FINDINGS

STAKEHOLDER VISIONS OF A NEW ACTION PLAN FOR DOWNTOWN KITCHENER

SHAPE DTK 2020: CREATING OUR DOWNTOWN

Downtown Kitchener (aka DTK) is in the midst of a tremendous transformation. The arrival of the ION transit line will accelerate change: more people, more density, new shops, new buildings, new collisions and creations. Today is a critical moment in time because we have a chance to shape the change to come. We can shape it to match our collective values and desires. We can make sure we're all proud of those changes and involved in realizing them.

Together as a community, we've been considering this opportunity by discussing two big questions:

What does the COMMUNITY love about DOWNTOWN KITCHENER that they don't want to see lost?

What will MAKE THIS PLACE EVEN BETTER, and HOW DO WE GET THERE?

The thoughts, ideas and answers of nearly 1500 community builders and stakeholders were collected, synthesized and grouped. What emerged was a clear set of core values — qualities that people appreciate about downtown and want to see preserved — and three key themes that suggest ways to improve on what already makes DTK compelling. We've translated these findings into a draft version of new strategic priorities.

While the City of Kitchener and Downtown Kitchener BIA may have undertaken this research, there is only one way to move these strategic priorities forward and into reality: by changing things together. Before we start, we want to check back in with you. Did we capture the community's thoughts, feelings and desires correctly? Do the proposed priorities reflect what you said? Do they reflect your vision and hope for DTK's future? We hope you'll continue to Shape DTK with us!

DOWNTOWN KITCHENER STAKEHOLDERS

275

locals shared their DTK vision at **ROUND TABLE DISCUSSIONS** and a **COMMUNITY FORUM**

> 2500+ comments by DTK stakeholders were captured by

SURVEYS and at GATHERINGS

1205

PEOPLE RESPONDED to four distinct Shape DTK 2020 ONLINE SURVEYS

52%

50% of survey

respondents were **LESS THAN**

35 years old

of survey respondents identified themselves as **FEMALES**

62% of survey

LIVE OR WORK

IN DOWNTOWN

KITCHENER

40% of respondents were AGED 35-59

> 47[%] identified themselves as MALES

THE INNOVATION DISTRICT | PHOTO: MATTHEW WARTMAN - BARNDOORCREATIVE.CA | 2

Kitchener has a heart and grit that everywhere doesn't.

MEG LESLIE'S AWESOME WALL AT THE HOUSE OF FRIENDSHIP | 3

-

YOU SHARED YOUR CORE VA

We asked stakeholders to explain their attraction to DTK, and four sets of core values emerged.

IN SAME THE A MERINA

341 5% AGED SIG RIG 5% 20 IBU GOLD ALE KENSINGTON 5.5% AUGUSTA ALE COLLECTIVE ARTS LOCAL PRESS

STARTER

dollars E CENTS RED= \$6.50 REEN = \$7.50 ELLOW= 0.50 isnt 🧐 1 Life just

B.NATION

PUREBRED 5% COLLINGWOOD SAISON DE NUIT 18 BL MACKINNON BROS. 8 MAN EPA 5.8% BLACK OAK 8% O BITTER YEARS DESCENDANTS WOODCUTTER = Sure TRY A* LIFE WOULD BE CL BOTHEMUSEUM | 4

I want to feel like I'm in the world, not a gated community.

OF FREE PARTY.

LOCAL & UNIQUE

Downtownees appreciate the many shops and restaurants that operate independently. They like finding products and food that are local, nurturing personal relationships with business owners, and having a truly "made-in-Kitchener" experience.

DIVERSE & INCLUSIVE

DTK should not only be a place for everyone, it should have a little something for everyone too. Diversity in shopping, restaurants and events will keep the downtown experience interesting and exciting, but it must be welcoming to all stripes of people and representative of the community's many cultures. The unique grassroots community vibe compelled us to move here from Toronto.

COMMUNITY-CENTRIC

A tightly-knit, supportive social structure is what defines the downtown experience. Community connections fuel DTK, whether that means bumping into friends on the street, coffee shops and pubs that feel like home, businesses being more collaborative than competitive, or facing complex social issues head on and with empathy.

