actions resulting in continuous and cumulative results over the next five years.

THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT FEATURES

The quality, character, and configuration of the built environment is one of the most consequential factors influencing the potential long-term vitality of a downtown commercial and mixed-use district. Research and practice from leading organizations consistently reinforce this conclusion. Great public spaces, defined by qualities of access and linkage, comfort and image, uses and activities, and sociability, do not happen by accident; they are the product of deliberate, human-scaled design that prioritizes people, and extends thinking beyond individual buildings, sites, or streetscapes, to the holistic experience of a place.

For tourism-oriented downtowns in particular, the built environment carries even greater weight, as visitors make judgments about a destination based on its beauty and visual interest, cleanliness, pedestrian comfort, and the apparent care with which a community tends to its public realm. Research consistently shows that tourists spend more time and



Uses such as the movie theatre provide opportunities for event programming that can be targeted towards locals and visitors alike.

The large area defined by the military monument, surrounding grounds and parking lots could be made more attractive and interesting with simple landscape design improvements, redesign of parking and movement networks and design of public spaces for more than just car storage.

Redesigning the laneway, or providing seasonal public spaces would improve downtown's appeal and aesthetics for local citizens and visitors by prioritizing spaces for people and their movement patterns.

There are opportunities to better define the gateways into the downtown through infill development and streetscape improvements

New investment in the downtown is a positive signal and efforts should be made to best understand how the community can be development ready and investment attractive.

The traditional built form and heritage buildings are central to defining the character of the downtown and should be understood as indispensable assets.

Creative programming and revitalization of the pocket park site can add vitality to the downtown

Facilitating the redevelopment of the vacant site with contextually fitting buildings, and uses that support activity, commerce, and downtown experiences should be of the highest priority.

money in walkable, visually engaging downtown environments where attractions, dining, retail, and accommodation are in close proximity and connected by comfortable, interesting streetscapes.

Downtown Hanover’s built form has many characteristics that can support, or be enhanced to support, the kinds of qualities that make for an attractive and successful downtown. In the image and call-outs below a number of these are identified. The work plans described in the Plan take advantage of a number of these, with the others standing as opportunities that future actions could leverage for success.



Heritage Square and its adjacent parking area and streets provide an excellent setting for more visitor-oriented events as well as community-scaled programming.

Suburban forms of development that do not address the street, can be improved with streetscape-oriented landscape improvements to better support the downtown’s sense of place.

The entrances to the downtown, and intersections, provide excellent opportunities for low-cost high-impact traffic calming and gateway definition through curb extensions, landscaped planters and public art.

The civic uses and Heritage Square with its parking lot, should be viewed as a cohesive single site, hub, or mini-campus, and programmed to express local civic life and authentic visitor experiences.

The local churches and their grounds are well-suited to have a greater presence in the life of downtown through adaptive reuse, programming, and creative infill. Facilitating this should be of high priority.

The roadways entering the downtown provide space for a variety of opportunities for supporting active transportation; wayfinding; placemaking.

Building on Past Work

Downtown Hanover has a strong foundation to build on. Over time, the Town and DIA have invested in understanding what makes its downtown work and how it can continue to thrive. This includes completing several important studies and strategies, such as a Downtown Community Improvement Plan, Streetscape Plan, Wayfinding Strategy, Cultural Plan, and Strategic Plan.

Together, these initiatives reflect a shared recognition that downtown is one of Hanover's greatest community assets. The studies focus on supporting existing businesses and residents, celebrating local culture and heritage, and creating an inviting downtown that serves both everyday needs and special experiences for visitors. Rather than starting from scratch, the Hanover Downtown Plan builds on this collective work and the many ideas already generated by the community.

Downtown Hanover already functions as a civic, cultural, and commercial hub, anchored by local businesses, community institutions, heritage buildings, and gathering places along 10th Street. Community assets such as the library, civic theatre, festivals, and local organizations contribute to a downtown that is active, recognizable, and rooted in local identity.

Positioning Downtown for the Next Phase

While not all ideas identified in past strategies have been implemented, the groundwork has been laid. The Hanover Downtown Plan is an opportunity to connect existing plans, local knowledge, and community energy into a clear and manageable set of actions. The Plan focuses on building momentum, supporting local champions, and aligning future investments with the strengths that already make downtown Hanover a place people value.

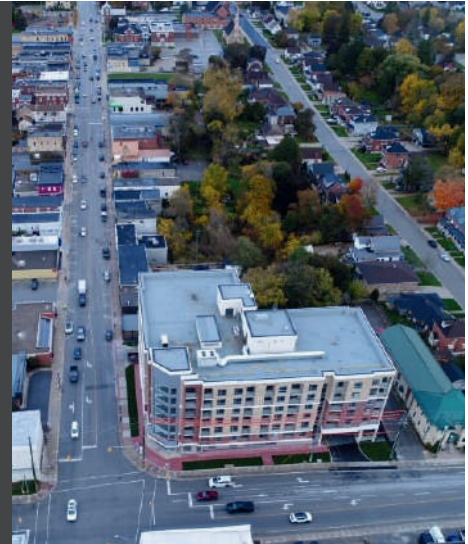
The Plan aims to support a downtown that continues to evolve in a way that feels authentic, inclusive, and achievable for the Hanover community.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Community Improvement Plan (CIP)

- Provided grants up to \$17,500 for Downtown facade, building and signage improvements.
- Tax Increment Grant has been successful in helping to facilitate the development of a mixed use residential building Downtown.
- CIP has other programs targeted to helping non-residential property owners improve accessibility, facilitate patios, improve landscaping and help start new businesses.



Downtown Signage

Designed as part of the Hanover Wayfinding Strategy and have been a successful navigation tool in the Downtown. This is supported by the Downtown District Placemakers which identify to pedestrians, cyclists and motorists that you are within the Downtown.



Events

- There are numerous events which are run and bring people Downtown including the:
 - Eat Well Farmers Market
 - Music in the Square
 - Trick or Treat Trail.
 - Santa Claus Parade and other holiday celebrations
 - Shop and Win Events
- Heritage Square acts as a main event hosting space in the Town and has a bandshell for performances.
- Town's Event Development Fund provides funding for groups to organize and run events in the Town.



Beautification

- Each year the Town invests in planters and the DIA invests in hanging baskets to bring vibrancy to the street.
- DIA Parkette provides place for people to rest and gather.
- Multiple murals in the Town to showcase its culture and history.
- The Town has seasonal street banners it uses to promote festivities each season.



Other Programs

- The Town's biannual HIPP Entrepreneur Business Pitch competition helps fund new businesses within the Town.
- The Town's Food Truck Pilot program permits seasonal food trucks on municipal property to support small businesses and enhance public spaces.
- The Town's driftscape app promotes local storytelling, offers self guided tours and promotes businesses downtown.



Business Context

Business Mix

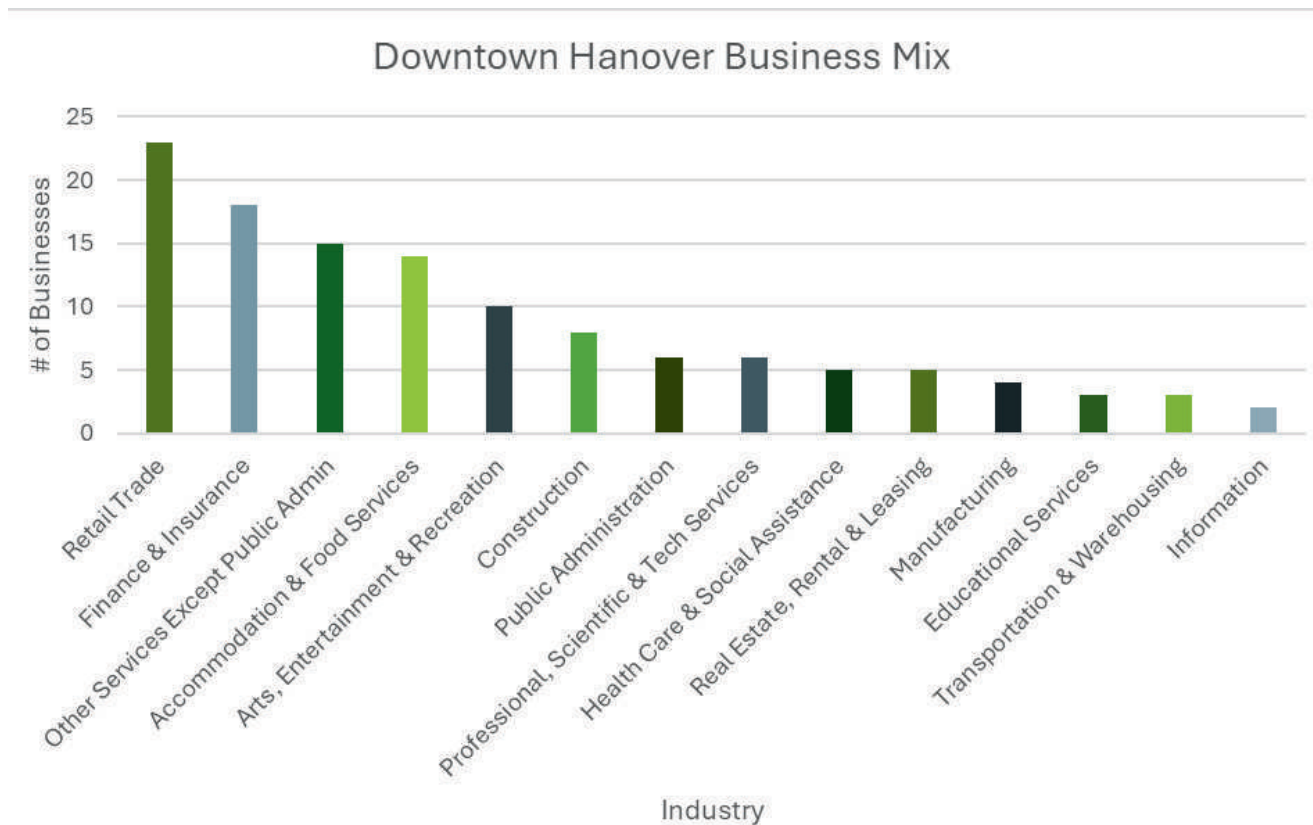
Downtown Hanover contains a mix of various businesses, with the predominant uses being retail trade (19%), followed by Finance and Insurance (15%) and Other Services Except Public Administration (12%) and Accommodation and Food Services (11%) based on available 2025 Safeguard data for the Town. Other Services Except Public Administration includes personal services like nail salons, hair and beauty salons, repair shops and religious organizations. While not within the Downtown, there are various recreation and entertainment uses in the surrounding area including the Playtime Casino and Raceway, Saugeen River and Hanover Community

Trail, Drive-in Theatre, P&H Centre, Entertainment District, and Hanover Flea Market.