GRITTY & AUTHENTIC

MR.L

Downtown Kitchener isn't too polished and it doesn't try to be something it's not. This is a place that feels real: buildings steeped in history, a local population made of many cultures and subcultures, and an eclectic mix of entrepreneurs, makers and doers.

old secretaries never die they just ose their touch

Stakeholders want greater diversity and variety

KITCHENER

in shopping and dining options, and they prefer independent stores, restaurants and services. People who live and work here want to spend more of their day-to-day lives downtown, without having to drive elsewhere for the things they need and want. Opportunities to develop the marketplace include:

OCALS WANT welcome to

R 💽

- Filling storefronts with interesting street-level retail and a wider variety of restaurants
- Compelling incentives and consumer loyalty campaigns
- Encourage businesses to offer people unique and meaningful experiences

INTERESTING FACTOID:

Historically, survey respondents have always prioritized 'vibrant street life' as the top priority. This is the first time we can recall 'better shops and restaurants' being the top priority.

THE CONUNDRUM:

What's Next?

The community wants better shops and stores at a time when the retail industry as a whole is completely in flux, thanks to disruptors like online retailing and fast fashion.



& SERVICES TWO TIMES AS OFTEN AS **RESTAURANTS & COFFEE SHOPS** when asked what would compel them to spend more time & money downtown.

Nearly 60% OF DTK EMPLOYEES said MORE/ BETTER RETAIL would make them shop more.

The public will **COME TO DTK FOR MORE/BETTER**

Shops and services

Restaurants and coffee shops

20%

15% Festivals and events

9%

Nightlife

9%

Cultural amenities

How do **DTK EMPLOYEES CURRENTLY SHOP?**

58%

If there were more and better shops downtown, I would definitely shop more.

11[%] I don't really care where I shop. If I need something, I'll find it.

10% I prefer to shop online, & probably wouldn't shop DTK even if there were more and better shops.



5²⁶ I'm happy/satisfied with the current shops.

8% I prefer power centres/malls, & probably wouldn't shop DT even if there were more and better stores.

🔊 I prefer to shop in Toronto.

45% like a mix

WHAT KIND OF SHOPS

2ND CHOICE

do people want to see?

1 ST
CHOICE
DAILY
SERVICES
466 VOTES

3RD CHOICE CLOTHING/ **RARE FIND/** SHOE/GIFT ANTIQUE/ STORES **VINTAGE STORES** 360 VOTES 241 VOTES

WHAT STYLE OF FOOD & DRINK do people want to see?

2ND CHOICE

1ST CHOICE UNIQUE CONCEPT **321 VOTES**

3RD CHOICE UPSCALE ETHNIC CASUAL **307 VOTES 243 VOTES**



52% prefer exclusively independent businesses

Although there are about

RETA **BUSINESSES DOWNTOWN...**

9%

of downtown employees **LIKE**

OUR RETAIL

STORES.



DESTINATION SHOP downtown on a monthly basis

...and with nearly 100 FOOD & DRINK **PROVIDERS DOWNTOWN...**



53% **LIKE OUR RESTAURANTS**



46%



- Cultural eats or coffee tour passport
- No offices on street level
- More restaurants serving locally-sourced products
- More things open more/later hours
- Extended hours at the Duke Food Block
- Deal of the week plot several deals on a map as an example of 'a Saturday in DTK'
- Discounts at restaurants with tickets (theatre, symphony)
- After-work incentives
- ▶ More lifestyle amenities like a 10 min walk to groceries
- More locally-owned retailers specializing in locally-sourced goods from independent artisans and makers
- ▶ Start events earlier or offer an incentive to stay in DTK after 5pm
- More 'draw' stores that bring people downtown
- ▶ More pop-ups: shops, entertainment, dining
- More street food

We need more services in order to bring people downtown more often. We need to concentrate on cultivating services that you can't buy online: eating, entertainment, beauty, fitness.

"Lots of people are working downtown, which is great for lunch, but we need to do a better job of giving them reasons to come back at night."

"More rewards for people who are already supporting DTK so that they keep coming back and hopefully they bring people they know."

"The introduction of Gilt, TWH Social and The Berlin has allowed me to bring affluent business contacts downtown for lunch/dinner — we need even more impressive culinary options like this to attract and keep people downtown. They are a trigger for rediscovery."

"A pet store would be a great retail amenity, especially if paired with a social destination for owners & pets." "[I] love our healthy restaurants and ethnic restaurants, I just want more!"

"Local/kitschy/independent is fine, but the visual of that scenario is a challenge for attracting more/other retail. I don't think Lululemon would ruin everything."

"More retail and market/grocery options would be lovely. I would also love to see some retail that sells gifts/toys. It would be amazing to be able to get my errands done at lunch. I despise malls and big box stores and would love to support more downtown retail."

"Institute some leniency on parking enforcement. Aggressive enforcement sends a terrible message to potential customers & will often leave people with an experience that will deter them from coming back." "Clean up the basics of the DTK environment (snow clearance, landscaping, light standards & building conditions) to 'set the table' so that entrepreneurs can have the drive to go for what they want to do here."

"Set up a DTK passport to encourage spending & exploration."

"How can multiple retailers be accommodated in DTK's longer (empty) spaces?"

"Support more places like Open Sesame, which offers a versatility of programming and shopping under one roof, and is focused on emerging talents."

"Restaurants and bars are helping to invigorate the community."

Downtown Kitchener is a place for discovery and exploration,

and people crave reasons to experience its uniqueness and authenticity, ideally on foot. Shape DTK stakeholders want their ever-evolving social adventures to be punctuated and enhanced by small art installations, cozy communal areas, interesting venues and other interaction, such as:

Fun, vibrant streets that are pedestrian-friendly

Festivals, live music, patios, social gatherings

Chances to explore and experience new areas or subcultures in a fresh context

11 | CANADA DAY FESTIVITIES IN 2015

OCALS LOV

WHAT WE HEARD A LOT:

People want to hang out in DTK after 5pm with a focus on social gatherings. As more and more of our daily lives are consumed through devices, experts suggest people will seek out for more human social experiences.

THE OPPORTUNITY:

ION will enable far more people to access Downtown within a 15 minute, car-free journey. With a wide variety of restaurant, entertainment and cultural venues, Downtown is poised to serve up uniquely layered experiences to an even wider audience. Shape DTK surveys asked participants to rank their **PREFERRED** INITIATIVES

LOCALS WANT SOCIAL EXPERIENCES



such as reimagining laneways as hangout spots such as creating a laneway basketball court

MORE THAN

ACTIVE

EXPERIENCES

380 votes

Reimagine rear lane ways with seating areas, murals, etc.

376

Develop a weekly live music program where restaurants, patios and pubs showcase local musicians

364

Frequently close streets to pedestrian traffic only

328

287

Provide free Wi-Fi throughout the core

Develop a local shopping & dining app featuring promotions, specials, events, etc.

87 I'm not fond of any of these ideas

Locals want PARTICIPATORY NIGHTLIFE

DTK stakeholders expressed a preference for:







OVER LARGE

SPECTACLES

& BEING PART OF A GROUP OVER BEING PART OF AN AUDIENCE

230

203

302 votes

Lounges/Pubs/Brew Pubs

Live music venues

222

Participatory venues (board game cafes, axe throwing, escape rooms)

Night time festivals

163 Major concerts (CITS)

146 Plays/Dramas/Musicals

57 Nightclubs LOCALS want daily VIBRANCY OUTDOOR SPACES



LIVE MUSICIANS



PEDESTRIAN EXPLORATION

Locals want DTK to:

STIR THEIR SENSES



of public survey respondents told us they want more festivals to happen downtown

24.1%

of respondants said they want more live music

FEED THEIR CURIOSITIES



of survey respondents said they want more unique concept restaurants downtown

23.1[%]

of respondents asked for more niche interest stores

SHAPE DTK FORUM IDEAS

- More great festivals
 - More public spaces for people to hang out outside and be active
 - Improved use of back alley spaces, bike paths, art installations, patios, eating spaces — all of them well-lit
 - Revitalizing, reimagining and making use of empty spaces
 - Fairy lights in trees, playful lighting, and motion-activated piano keys
 - Repurpose brown space to green space
 - Downtown community garden
 - A Ferris wheel at Victoria Park
 - Family scavenger hunts
 - Outdoor winter events
 - Art crawls every month

Kitchener could be a kind of smaller, Canadian version of Portland. Keep it weird, keep encouraging experiences that are hard to explain or mysterious in nature. Laneways are hidden gems!! I think the idea of using laneways for seating areas, patios and festivals would greatly increase the effectiveness of space downtown.