This mix provides opportunities to promote the Downtown as a convenience and goods services destination or a family-friendly destination with stores and events catering to youth.

Visitor Snapshot

MobileScapes data between January and June 2025, indicates late morning/midday is the most popular visitation of Downtown, with little variation in the most popular day. Most visitors come from within 30 km. Approximately 40% of visitor households had children.





Demographics

Based on the 2021 Census Profile for Hanover from Statistics Canada, the Town of Hanover has a population of approximately 8,000 people which has been growing over the past two decades. The Median age of the population is 49.2, indicating a larger proportion of older adults and long-term residents.

This influences how the Downtown is used by its residents and means that:

- people are more likely to visit the downtown during daytime hours;
- there is a higher importance placed on walkability, comfort, accessibility and safety;
- there may be more demand for services, specialty retail (i.e. local goods, food) and gathering places; and,
- there is stronger potential for volunteerism and civic participation in the Town

Based on the 2021 average household expenditure data in the Province and the Town of Hanover from Statistic Canada, we are seeing that people in Hanover are spending less on clothing and recreation.¹ This could be a lifestyle choice, favouring free recreational activities or it could be an opportunity for recreation based business and clothing retail within the Downtown.

¹ Data derived from the Statistics Canada 2021 Survey of Household Spending and the 2022 Community Profile Hanover by Environics Analytics.

Vacancies and Infill

There are approximately 122 businesses operating in Downtown Hanover across 214 properties, including residential, institutional, and Town-owned properties. In some cases, individual businesses occupy more than one property. When we look at properties which have direct physical links to 10th Street, which is considered the main street, there are approximately 156.

Less than 5% of buildings and sites within the Downtown are vacant, indicating a low overall vacancy rate. While this suggests a generally healthy level of occupancy, vacancy rates alone do not fully capture how vacancy may affect downtown function. Consideration must also be given to the location, concentration, and duration of vacancies.

Data and stakeholder feedback suggest that sustained low vacancy has contributed to affordability pressures and reduced incentives for reinvestment in existing buildings. High rents, combined with aging building stock and deferred maintenance, may limit opportunities for new and expanding businesses and constrain the long-term adaptability of the downtown, despite its strong occupancy levels.

While occupancy levels remain strong, these factors point to emerging constraints related to affordability and reinvestment that warrant proactive attention to support long-term downtown resilience.

Opportunities associated with vacant development / infill sites have a potentially greater impact on the long-term success of the downtown. Attention should be focused on facilitating the redevelopment of these sites and the casting of complementary businesses within these buildings, as this will have possible impacts on: tax revenue; streetscape aesthetics and function; and, business mix.



Vacant infill site, downtown Hanover



DOWNTOWN VISION

THE VISION

Downtown Hanover will be a vibrant, lively and inclusive community hub designed for all ages and abilities. A place where people can comfortably walk, linger, and connect, the downtown will build on its local assets, strengthen existing businesses, and create inviting public spaces that support everyday life and community events. Through strong collaboration between the Town, DIA, Chamber, businesses, and volunteers, downtown Hanover will continue to grow as a resilient, welcoming, and people-focused destination.

HOW WE GOT THERE

Through the preparation of the Downtown Hanover Plan, we spoke with key stakeholders, residents, business owners, and municipal staff about what they value most about Hanover and how they would like downtown to grow and change over time. While there was no single tourism theme or signature attraction identified, a clear message emerged: people want a downtown that feels welcoming, reflects local pride, and works for everyday life.

Participants emphasized the importance of a downtown that serves residents of all ages, supports local businesses, and provides spaces to gather, shop, and spend time year-round. This feedback shaped a plan that focuses on strengthening existing assets, improving how downtown functions for the community, and guiding change in a way that feels authentic to Hanover rather than aspirational or tourist-driven.

VISION BOARD

The vision board below captures the feedback shared at the Idea Jamming Session in January 2026. Taken together, the images and words highlight a strong desire to build community within downtown Hanover, celebrate inclusivity and diversity, and showcase local culture through shared spaces and events.

The feedback reflects a downtown vision that is active and social, where people of all ages feel welcome and have reasons to spend time, connect with others, and take part in celebrations throughout the year. This community-driven vision emphasizes belonging and togetherness, reinforcing downtown as a place shaped by and for the people who live, work, and gather in Hanover.



STRATEGY

FOUR PILLAR APPROACH

The Hanover Downtown Plan is organized around a four pillar approach made up of Economic Vitality, Design, Promotion, and Organization. This approach recognizes that successful downtowns are built through a combination of strong local businesses, welcoming public spaces, active programming, and ongoing collaboration.

Each pillar supports a different aspect of downtown life.

Economic Vitality focuses on supporting local businesses and encouraging investment.

Design addresses how downtown looks and functions, including buildings, streets, public spaces, and accessibility.

Promotion helps share downtown's story through events, branding, and communication.

Organization brings together the Town, businesses, organizations, and volunteers to coordinate efforts and turn ideas into action.

The four pillar approach works well in Hanover because it builds on strengths that already exist. Downtown Hanover benefits from active businesses, cultural and community facilities, engaged volunteers, and a planning framework that supports reinvestment. Rather than relying on a single large project, this approach supports steady, achievable improvements led by many different partners.

Community feedback showed a clear desire for a downtown that serves residents of all ages, supports everyday life, and creates opportunities to connect and celebrate. The Four Pillar framework reflects this by balancing economic, physical, and social priorities, while providing a clear structure to guide action over time. Together, the pillars help ensure that downtown improvements are practical, inclusive, and sustainable.

Economic Vitality

Actions that strengthen the downtown economic base, diversifying it and creating a supportive environment for small businesses, entrepreneurs and consumers.

Examples include but are not limited to CIP programs, business incubators and zoning changes.

Design

Actions to enhance downtown's physical and visual appeal to be safe, appealing, inviting for people to shop and spend time, including public art, street furniture, parking areas and public spaces.

Examples include but are not limited to streetscape improvements (i.e lighting, benches), accessibility improvements and parkettes.

Promotion

Actions to market downtown's unique characteristics to residents, visitors, and investors by creating a positive image.

Examples include but are not limited to branding, seasonal events and walking tours.

Organization

Actions to engages stakeholders to build partnerships and leadership, creating a foundation for sustained downtown investment and development.

Examples include downtown delivery team, development of action plan and partnerships.

A**ASSET****B****BASED****C****COMMUNITY****D****DEVELOPMENT**

Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is an approach to guiding the incremental evolution of a community, or neighbourhood, to greater success by focusing on and working with its existing assets. ABCD identifies community assets and strengths of all kinds, seeing these as the key resources for building successful and livable communities. This includes a shift in focus from outputs or products and procedures such as plans and community meetings, to outcomes which are definable actions and desired results.

The core principles of Asset Based Community Development is that we cannot know what a community needs until they first know what they have. Every community has more gifts, skills, talents and resources than any one person or organization can know, and these are easily disadvantaged or marginalized by solutions that are not context specific.

The asset mapping work completed as part of the Hanover Downtown Plan is a foundational act of community recognition. Asset mapping begins from a fundamentally optimistic premise demonstrated through decades of research: that every community,

regardless of its challenges, possesses an existing wealth of resources, relationships, and capacities waiting to be identified, connected, and mobilized. Community building must start with the use of those assets rather than a focus on what is wrong or missing. Community assets are often invisible and that the critical work lies in making the invisible visible. For Hanover, this will mean repeatedly returning to, and deepening, the asset map as the strategy unfolds. Asset mapping needs to be understood as a living inventory rather than a documentation.

Discovering, connecting and mobilizing community assets is about so much more than making a list or drawing a map. Community assets function together in dynamic ways, reflecting community values, and emergence of ideas. It is important to understand that the value of asset mapping extends well beyond informing individual projects; it shapes the culture and orientation of the entire revitalization effort.

Hanover has a rich associational life, a proud heritage, a growing creative economy, and demonstrated civic ambition. The asset mapping work completed should lead to an

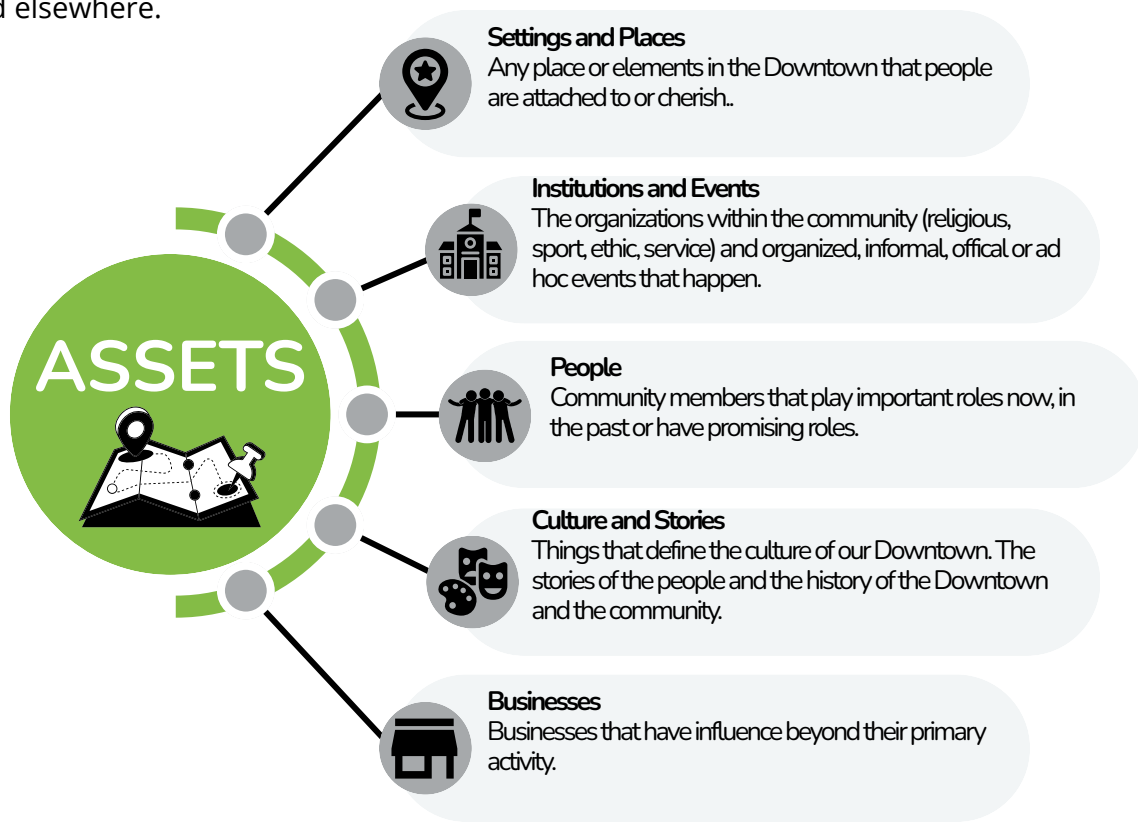
ongoing and more rewarding community conversation about what downtown Hanover can become. It should now serve as a springboard for deeper engagement, connection-building, and strategic action.

In his landmark work *Rediscovering the Wealth of Places*, Dr. Greg Baeker, a leading Canadian authority on municipal cultural planning and cultural asset mapping and the consultant for the Town's Cultural Plan, argues that 80% of the growth of any economy does not come from new businesses moving in, but from existing assets, and that the purpose of cultural and community planning is to identify those local assets and help grow them. For any community the assets of local culture and stories are particularly unique, not to be found elsewhere.

Decades of community and economic development practice bears out the value gained from this understanding.

The Hanover Downtown Improvement Area, local merchants, cultural organizations, community groups, and municipal staff each hold pieces of this asset map, and the strategy's implementation should create regular opportunities to keep surfacing, connecting, and celebrating what makes Hanover's downtown genuinely distinct.

Through focus groups, idea jamming and asset mapping questionnaire, Hanoverians helped map their Downtown's assets using five categories. The graphic below and list on the following page summarise the assets identified by the community.



Assets Still to Discover

Through the process the community was able to easily identify local assets that have direct connection to the downtown.

As the Plan is implemented it is recommended that the list of assets is revisited and updated, at best at the launch of each initiative. This will help broaden the community asset inventory and could include targeted outreach to residents, local organizations, institutions, and businesses as part of this update task. The goal is to capture more tangible and intangible assets that specifically relate to each initiative.

A fuller asset inventory gives decision-makers a clearer picture of the community's strengths, the most valued places and resources, and the reasons those assets matter to residents. It also supports more effective revitalization, stronger community engagement, and better resilience by helping the community identify what can be strengthened, leveraged, and protected over time.

This should be paired with a structured process to compile, and maintain the information in a shared database so the asset list is current, organized, and usable.



Settings and Places

1. Heritage Square
2. Library
3. Theatre
4. Legion
5. Curling Club
6. Ashanti's
7. Giddy Goblin
8. Paramount Theatre
9. Clock Tower
10. 10th Avenue and 10th Street



Institutions and Events

1. Legion
2. Rotary Club
3. Lions' Club
4. DIA
5. Chamber of Commerce
6. Saugeen Artists Guild
7. Eat Well Farmers Market
8. Pumpkin Carving Challenge
9. Trick or Treat Trail
10. Rotary's Santa Claus Parade
11. Spring and Fall Shop and Win programs
12. St. Matthew's Luthern Church
13. 1 Grace United



People

1. Adam Olivero
2. Al Morrow
3. Dave Schefter
4. Jen Olivero
5. Hanover Community Players



Businesses

1. Foodland
2. Ashanti's
3. Giddy Goblin
4. Denim Bar
5. Queens Bush
6. Lasting Memories
7. Paramount Theatre
8. Lift Fitness Studio
9. Golden Tiger
10. Becker Shoes
11. Schultz Bakery
12. Kerry Moore School of Dance



Culture and Stories

1. Murals
2. Furniture Manufacturing - Knechtel Furniture Company
3. Regional service centre
4. Saugeen River
5. Rural Roots - How the Town came to be



PLACEMAKING

Placemaking is one of the most powerful and enduring frameworks available to communities seeking to revitalize their downtowns. This is because of its underlying characteristics, principally being authentically place-based, community-driven, and collaboratively executed. These inherently help with community well-being and economic development.

Placemaking is both philosophy and practical process together; adding meaning to spaces. It is the facilitation of the transformation of public spaces into places that are human-scaled and connected to the lives of the people who inhabit them. It asks communities to look at their streets, squares, parks, and storefronts not as pieces of real estate or lines on a zoning map, but as the shared stage upon which daily life is performed, relationships are formed, and community identity is expressed. In this sense, placemaking is not a program or a project with a defined end date, it is an ongoing commitment to the quality, character, and vitality of the public realm as a reflection of what a community values.

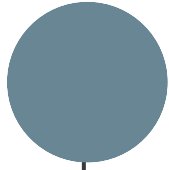
The connection between placemaking and community well-being is both intuitive and increasingly well-documented. When people have access to welcoming, well-designed, and programmatically rich public spaces they experience measurable improvements in social connection, mental health, civic pride, and sense of belonging. This looks like places where people can sit

comfortably, encounter their neighbours, watch their children play, attend a market or a concert, or simply linger.

Great public spaces are defined by four essential qualities: accessible and well-connected; comfortable and project a positive image; filled with diverse uses and activities; and foster sociability. In a downtown context, these qualities are the difference between a commercial corridor that people pass through or a place they go to.

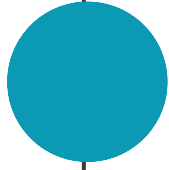
Placemaking has a demonstrable economic dimension: businesses located in well-activated, human-scaled pedestrian-friendly public environments consistently outperform those in environments where the public realm has been neglected, because people spend more time and money in places they enjoy being. For a community like Hanover, where the downtown serves simultaneously as a commercial centre, a cultural venue, a gathering place, and a source of civic identity, investment in placemaking is investment in the full spectrum of community life. The framework introduced through this Plan is designed to support and amplify this kind of distributed, community-powered action, toward the shared goal of a downtown that is more beautiful, more welcoming, and more successful.

Characteristics of Placemaking



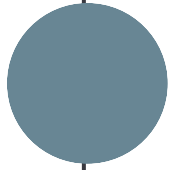
ASSET BASED

Effective placemaking begins with appreciative inventory of the physical spaces, cultural traditions, local businesses and organizations, and human talents. These are the building blocks to create easy wins, generate momentum, build community pride, and ensures that change and growth is authentic from the community's own identity rather than being imposed from the outside.



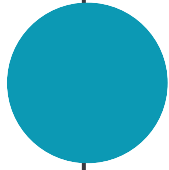
COMPREHENSIVE

Placemaking requires recognition that the vitality of a downtown cannot be achieved by addressing any single element in isolation. The physical environment, mix of uses, programming, accessibility, economic health, and social culture are all interconnected and must be considered together.



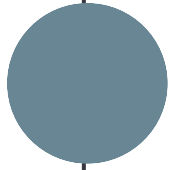
INCREMENTAL

The most durable downtown transformations are achieved through many small, well-sequenced actions that build capacity, confidence, and community support over time. Placemaking embraces incremental approaches because it acknowledges that municipalities, businesses, and community organizations have finite resources, and communities' perspectives and capacities change over time.



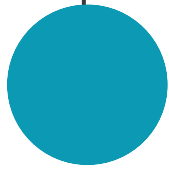
IMPLEMENTATION FOCUSED

Transforming the economy of an older commercial district takes time, and the enormity of the challenge can sometimes seem overwhelming. Breaking these transformations down into small, achievable activities makes the process manageable. And, by demonstrating frequent, visible progress, the revitalization initiative gradually builds and strengthens community support



PLACE BASED

Great placemaking is always specifically about one place, with its history, geography, culture, and community, and solutions are ones that could only work in that place. A place-based approach resists the temptation to import off-the-shelf solutions and when it takes inspiration from elsewhere it is adapted to local context and not mimicry.



PARTNERSHIP ORIENTED

No municipality, business association, or community organization can revitalize a downtown on its own, and placemaking has always been achieved through the sustained collaboration of many different actors, bringing together different resources, perspectives, and capabilities to focus on a shared goal. This means actively cultivating relationships, and building capacity and resources.

STRATEGIC WORK PLANS

APPROACH

Each work program is grounded in local knowledge and lived experience. Ideas were shaped by people who know Downtown Hanover the best, including residents, the DIA, Chamber of Commerce, business owners, volunteers, community groups and Town staff. Their everyday experience helped identify what matters most for the future of the downtown.