"Downtown is very walkable. Many times I've gotten together with friends and we've just explored with our mouths. There's an aspect of approaching the city experience in that which is quite marketable."

"[I] love the variety of interesting stuff with appeal for many people, especially in front of City Hall: skating, boxing, bike races, etc. Because of those activities, I bring my kids downtown, I drag friends & colleagues from work here for things."

"Support miniature art projects that rely on subtlety and can lend themselves to lots of different personalities, like Wroclaw, Poland's gnome project."

"I would like there to be more art and culture crawls, more new media exhibitions like THEMUSEUM's RAM in 2015, and other cultural events that help grow Kitchener into a hub of innovation, tech, arts and culture." "I really love being able to walk from many quiet neighbourhoods with old houses into a downtown with personality-driven local businesses like The Yeti."

"The colourful bike racks and chairs make me really happy when they appear every year."

"Queen Street Commons has always been a place that is for everyone, where I've run into people from all walks of life, and where I love taking other people who don't know about it. I appreciate that it's a resource for healthy affordable food & that it has such an enviable social justice-focused business model."

"Shakespeare in the Park event at Civic Centre Park is amazing. The setting and pop-up experience are interesting, and it's great to have surprises like that happening."

"Can the BIA facilitate a roaming artist in residence project?"

"We need to keep pace on little details as cars give way to the pedestrian realm."

"Provide packages of layered experiences."

"European cities are vibrant with pedestrian walkways, cafes, outdoor merchant shops, live music, mature trees and green spaces lined with overflowing flowers in pots. In the winter the decorative lights and outdoor cafe heaters continue to attract crowds. This concept should be the Kitchener model."

"DTK can't compete with a major metro area on something like Canada Day, so don't. Instead, concentrate on making great things happen in between big occasions."

"Create a behind-the-scenes event series at DTK businesses that invites interested consumers to come behind the counter and learn about how we do what we do."

LOCALS VALUE CONNUNTIONS CONNECTIONS

The supportive, collaborative and inclusive spirit of downtown is important and energizing.

Stakeholders want the City and BIA to continue working on creating and building connections between DTK's various assets, organizations and happenings. The qualities that make downtown special can be amped up by:

- Connecting the people and places that make DTK compelling
- Providing amenities, services and spaces so locals can do life in DTK
- The collison of community-minded people and organizations to create a breeding ground for grassroots innovation

15 | YOGA IN VICTORIA PARK | PHOTO: DEAN LANDRY - DVISION.CA

INTERESTING FACTOID:

While suburban residents prioritized 'Great Shops and Restaurants' and 'Vibrant Street Life' as most important, urban residents prioritized 'A Diverse and Welcoming Community' as most important.

WHAT THIS MIGHT MEAN:

Great shops and restaurants and vibrant festivals and street life might be what attract us to Downtown in the first place, but it's our ability to build social connections and relationships with others that keep us engaged Downtown.

INTERVENTIONS SHOULD ENCOURAGE INTERACTION

Asked to choose from a list of potential urban interventions, almost 50% of survey respondents voted for outdoor communal spaces that lend themselves to spontaneous activity.



Locals want DTK'S FABRIC TO STRENGTHEN



The **TOP PRIORITY** of downtown residents is "A DIVERSE AND WELCOMING COMMUNITY"

which was **RANKED 1ST MORE OFTEN** than "great shops and restaurants" or "vibrant street life" by survey respondents.

Locals value their COMMUNAL VENUES

Where would you **TAKE A VISITOR DOWNTOWN?** –

Survey respondents' **TOP TWO CHOICES** (40% OF VOTES) are VICTORIA PARK & the KITCHENER MARKET –

key gathering spaces that **connect local communities and individuals** through special events, weekly rituals and random interactions.



- 27 Show them old, historic buildings
- 4 Shopping

- Space for everyone to belong, feel welcome
- Meet-ups and events to foster this kind of creative collaboration
- SORTINA INSTANCE Collaboration between community services and business
- Intentional community building
- Sharing of business ideas and experiences (owners) discussing struggles and successes to help each other out).
- Greater support for senior services and youth programs. Accessibility!
- Connect community collaborators (ideas with doers)

The businesses and organizations here that are really collaborative make me want to do more to contribute to this place.