The ideas for this Plan came directly from the community. There was no single, shared vision for how downtown should be revitalized. Instead, people expressed different priorities, interests, and hopes for downtown's future. To reflect this, the work programs do not rely on one overall theme. Instead, community ideas were grouped into three work programs, each representing a distinct but equally important direction for the Downtown Vision:

- 1. A beautiful and welcoming Downtown**
- 2. A Downtown for all ages and families**
- 3. An easy Downtown to visit and explore**

Next, we developed a series of objectives for each work program that describes what it aims to achieve. These objectives help connect individual actions to shared long-term outcomes for downtown Hanover and provide guidance for implementation, partnerships, and decision-making over time. These objectives are intended to act as reference points throughout the implementation of the plan.

Community ideas related to physical improvements, events, programs, and strategies were refined using the following criteria: implementability, local appropriateness, and how well actions complement one another. Ideas were further refined to ensure all four pillars are reflected within each work program, resulting in balanced, community-grounded, and achievable programs that can be implemented by different partners including the DIA, Chamber, businesses, volunteers and other groups over time.

VISION

Downtown Hanover will be a vibrant, lively and inclusive community hub designed for all ages and abilities. A place where people can comfortably walk, linger, and connect, the downtown will build on its local assets, strengthen existing businesses, and create inviting public spaces that support everyday life and community events. Through strong collaboration between the Town, DIA, Chamber, businesses, and volunteers, downtown Hanover will continue to grow as a resilient, welcoming, and people-focused destination

STRATEGIC WORK PLANS

A Beautiful and Welcoming Downtown

- Laneway and streetscape placemaking
- Extended hours
- Incentivize restaurant development
- Business retention
- Develop artists space

A Downtown for All Ages and Families

- Develop more youth and family focused spaces and events
- Improve maintenance activities
- Accessibility
- Promote volunteer opportunities

An Easy Downtown to Visit and Explore

- Promote river activities and access
- Improve event and business collaboration on events
- Promote all season-activity
- Improve event success

To support practical implementation, actions within each work program are organized into pilot, near-term, and mid-term phases. This phasing starts with lower-risk pilot projects, builds momentum through near-term actions, and advances more coordinated initiatives as capacity, partnerships, and resources grow.

Each action is supported by an objective, measure of success and relates to one of the four pillars. This supports implementation and helps determine whether actions were successful.

The implementation of each work program will require collaboration between different groups including the Town, DIA, Chamber, local businesses, institutions, and volunteers. It is important to note that the implementation of these work programs cannot fall on the shoulders of one group or the objectives of each work program will not be realized.

To support the implementation of this plan, a Downtown Hanover Plan delivery team should be struck. This team should include representatives from the Town, DIA, Chamber and volunteers. Each year this group should determine which actions they will work towards implementing and assign responsibility.



Coordination and Schedules

Gantt charts for the following work plans present a sequenced, multi-year program for the downtown revitalization strategies. These are organized across the three interconnected work plans. These charts are a helpful project management tool displaying the key initiatives along a timeline, allowing decision-makers to visualize how individual projects relate to one another, identify possible conflicts and dependencies between activities, and to understand the overall arc of implementation.

In the context of the Plan, the charts are particularly valuable as a communication and coordination tool for helping municipal staff, elected officials, community partners, and the public understand not just what is planned, but when and in what order efforts will be advanced across the five-year horizon of the Plan.

The sequencing reflected in these charts is based on three key considerations: the current and anticipated capacity of the Town, DIA and other partner organizations, recognizing that institutional capacity and capabilities build over time; the relative complexity of individual projects, with more straightforward, foundational actions scheduled in the near-term and more complex, resource-intensive initiatives positioned later in the program; and budget considerations. This will allow the Town to build the necessary support, stakeholder alignment, and momentum required to carry them forward successfully.

It is important to note that these work programs are general in nature and are intended to be read together. The three charts each describe a distinct but related work plan, and should be considered a unified strategy rather than evaluated independently for execution, as the success of many initiatives will depend on progress made in complementary areas of work. Additionally, budget identification, funding strategies, and detailed resource planning have not been incorporated into the suggested sequences at this time. Those would be key deliberate next steps that will need to be undertaken as individual initiatives advanced. The charts are best understood as a strategic compass that establishes direction and priority, providing an initial framework from which more detailed planning and resourcing can be defined.

A Beautiful and Welcoming Downtown

Research and practice consistently demonstrate that the visual quality, physical character, and emotional warmth that these create in persons' experiences in a downtown directly influence how long people choose to stay, how often they return, spending habits, and how positively they speak about their experiences. This work program focuses on transformation through attention to downtown's character and design recognizing that downtown Hanover already possesses distinguishable character in its historic streetscape, Heritage Square, and authentic small-town atmosphere. The intent is to amplify these in ways that enhance the district's appeal.

Objectives

- Increase the amount of time people choose to spend downtown, including during evenings and outside regular business hours
- Expand opportunities for play, relaxation, and informal social activity for people of all ages
- Strengthen downtown's role as a destination for visitors from outside the Town

ACTIONS: PILOT - YEAR 1-2

Action	Objective	Measures of Success	Pillar
Close Veterans Way from Kerry Moore School of Dance to 10th Street to vehicular traffic during the spring, summer and fall months to create a dedicated pedestrian corridor which includes: Seating, lighting and landscaping.	Create a safe, pedestrian-focused corridor in the downtown	Seasonal closures implemented; increased pedestrian use observed; Seating and lighting installed; corridor perceived as welcoming	Design
During the spring, summer and fall, install moveable curbs to create curb bump outs which reduce travel distances and demark pathways.	Shorten crossings and clarify pedestrian pathways	Moveable curbs installed; safer crossings observed	Design
Review garbage collection schedules	Improve cleanliness during busy periods	Schedule adjusted; reduced overflow complaints	Organization

NEAR TERM - YEAR 3 to 5

Action	Objective	Measures of Success	Pillar
Develop a rent subsidy grant for new restaurants	Reduce start-up costs and attract new dining options	Program launched; new restaurant applications and openings	Economic Vitality
Establish a Vacant Store Task Program	Reduce vacancies through active tenant-owner matching	Vacant space inventory created; tenant matches supported	Economic Vitality
Create a parking space patio program	Expand outdoor dining and enliven streets	Program adopted; patios installed and used seasonally	Design
Invite students and artists to decorate planters and chairs	Add colour, creativity, and local identity	Decorated elements installed; positive public feedback	Design
Add interactive elements to Veterans Way Parkette	Encourage people to linger and interact downtown	Features installed; increased parkette use	Design
Coordinate extended evening business hours with events	Increase evening activity downtown	Evening events held; businesses extend hours	Promotion
Coordinate a Library, Cultural and Business Centre Task Force	Identify potential downtown sites for a future civic anchor	Task force formed; potential sites identified	Organization

MID TERM - YEAR 6+

Action	Objective	Measures of Success	Pillar
Identify dining gaps and recruit restaurants from outside the Town	Strengthen and diversify the downtown dining offer	Market gaps identified; outreach conducted; new restaurant interest	Economic Vitality
Add seasonal light displays along 10th Street	Improve downtown atmosphere and enhance nighttime appeal	Seasonal lighting installed; positive community feedback	Design
Investigate a Dedicated Library, Cultural & Business Centre	Create a central hub for learning, culture, events, and entrepreneurship	Centre concept advanced; workshops, events, and art displays hosted	Organization
Coordinate with Grey County to reduce speeds on 10th Street (6th–13th Ave.)	Improve safety and pedestrian comfort along a key corridor	Speed reduction approved or piloted; improved perceived safety	Organization



Community Dinner on Closed Road, Collingwood, ON



Public Streetside Piano, Collingwood, ON



Example of Laneway Parkette

Work Plan: A Beautiful and Welcoming Downtown

			Year 1		Year 2		Year 3		Year 4		Year 5			
ACTION			Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Pilot – Year 1-2														
1	Close Veterans Way to vehicular traffic (spring–fall) — seating, lighting, landscaping	Design												
2	Install moveable curbs to create bump-outs and demark pathways (spring–fall)	Design												
Near Term – Year 3-5														
3	Develop a rent subsidy grant for new restaurants	Economic Vitality												
4	Establish a Vacant Store Task Force	Economic Vitality												
5	Create a parking space patio program	Design												
6	Invite students and artists to decorate planters and chairs	Design												
7	Add interactive elements to Veterans Way Parkette	Design												
8	Coordinate extended evening business hours with events	Promotion												
9	Establish a Library, Cultural and Business Centre Task Force	Organization												
10	Review garbage collection schedules	Organization												
Mid Term – Year 6+														
11	Identify dining gaps and recruit restaurants from outside Town	Economic Vitality												
12	Add seasonal light displays along 10th Street	Design												
13	Develop a Dedicated Library, Cultural & Business Centre	Organization												
14	Coordinate with Grey County to reduce speeds on 10th Street (6th–13th Ave.)	Organization												

VETERAN'S WAY POP-UP PLACEMAKING CONCEPT

A pop-up park can transform spaces into vibrant community places. By adding moveable seating, landscape features, public art, lighting, and opportunities for onsite food and beverage service, or other event oriented services, the space becomes a destination. This type of tactical urbanism creates opportunities for residents and visitors to interact, linger, and participate in community life, helping to strengthen social connections and foster a greater sense of place. Design creativity can help make this space an interesting local expression of community identity that is more human-scaled and people-oriented; which increases activity and exposure for downtown businesses. A people-first design sense is key to downtown's successful evolution.



Adding landscape features helps make the space more people-friendly.

Lighting can add visual interest, extend the usable time of the place and provide a greater sense of security.



Giving people the options that are created by using movable furniture to fit their needs in outdoor spaces is one of the most important and underrated keys to successful placemaking.

Mobile kiosks or vending carts offering food and drinks, or local-themed products, make the place more inviting, create a seasonal small business opportunity, and add a sense of security.