Foster a climate of openness to space usage, encourage land owners to let their empty spaces be experimented with.

"Keep working on putting people/ businesses/orgs together that can benefit from one another's expertise, interests and passion."

"Let's get the downtown connected. There is so much more than the three blocks of King Street between Water and Queen. The Kitchener Market, Victoria Park, the KPL are great infrastructure that we already have downtown. Expanding events outside of the City Hall square will help broaden people's experience downtown with minimal cost."

"How do we get better coordination & collaboration between downtown food & drink providers and the thematic events/ experiences happening around them?"

"People sometimes need an invitation in order to walk through the door. Are we doing enough to ask people to enjoy what DTK already has?" "Innovation does not mean a bunch of people sitting at a patio with their laptops. Taking care of our homeless and our mentally ill would be innovative. Intervening on their behalf, instead of intervening to have them removed from our 'initiatives' would be a big step toward creating a truly diverse and welcoming community."

"Need to do more to market the parking options available, put more emphasis and promotional effort into passes, discounts, and opportunities."

"Free Wi-Fi and mobile device charging stations are great ideas to make our next generation of mobile users feel welcome and keep them downtown for longer periods of time, such as staying for dinner after shopping."

"Differences are valuable, so create more opportunities for people from different worlds to get to know each other better." "Love the expression of collaborative spirit over competition (ex: Hump Day DTK), especially in the food & beverage sector."

"Word of mouth and recommendations from friends are essential tools. Empower other people to be DTK's influences."

"Work on establishing a stronger network of ambassadors that work at the companies you want to connect with and engage."

"I know that Kitchener in general has more shelters/soup kitchens, but it makes me feel uncomfortable to walk by the same homeless people in front of the same coffee shops every day. I want to help, but as a single female walking through downtown at dusk or dark on my way to work, being in that position just makes me feel uncomfortable. I'm not going to pull out my wallet on King Street in the dark to help someone out. Period."

SHAPING DTK: A VISION FOR 2020

Five years ago, you challenged us to energize King Street, add more housing in the core, and build out an Innovation District. Thanks to the work of countless partners and stakeholders, this change is happening! And while they remain key priorities, the arrival of ION will only accelerate change. As such, today marks a critical inflection point. With your input, thoughts and ideas, we've been able to shape a vision and mantra for the future of DTK that builds on our success and positions us for the change ahead.

When we started this journey, we asked 3 simple questions: What do you love about Downtown today? What's your vision for its future? How do we get there?

You told us that it's not just the tangibles— like buildings, restaurants or parks—that you love about DTK. It's the **DIVERSITY** of people, businesses, festivals and community groups that are **INCLUSIVE** of anyone and everyone. It's the **UNIQUE** shops and restaurants which give downtown a decidedly LOCAL 1 feel. It's the belief that our **GRITTY** character is proof of our **AUTHENTICITY**.

Simply put, it's our unwavering sense of **COMMUNITY** that truly defines Downtown Kitchener. It's where dreamers, creators and makers find neighbours, collaborators and friends. No matter the size, scale or type of change you want to champion, if it betters our community, people here will help you! And if you simply want to be part of something, there's a place for you in DTK. As community leaders, stakeholders, partners and agencies, the BIA and City included, you want us to enable the champions of positive change, and create opportunities for those who want to be part of it. These three proposed strategic areas of focus may not be grandiose, transformative ideas – but that's the point. They simply set the stage for the kind of positive change our community wants:

PRIORITY #1 IGNITE DOWNTOWN AS A PLATFORM FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF URBAN SHOPS, RESTAURANTS, BUSINESSES & SERVICES

Yes, you want more and better shops, restaurants and services. And you were clear on what the parameters are - unique, local, independent places that offer products, services and an experience you can't find at a mall or online. And we agree.

Our opportunity is to create the runway for businesses to succeed. We can't tell you how to run your business - that's your job. What we can provide are the tools to compete in an increasingly disruptive, digital marketplace. We can enhance the customer experience to and from your shop or restaurant. We can provide space, opportunity and mentoring for those who want to test new concepts. And we can certainly promote and amplify all of the amazing experiences DTK has to offer.