Surface treatments help signal that the space is intended for people, not as a throughfare for cars.

Using colourful artistic expressions for this can create interest and also express local character.

Please note that this is a conceptual rendering intended to demonstrate potential design opportunities for a parkette along Veterans Way. It is not a final design.

A Downtown for All Ages and Families

A healthy downtown is not just measured by the number of businesses it contains or foot traffic volume, it includes whether local citizens and visitors feel welcomed, represented, and comfortable. This work focuses on making downtown appealing for everyone: children discovering their world; youth seeking places to belong and contribute; families looking for accessible everyday experiences; and individuals navigating the public realm in all seasons. The initiatives reflect a dual ambition: enlivening the area with programming, spaces, and events for younger generations and families, and strengthening social infrastructure that is central to Hanover's community character. There are also practical dimensions of wayfinding, accessibility, seasonal comfort, and low-barrier designs essential to serve all ages and abilities.

Objectives:

- Create inclusive downtown spaces and events that engage children, youth, and families
- Strengthen community involvement by engaging youth and volunteers in downtown life
- Support practical, low-barrier solutions that help people navigate and use the downtown more easily in everyday and seasonal conditions

ACTIONS: PILOT - YEAR 1 -2

Action	Objective	Measures of Success	Pillar
Promote accessibility improvement funding in CIP to downtown business owners	Support businesses in creating accessible entranceways and removing barriers	Funding programs promoted; inquiries or applications submitted by businesses	Economic Vitality
Provide temporary ramps for downtown businesses	Improve short-term accessibility while permanent solutions are explored	Temporary ramps deployed; improved access to storefronts observed	Design
Investigate options for winter snow clearing downtown and in Heritage Square	Maintain safe, accessible pedestrian routes in winter	Enhanced clearing implemented; volunteer program launched; fewer winter complaints	Organization

NEAR TERM - YEAR 3-5

Action	Objective	Measures of Success	Pillar
Add kid-friendly activity requirement to Event Development Fund	Ensure downtown events are welcoming to families and children	Funding criteria updated; funded events include kid-friendly activities	Economic Vitality
Revitalize DIA Parkette with youth-focused amenities using CPTED design principles, active programming and a combination of permanent/temporary infrastructure.	Create a comfortable, welcoming space for youth to gather and spend time downtown	Shelter, lighting, seating, charging, art, and bike parking installed; increased youth use observed	Design
Add more greenery through planters, pop-up parks, and parkettes	Improve visual appeal and comfort of downtown spaces	New planters and green features installed; positive public feedback	Design
Create a Youth Downtown Ambassadors Initiative	Engage teens in downtown events and beautification while earning volunteer hours	Program launched; youth participation tracked; events supported by ambassadors	Promotion
Build on volunteer “speed dating” to match people with downtown initiatives	Grow and better coordinate volunteer involvement	Sessions held; volunteers matched to initiatives	Organization

MID TERM - YEAR 6+

Action	Objective	Measures of Success	Pillar
Add priority pedestrian crossing buttons at key locations along 10th Street (including Veterans Way and near Heritage Square)	Improve pedestrian safety and ease of crossing along a key downtown corridor	Priority crossings installed; pedestrians report improved crossing experience	Design
Temporarily close half a block near Heritage Square for activities (e.g., hopscotch, road hockey, ice rink)	Create flexible, playful spaces that support all-ages activity downtown	Seasonal closures implemented; community use of activity space observed	Promotion



*Outdoor Table Tennis,
Thornbury, ON*



*Example of Kid Friendly Activity
Hanover, ON*



*Example of Youth Space
Kitchener, ON*

Work Plan: A Downtown for All Ages and Families

ACTION		Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				Year 4				Year 5			
		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Pilot – Year 1-2																					
15	Promote accessibility improvement funding to downtown business owners	Economic Vitality																			
16	Improve winter snow clearing downtown and in Heritage Square	Organization																			
17	Provide temporary ramps for downtown businesses	Design																			
Near Term – Year 3-5																					
18	Add kid-friendly activity requirement to Event Development Fund	Economic Vitality																			
19	Revitalize DIA Parkette with youth-focused amenities	Design																			
20	Add more greenery through planters, pop-up parks, and parkettes	Design																			
21	Create a Youth Downtown Ambassadors Initiative	Promotion																			
22	Improve winter snow clearing downtown and in Heritage Square	Organization																			
23	Build on volunteer 'speed dating' to match people with downtown initiatives	Organization																			
Mid Term – Year 6+																					
24	Add priority pedestrian crossing buttons at key locations along 10th Street	Design																			
25	Temporarily close half a block near Heritage Square for activities	Promotion																			

DIA YOUTH AND COMMUNITY PARK REFRESH CONCEPT

Enhancing this pocket park to appeal to youth can create a community gathering space that supports social interaction, creativity, civic engagement and sense of security. A space that features attractive lighting, public art, a small stage platform and seating with tables could transform the space into an active and inviting environment where young people and families feel welcome and connected. The space could be used for informal gatherings, performances, and community/event programming. This type of project shows Hanover's commitment to being all-ages and family-friendly. It makes the public realm more dynamic and animated creating experiences that would only be found in Hanover, increasing street life and visitation.



Partnering with local community groups and artists to add public art to the space helps create beauty in the downtown, celebrates local character, and builds relationships.

A small performance platform creates opportunities for animating the place and street and also cross-programming with local events.



The management / programming of the park can create mentorship opportunities and a sense of shared commitment to the downtown with local youth.

Giving people the options that are created by using movable furniture to fit their needs in outdoor spaces is one of the most important and underrated keys to successful placemaking.

An Easy Downtown to Visit and Explore

This work program addresses the foundational conditions that must be in place for downtown Hanover to function as an accessible and legible destination for local citizens and visitors alike can discover with ease, explore, and return to with enthusiasm. This work program has three interconnected priorities: ensuring that people can readily find information to plan their visits accordingly; strengthening physical and visual connections between downtown, Hanover's public spaces, and the Saugeen River; and, building the capacity of downtown businesses and community partners to actively support, host, and deliver the events and experiences that give people compelling reasons to come and stay.

Objectives:

- Make it simple for residents and visitors to find, understand, and plan experiences
- Strengthen physical and visual connections between the Saugeen River, public spaces, and the downtown
- Ensure downtown businesses and partners are prepared to support and deliver events and experiences

ACTIONS: PILOT - YEAR 1-2

Action	Objective	Measures of Success	Pillar
Assign a dedicated person to promote weekly downtown events on social media	Increase awareness of downtown activities and encourage participation	Weekly event posts published; increased engagement and event attendance	Promotion
Create a Downtown Delivery Team (DIA, Chamber, Town, volunteers)	Coordinate implementation, track progress, and report on downtown actions	Delivery Team established; actions tracked; regular updates to Council	Organization

NEAR TERM - YEAR 3 to 5

Action	Objective	Measures of Success	Pillar
Create “events-ready business toolkits”	Help businesses align hours, promotions, and storefronts with events	Toolkits created and shared; businesses participate in event promotions	Economic Vitality
Improve canoe launch at Town of Hanover Park	Enhance access to the Saugeen River and strengthen connections to downtown	Improved launch installed; signage, maps, and amenities added	Design
Link the Saugeen River brand to the downtown	Promote river walks, trails, and paddling alongside downtown food and amenities	Coordinated river-to-downtown promotion implemented	Promotion
Consolidate multiple event calendars into shared Town Calendar which would be promoted across platforms	Make it easier for residents and visitors to find downtown events	Shared calendar relaunched; events promoted across multiple platforms	Promotion
Create a winter Heritage Square event tied to extended hours	Activate the downtown in winter and encourage evening activity	Winter event delivered; businesses extend hours; attendance observed	Promotion

MID TERM - YEAR 6+

Action	Objective	Measures of Success	Pillar
Create a canoe and kayak rental program near Saugeen River access points	Make river recreation easy and accessible for residents and visitors	Rental program established; equipment in use; positive user feedback	Economic Vitality
Create a signature river-based event which could be paired with other events such as Canada Day or Culture Days	Celebrate the Saugeen River through food, music, and activities that connect to the downtown	River-based event delivered; strong attendance; downtown businesses participate	Promotion



*Midday music event,
Collingwood, ON*



*Lights Festival,
Blue Mountains, ON*



Kayak Launch Signage

Work Plan: An Easy Downtown to Visit and Explore

		Year 1				Year 2				Year 3				Year 4				Year 5			
ACTION		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Pilot – Year 1-2																					
26	Assign a dedicated person to promote weekly downtown events on social media	Promotion																			
27	Create a Downtown Delivery Team (DIA, Chamber, Town, volunteers)	Organization																			
Near Term – Year 3-5																					
28	Create 'events-ready business toolkits'					Economic Vitality															
29	Improve canoe launch at Town of Hanover Park									Design											
30	Link the Saugeen River brand to the downtown									Promotion											
31	Consolidate multiple event calendars into one shared platform	Promotion																			
32	Create a winter Heritage Square event tied to extended business hours					Promotion															
Mid Term – Year 6+																					
33	Create a canoe and kayak rental program near Saugeen River access points													Economic Vitality							
34	Create a signature river-based event																	Promotion			

VACANT LAND REDEVELOPMENT CONCEPT

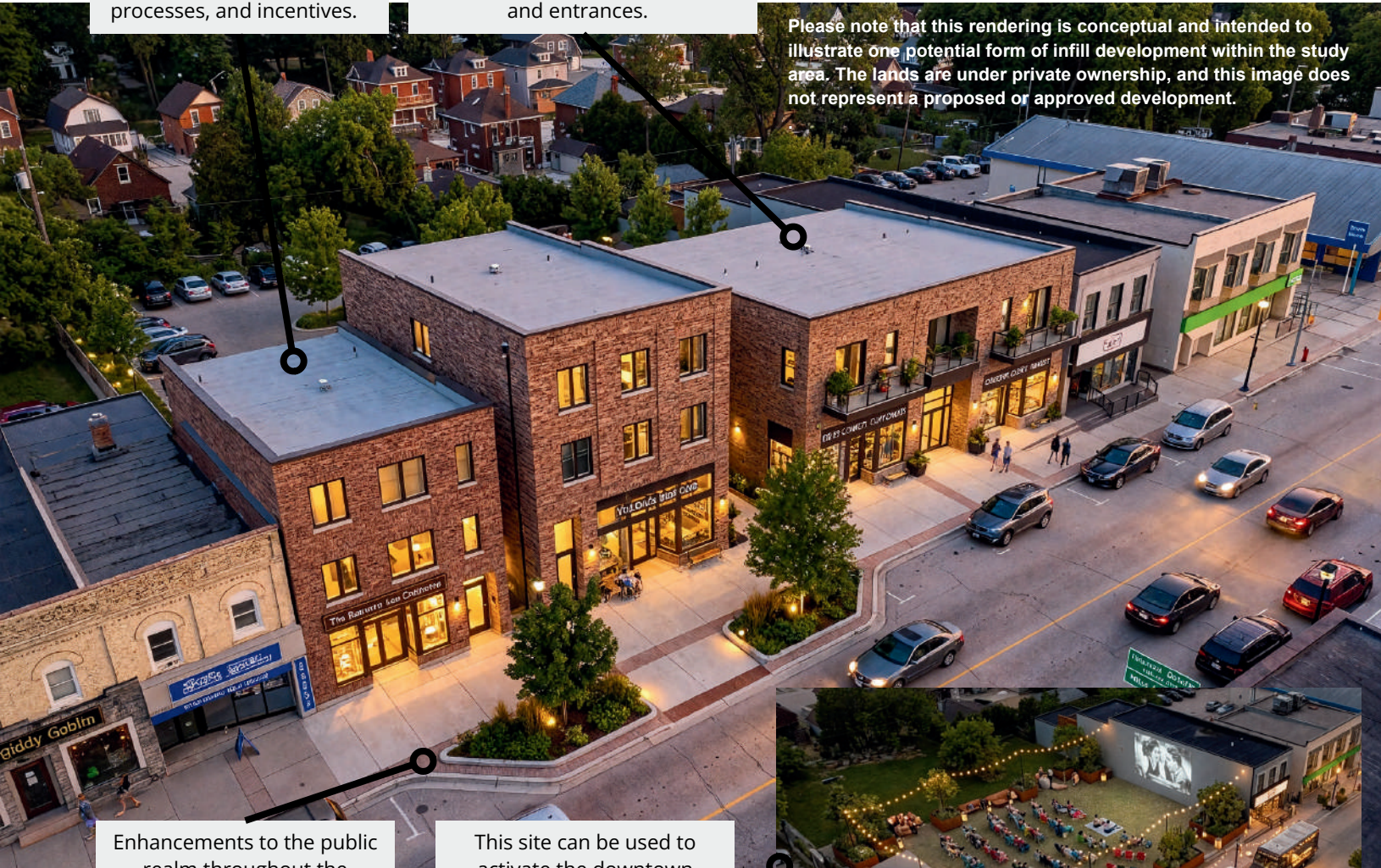
Transforming vacant sites with infill development is one of the most important goals to strengthening the long-term vitality of downtown. A task force of the Town, DIA, and Chamber should be struck to recruit for the best-fitting new development/owner(s). Vacant properties create gaps in the urban fabric, reduce pedestrian activity, and negatively influence visitor perceptions. New development increases commercial opportunities, creates a more inviting streetscape, and reinforces a sense of place. The economic benefits include: increased municipal tax revenue; opportunities to attract a broader range of businesses; and, additional customers to support year-round street life and economic activity.

The Town should ensure its areas of influence are optimized to drive toward success for infill development, including: policies, regulations, processes, and incentives.

The built form of the new development should best match the historic characteristics of the downtown in terms of massing, materials, and patterns of windows and entrances.



Please note that this rendering is conceptual and intended to illustrate one potential form of infill development within the study area. The lands are under private ownership, and this image does not represent a proposed or approved development.



Enhancements to the public realm throughout the downtown can add beauty, calm traffic, attract investment, and make it more people-friendly; and can be done with no negative impact on overall parking availability.

This site can be used to activate the downtown through cross-event programming as a temporary measure and also as a way of attracting investment interest.



THE WELCOMING COMMUNITY

Tourism is not one industry. It is made up of businesses from many different sectors along with community assets that, collectively, motivate people to visit a location. They are the same businesses and assets that attract new businesses and inspire people to move to a community. These include: agri-tourism; indigenous tourism; museums and heritage; arts and culture; accommodations and meeting venues; outdoor nature; food and beverage; education and tourism services; festivals and events; sports and recreation; downtowns and specialty retail; outdoor play; and attractions.

As downtown Hanover evolves through the implementation of the strategic actions in the Plan, the community may find there are specific sectors that it is particularly well-suited to growing. This awareness will come about through careful assessment of the evolving conditions in the community including: local assets; levels of success of new initiatives; growth of existing offerings; all types of data including demographics, visitor profiles, etc.; and changing capacity and skills.

Industry Support

To support the tourism industry in Hanover, businesses and organizations can leverage multiple government agencies, regional tourism organizations, and industry associations. These provide a range of support, from funding and strategic marketing to workforce development and advocacy. Their influence and support ranges from direct initiatives that can impact day-to-day operations in the community, to broader advocacy work that influences the tourism sector well beyond Hanover, but influential and important none-the-less. The following is an overview of those that are particularly applicable to Hanover's context:

National Organizations

Destination Canada: Provides national-level intelligence, research, and tools to help the Canadian tourism industry reach domestic and international markets (Tourism Destination Development Toolkit for Rural Communities). The National DMO is a significant part of Destination Canada's work and provides a platform for knowledge-sharing, fostering innovation and providing resources, within a framework of guiding principles that align with the downtown Hanover project (Collaboration, Prosperity, Public Support, Reconciliation, Regeneration). They facilitate knowledge-sharing and provide expertise to shape national strategies that can influence activities in Hanover.

Tourism Industry Association of Canada

(TIAC): Acts as a national private-sector advocate, representing tourism interests at the federal level and supporting policies that benefit sector growth and development.

Provincial Organizations

Ministry of Tourism, Culture, and Gaming (MTCG): The provincial government body responsible for setting the vision, policy frameworks, and strategic investments in tourism across Ontario. The Ministry provides regulatory oversight and funding for regional tourism initiatives, including working closely with industry stakeholders, and funding agreements with Regional Tourism Organizations such as RTO7 (of which Hanover is a part).

Destination Ontario: The lead provincial marketing organization. It markets Ontario as a travel destination internationally and domestically and provides brand tools and partnership marketing programs. It also collaborates with local RTOs and sector organizations and operators to help ensure cohesive messaging.

Tourism Industry Association of Ontario

(TIAO): Serves as the sector-wide advocate and strategy facilitator. TIAO represents a diverse range of tourism businesses, connecting industry voices to the provincial government and aligning partners

behind shared goals. TIAO collectively represents 200,000 businesses and 400,000 employees, to take on policy issues that impact the Ontario tourism industry.

Indigenous Tourism Ontario (ITO): An Indigenous-led organization dedicated to uniting communities and industry leaders to support the growth of Indigenous tourism in the province. It supports businesses through advocacy, and product development, and builds opportunities for economic reconciliation.

Culinary Tourism Alliance: The Culinary Tourism Alliance works with communities to grow food tourism by leveraging the history, heritage and culture behind food and drink unique to each destination.

Regional Organizations

Regional Tourism Organization 7 (RTO7) / BruceGreySimcoe: This independent, not-for-profit corporation is the strategic regional body for Bruce, Grey, and Simcoe Counties 11. RTO7 provides leadership in tourism planning, marketing, and development. They offer tourism businesses practical tools, training workshops, one-on-one coaching, and industry insights, and help navigate funding opportunities. Their programs are designed to help business, and the region, grow responsibly, supporting environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

Grey County Tourism: As the Destination Marketing Organization (DMO) for Grey County, they support tourism development and marketing to contribute to economic success. They focus on market research, regional partnerships, and engaging industry stakeholders to develop new tourism experiences.

Industry Support Resources

The Business Enterprise Centre (Grey County), while not a tourism-focused entity, provides essential support to small business owners and entrepreneurs in Grey County, and has offered tourism-sector business support and information.

Saugeen Economic Development Corporation (SEDC)

The SEDC promotes sustainable economic and social development in various municipalities including Hanover, Arran-Elderslie, Chatsworth, Brockton, Grey Highlands, Minto, South Bruce, Southgate, West Grey and Wellington North.

Contemporary Tourism

The Tourism Industry Association of Ontario's Forward Motion strategic playbook released in July 2025 identifies key tourism insights that are applicable as important considerations for downtown Hanover, as it seeks to build tourism-oriented businesses and offerings. These are also reflected in many of RTO7's identified strategic actions.

Considering this helps ground the implementation of the Plan in current industry realities and in the kinds of destination attributes visitors and operators increasingly value.

This creates several opportunities for the Town as it expands tourism-oriented businesses and offerings. It strengthens the case for designing downtown experiences that showcase local stories, supports more coordinated and inclusive planning, and encourages innovation, smarter marketing, and capacity building across the industry. It also helps ensure that investments and effort are aligned with tourism development goals, so that public and private sectors work together to support business growth and a more compelling visitor experience. In that way, the Downtown Plan can position Hanover's core not only as a place to visit, but as a community benefit that strengthens prosperity, identity, and the overall role of downtown as a destination attraction.