PRIORITY #2 FOSTER HEARTFELT URBAN EXPERIENCES

When you're downtown, you want a meaningful, layered urban experience, and you were clear that doesn't mean Disney. You want the chance to dine at an innovative restaurant, explore interesting shops, visit a gallery or museum, go for a drink and take in live music or comedy, all in one trip. You were also very clear that you want these experiences all the time, evenings and weekends, designed for all types of audiences.

Our job is not necessarily to create those experiences. We want to help and support those who are creating heartfelt experiences today, and those who want to offer new ones tomorrow. We need to let the community know about all of the amazing experiences DTK has to offer.

PRIORITY #3 CHAMPION A CARING & COLLABORATIVE COMMUNITY

How we do things is often as important as what we do. You told us that it might be the events, stores, restaurants, experiences or work that brought you downtown, but it's the community that keeps you engaged!

We can support our community builders. We can create the venues, spaces and opportunities for people to unite. We can help neighbours come together and support collaboration among businesses, residents and community groups. We can work together to tackle difficult challenges, like supporting those in need. Because at the end of the day, it's not the size of our buildings or wealth of our companies that will define DTK – it's the openness, inclusiveness and authenticity of DTK people that will.

DOWNTOWN IS CHANGING.

But change doesn't need to be scary or unwieldy, because we can shape change together. Remember, Downtown is much more than a physical place – it's a community. We will champion positive change through programs and investments that make Downtown Kitchener a destination of choice for our entire community. But we need your help. Come Shape DTK together.



WHAT THE COMMUNITY WANTS

More and better shops and daily services. Continue growing a vibrant food scene. A preference for unique, independent businesses.

HOW THE BIA & CITY CURRENTLY HELP

Small Business Centre programs; façade grant program; promotion and marketing support (ex: OWN IT Magazine, Shopping & Dining Guide, social media, etc.)

DTK PARTNERS & ASSETS

Existing network of businesses; Small Business Centre; Kitchener Market; Communitech Hub; Velocity, etc.

POSSIBLE IDEAS/ACTIONS

Develop a retail/food incubator program; improve the customer experience (ex: parking, wayfinding, beautification, etc.); undertake a retail market analysis; advance a marketing strategy to attract customers

WHAT THE COMMUNITY WANTS

A layering of social experiences (dinner, drinks, culture, shopping, music). An element of discovery. Fun, unconventional experiences.

HOW THE BIA & CITY CURRENTLY HELP

Downtown Live; patio program; community grant program; festival & event partnerships

DTK PARTNERS & ASSETS

Dynamic food, coffee & drink scene; Apollo Cinema; THEMUSEUM; KWAG; Centre In The Square; KPL; Registry Theatre; participatory venues; live music & comedy venues; King Street design/patios; festival scene; Victoria Park, Carl Zehr Square, laneways, etc.

POSSIBLE IDEAS/ACTIONS

Develop a strategy to promote experiences; shift BIA/city resources to evenings and weekends; encourage experiences in rear laneways; foster experiences for different audiences (family, seniors, etc.); foster activations in the Innovation, Market & Civic Districts; explore signature outdoor installations

WHAT THE COMMUNITY WANTS

A spirit where everyone matters. Diversity of people, places and businesses. Collaboration instead of competition.

HOW THE BIA & CITY CURRENTLY HELP

OWN IT magazine; ongoing community development; partnership building; community grant program

DTK PARTNERS & ASSETS

Existing community & business diversity; network of community builders/groups; cultural venues; Community Centre; social & community service agencies; co-working spaces; Communitech Hub; Velocity, Small Business Centre; Chamber of Commerce; Waterloo Region Tourism; faith organizations

POSSIBLE IDEAS/ACTIONS

Champion community building as a fundamental approach to doing business; host community building events (ex: art crawls); explore urban community amenities, such as dog parks; champion better integration of Innovation, Market & Civic Districts; foster #DTKLove

NEXT STEPS

Before we finalize the Downtown Kitchener BIA and City of Kitchener's strategic priorities for downtown, we need to know how well we've captured your thoughts, feelings and desires.

Anything is possible and anyone will help you in DTK.

Please keep sharing your thoughts on how we Shape DTK at downtownkitchener.ca/ShapeDTK

BROUGHT TO YOU BY THE PEOPLE OF



F I COTKITCHENER | #SHAPEDTK

Questions?

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