The following insights are linked to this foundation and describe higher-level strategic actions. These recommendations are considered longer-term, aspirational initiatives that fall outside the three work programs but can supplement their implementation.

Sustainability

There is a high level of interest for tourism that is environmentally, socially, and economically sustainable. For downtown Hanover, this is a central strategic opportunity to embrace. Sustainable tourism is no longer a niche, it is a powerful market differentiator that aligns with regional priorities set by RTO7 and their marketing initiatives, and appeals to the kind of high-yield, conscientious travelers Hanover could aim to attract. Hanover can appeal to this by finding ways of embedding environmental stewardship, social equity, and local economic resilience into its recognized brand identity and the visitor-oriented offerings of downtown businesses. This also aligns with Grey County's Economic Development, Tourism and Culture Master Plan's attention to locally place-based initiatives.

Prioritize Local Sourcing: Actively build supply chains with producers in Grey and Bruce Counties.

Develop Experiential Products: Create tourism experiences that connect visitors to Hanover's natural and cultural heritage in a responsible way.

Invest in Green Infrastructure: Prioritize the Town in making simple and inexpensive downtown-focused infrastructure investments that support sustainable tourism

Launch Education and Capacity-Building Programs: Partner with RTO7 to host workshops and provide toolkits for businesses



Interpretive signage focused on water cycle



Bike Valet program for events, Collingwood, ON

Local Stories

Operators are eager to co-create new experiences, especially ones that showcase local stories, and engage in more coordinated, inclusive planning. This insight signals an industry-wide readiness within the business community. Operators see themselves as active curators of visitor experiences. There is no reason to believe that this is not also the case in Hanover, given the broad-scaled effort and creativity exhibited by Hanover’s business community with their events programming and history of new initiatives to create more vitality in downtown. If effectively channelled, collaborative work on taking creativity and operationalizing it into innovation could be a powerful asset focused on differentiating downtown Hanover from somewhere to drive through, to a special place to go to.

Establish "Experience Incubator" Fund:

Create a micro-grant program that supports development of new, collaborative tourism products.

Streamline Requirements for Co-Creation in the Public Realm:

Review and simplify all by-laws, permit processes, insurance requirements, and logistic supports for activities that happen on Town owned land and rights-of-way that are intended to animate the downtown.

Co-create and Lead Niche Experiences:

Empower local businesses and community members to become tourism providers by building on a core offering that is unique.



Tank monument outside of Legion, Hanover, ON



First Nations public art exhibition, Blue Mountains, ON

Local Well-being

Operators want tourism to enhance local well-being, preserve cultural heritage, and align with their community's values. This insight reveals a profound and sophisticated understanding among tourism operators that their business is not an end in itself, but a tool for community building, and also that it is place-based and reliant on the community in which it is located.

This appears to illustrate a strong link between operators and their communities, beyond just business location and income source. This means that operators are recognizing that their successes are linked to the unique qualities of their communities and that they have a role in the stewardship of their positive attributes and characteristics, and are responsible for addressing and mitigating negative impacts.

Become Heritage Stewards: Embrace and celebrate the unique qualities of downtown heritage buildings and spaces as integrated parts of visitor experiences.

Design "Locals-Friendly" Offerings: Create programming and specials that appeal equally to locals and visitors.

Champion "Tourism That Builds Community" Events: Organize or support downtown events that have a direct community benefit components.

Act as Welcoming Hosts, Not Just Bystanders: Foster a culture of downtown hospitality by implementing a seasonal tourism visitor kiosk in Heritage Square.



Lemonade Stand and Information Kiosk in Business District, Toronto, ON



Cardboard city event for children

Community First

Tourism operators want to grow responsibly, adding to prosperity and not disturbing the community. This insight gets to the heart of sustainable tourism management where preservation of community character and quality of life are considered along with business decisions about economic activity.

This is important because it relates to the impacts visitors can have on the desirability of a community as a place to live and visit, and therefore the long-term viability of the local tourism sector. For successful long-term place-based tourism to be sustained it must be actively managed within this perspective, ensuring that increased visitor numbers translate into shared prosperity community-wide without eroding the essential character of the community.

Focus on Success Through Yield Not Volume:

Focus tourism growth strategies toward maximizing the value of each customer experience, not necessarily the number of customers. This can be achieved by creating higher-value, niche experiences (like workshops or curated experiences) rather than relying solely on high-volume, low-margin sales.

Complete a Carrying Capacity Assessment:

A proactive measure would be for the Town to study the physical and social limits of the downtown, to understand detailed parking function, public washroom availability, waste management systems capacities, and pedestrian infrastructure, etc. The results would inform strategic planning, operational practices, and possible capital investments to address evolving challenges before they become negative impacts on the liveability of the downtown.



Traffic calming reduces the impacts of increased traffic



Places with human-centred wayfinding and transportation are more comfortable.

Innovation

There is a strong appetite for innovation, smarter marketing, and ways to build capacity amongst tourism operators. This insight is perhaps the most critical for Hanover's long-term success. It is about building a culture of passion about creating successful visitor experiences, and becoming more strategic, professional, and competitive.

Youth and Student Engagement Initiatives:

Initiate partnerships with schools, colleges, and youth organizations to invite younger generations to contribute ideas related to tourism, digital media, culture, events, and entrepreneurship. Younger people often bring new perspectives on visitor expectations and emerging trends.

Downtown Visitor Experience and Business Innovation Program:

A coordinated program to help downtown businesses strengthen visitor experiences through training, collaboration, and experimentation. This could include partnerships with RTO7 on workshops on customer experience design, tourism packaging, digital storytelling, social media marketing, seasonal merchandising, and experiential retail. Small-scale innovation grants or “pilot project” funding could encourage businesses to test new ideas such as themed weekends, interactive storefronts, evening programming, or local product experiences.



Being a host community for events like this Airstream festival attracts visitors and creates activity downtown.



Temporary pedestrian zones on secondary laneways create safe and interesting places for events and activities.



Naturalized seating areas help people connect with nature and their neighbours.



Local art murals create a stronger sense of place and reflect local culture.



Food trucks offer an opportunity to try new cuisines and keep events interesting.



Temporary seating offers places to rest and gather along key routes.



Covered bicycle parking encourages people to bike to the Town and offers reprieve.



Temporary structures can be used to host concerts which generate pedestrian activity.

IMPLEMENTATION

SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Communities do not develop from the top down or from the outside in, but must build from the inside out, with residents investing themselves, their ideas, assets, capabilities and resources in the process. This philosophy is directly applicable to Hanover's Downtown Plan, where lasting revitalization will ultimately depend on the degree to which local citizens, businesses, organizations, and institutions see themselves as co-owners of the community's future and using that in invest in, and attract external investment, to their downtown.

Who Helps Implement the Plan

Implementation of the Downtown Hanover Plan may involve:

- Downtown business owners and property owners
- Community organizations, service clubs, and volunteers
- Event organizers and cultural groups
- Residents and community champions
- The Town of Hanover and partner agencies
- The Downtown Improvement Area
- The Chamber of Commerce

Many actions will benefit from shared roles and informal partnerships, rather than a single project lead.



Shared Effort, Shared Success

The success of the Hanover Downtown Plan relies on collaboration. Downtowns are shaped by many people, including business owners, residents, property owners, organizations, volunteers, DIA and the Town, and meaningful change happens when these groups work together toward shared goals. Downtown initiatives often extend beyond the scope of any single organization, and progress is most effective when responsibility, capacity, and ideas are shared.

Many of the actions identified in this plan are designed to be delivered through partnerships. For example, event programming may involve local organizations and volunteers, public-realm improvements may require coordination between the Town and property owners, and business support initiatives may depend on collaboration between the Town, the DIA, businesses, and external partners. The DIA's mandate is to promote and make physical improvements in the Downtown Core, and may lead some public realm improvements in addition to the Town. This approach helps ensure actions are realistic, build local ownership, and can be adjusted over time as conditions change.

To support implementation, collaboration in downtown Hanover is guided by a few practical principles:

Clear roles and shared leadership: Not every action requires a single lead. In many cases, the Town or DIA may play a coordinating or enabling role while others help deliver specific initiatives.

Using existing capacity: Building on current relationships, organizations, and volunteers helps move actions forward without creating unnecessary new structures.

Flexible partnerships: Some collaborations may be ongoing, while others may form around a specific project or event and evolve over time.

Incremental action and learning: Small steps, pilot projects, and shared problem-solving allow the community to test ideas, learn from experience, and adjust approaches as initiatives are implemented.

By approaching implementation collaboratively, the Hanover Downtown Plan supports steady progress that reflects community priorities, makes effective use of available resources, and strengthens the relationships that will sustain downtown improvements over the long term.

Leadership

Downtown revitalization is often discussed in terms of physical transformations, including building facade improvements, upgraded infrastructure, new street furniture, etc. However, more impactful and durable changes come from implementing coordinated, intentional actions that align with local assets, and priorities over time. The Downtown Plan functions as that coordinating tool. It is a framework for decision-making, investment, and collaboration on downtown's success for the coming years. With this more cohesive approach, the underlying conditions for economic opportunities are improved, meaning the changes can be more impactful on the success of the downtown district.

Downtowns typically perform multiple roles for communities, and in Hanover's downtown this includes: economic hub, cultural centre, social gathering space, tourism destination, and primary service node. At its core, the Downtown Plan establishes a shared direction for the intended investment in time and capital in the downtown for increasing economic opportunity and success across these various functions. Without a defined direction and unifying structure, efforts put into revitalization can become fragmented, which diminishes successes. The Downtown Plan addresses this potential disjointedness by clearly

identifying and organizing a set of actions designed to ensuring that each investment contributes to a broader success and capacity building.

Effective revitalization cannot be imported wholesale from another community. It must reflect the specific economic realities, built form, cultural identity, and market context of the downtown in question. This includes an understanding of existing businesses, vacancies, movement networks, public realm characteristics, and the role the downtown plays within the wider region. A key characteristic of this Plan is its grounding in this kind of understanding of local conditions.

Another important dimension is the recognition of downtown as a system rather than a collection of isolated properties and businesses. Public realm improvements, for example, are not only aesthetic upgrades, they influence how long people stay, how they move, and how they interact with businesses. Similarly, programming and events are not standalone activities, they are tools that animate space, draw visitors, and reinforce identity as well. The Plan integrates these elements across a number of projects, ensuring that physical improvements, economic development initiatives, promotion and programming efforts reinforce one another.

The role of partnerships is also central to success. Revitalization cannot be delivered by a single entity. Municipal government, DIA, business owners, property owners, community organizations, and local citizens all play important roles. The Hanover Downtown Plan helps provide structure for these roles, clarifying responsibilities and identifying opportunities for collaboration. By defining how different stakeholders contribute, the Plan helps move beyond ad hoc efforts toward sustained, collective action.

Implementation is where many plans fail. Rather than remaining at the level of broad recommendations, the projects included in the Plan were developed with a focus on actionable steps. This includes consideration of prioritization, sequencing, and timelines for the various initiatives. It also involves aligning the plan with available resources.

Adaptability is also built into the Plan. Downtowns are dynamic environments, influenced by changing market conditions, consumer preferences, and broader economic trends. This is particularly true for being competitive in the tourism sector where influential market conditions are so varied. The Plan acknowledges this by incorporating recommendations to track progress and adjust as needed. This may involve monitoring indicators such as foot traffic, business turnover,

vacancy rates, or event participation. Regular evaluation allows for course correction, ensuring that the Plan remains relevant over time.

The Hanover Downtown Plan recognizes that revitalization in the Hanover context is a longer-term process, with changes happening at smaller scales and incrementally. The implementation of the Plan requires a lot of work and attention to detail. This is not a shopping list for downtown enhancements. This is a set of carefully selected initiatives that address different aspects of the conditions that influence economic success, resulting in an improved downtown business environment and social capital. The implementation recommendations are done so with consideration for their interrelationships and the capacities of local stakeholders to complete the work with a high quality. By structuring efforts in this way, the Plan can help sustain revitalization efforts over time.

When it comes to the implementation of the Downtown Hanover Plan's various projects local stakeholders will play different roles. This is also true of the leadership that will be required for these projects by the local citizens, businesses, organizations, landowners and the Town.

Lead with Strengths

Primary leadership for the projects in each of the four pillars of the Plan: Design, Promotion, Organization, and Economic Vitality, can be generally categorized to fall under responsibility of either the Town, DIA, or Chamber of Commerce.

The Design Pillar deals primarily with the public realm and public spaces, in the effort to create places of meaning and places that are attractive and interesting. This pillar particularly requires collaboration between a variety of stakeholders; however, in almost every instance it will require significant participation, if not also leadership and long-term support provided by the Town. This is because the Town is the owner of key public properties, such as Heritage Square, and all of the rights-of-way (which include all of downtown's sidewalks).

Under the Promotion Pillar, in general terms, the lead organization for the work program of projects will depend on the timeliness of the particular promotion. For long-term promotion of the downtown district's identity, or regularly scheduled seasonal events, where the message is updated across longer time horizons, the Town can provide strong support or leadership with added insights from businesses and the broader community. However, for promotion that is specific to the current market realities of the day,

organizations and/or private businesses should be in the lead position. This is because the inherent characteristics of local government decision making, meeting procedures, procurement requirements, and public engagement and transparency expectations, mean that municipal actions are not as nimble and dynamic as those in the private sector. This makes the Town less effective in promotional activities that are highly time-sensitive.

The characteristics of the specific projects in the Organization Pillar will more directly determine the leadership roles necessary for success, perhaps more so than the other pillars. This pillar is about being more successful as a district by building capacity within the businesses, associations, and Town. This means that leadership will likely rest with the organization that any particular project is focused on, with the other stakeholders providing various levels of support as needed.

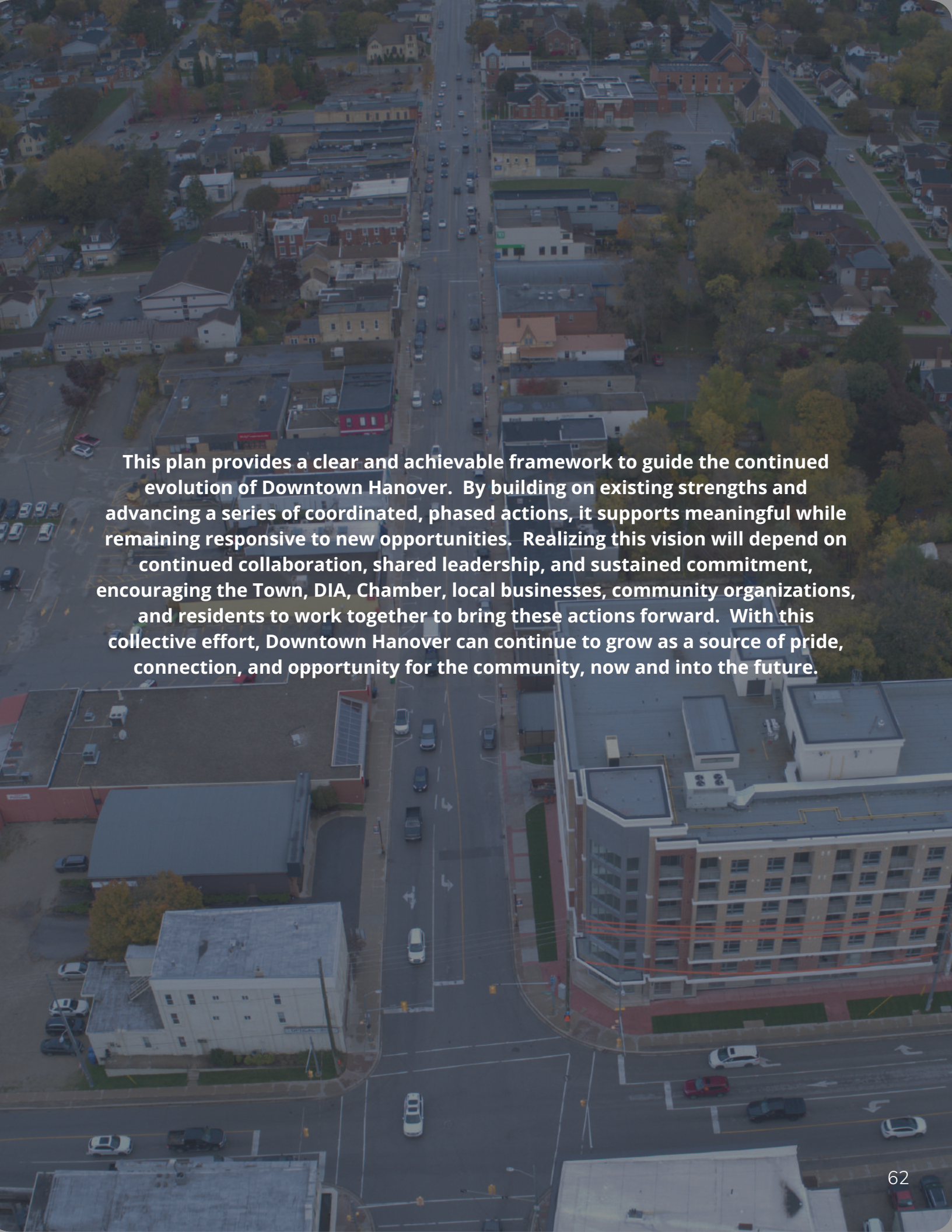
For the Economic Vitality Pillar it is expected that in these early stages of the Plan's implementation that there will be very close collaboration between the Town's Economic Development Department, the Chamber of Commerce, and the DIA. These early projects help build a strong foundation of cross-organizational strengths from which more complex or larger-scaled initiatives can be built. The leadership roles for projects will likely be defined by the circles of influence each organization has, and whichever is at the most effective scale.

Project Charters

A critical next step in advancing the initiatives outlined in the Hanover Downtown Plan is the development of individual project charters for each identified action. A project charter is a concise, structured document that formally defines an initiative before detailed planning and resource allocation begin. It is a reference point for all parties involved, ensuring that there is shared clarity and agreement. Rather than a lengthy or overly technical document, a well-crafted project charter is deliberately brief and accessible making it a practical tool for municipal staff, elected officials, and community partners. In the context of a downtown revitalization strategy, where initiatives span multiple departments, external agencies, and community stakeholders, project charters are particularly valuable in establishing accountability and preventing scope creep before work gets underway.

At a minimum, each project charter should address the following key elements: a clear project purpose and objectives, articulating why the initiative is being undertaken and what it seeks to achieve; a defined scope of work, describing the specific activities, and deliverables; an out-of-scope statement, which is equally important in clarifying what the project will not address, helping manage expectations and avoiding unintended expansion of effort; a designated project lead, identifying the individual or department with primary responsibility; a project team and key stakeholders, outlining who is involved in

delivery or must be engaged throughout the process; timing and milestones identification, establishing a realistic schedule aligned with the broader work program; a budget framework, defining resources required; and identification of key risks and assumptions, noting the factors that could affect successful delivery and the conditions upon which the project plan is based. Given the public-facing nature of the work it would be beneficial to include a communications strategy as well.



This plan provides a clear and achievable framework to guide the continued evolution of Downtown Hanover. By building on existing strengths and advancing a series of coordinated, phased actions, it supports meaningful while remaining responsive to new opportunities. Realizing this vision will depend on continued collaboration, shared leadership, and sustained commitment, encouraging the Town, DIA, Chamber, local businesses, community organizations, and residents to work together to bring these actions forward. With this collective effort, Downtown Hanover can continue to grow as a source of pride, connection, and opportunity for the community, now and into the future.