

Community Conversation on Downtown Revitalization

True Grain Bread – Dec 1, 2015

13 participants – 3 tables

1. What do you like about Summerland's downtown?

It's charming, intimate

Ambiance: lampposts, sidewalk stones, benches, etc

Compactness, neighbourliness – everything is close together

- it's flat: easy to get around

Tidy and well-maintained: instills a sense of pride

Off the highway

No big box stores

Views of the surrounding mountainous landscape: nice scenery all around the edges

Two business/shopping streets – Main and Victoria

Angled parking

Clock tower

Community bulletin boards

Memorial Park

Unique, independent boutique stores

Destination retailers: stores that draw people into the community

New Library

Cultural and recreational amenities, schools, churches, coffee shops, practical retailers and services – all located downtown in close proximity

Xmas lights, flower beds, trees, banners

Seasonal themes – Fall harvest, Remembrance Day, etc...

Local events centred in downtown:

- ActionFest

- Light Up

- Farmer's market

- car show

2. How could you envision a more inviting and vibrant downtown?

Focus more on our history

- eg. have a railway car downtown as a ticket kiosk or something

Should be a wine presence (Bottleneck Drive) – eg. tasting room or wine bar

- Wine is why people visit the Okanagan
- Wine and the KVR are why people visit Summerland

Need to route Bottleneck Drive and KVR visitors through downtown: increase traffic flow to create congestion.

Quote: “Congestion is a downtown’s best friend.”

Downtown has to go beyond being a place of convenience to a place of activity.

Wider sidewalks, allow business to spill out

Create atmosphere: something that’s really unique to Summerland

- close off Main Street on select days (eg Sunday market)
- Downtown fruit stand – create market ambiance all the time
- More parkland

Amphitheatre – use the slope at the back of Memorial Park

- Plaza for performing
- Pocket lawns that can transform into public art/mini performance space
- More outdoor seating
- Funky bike racks
- Refillable water bottle / drinking station
- Public art “all over the place”
- More attention to detail to plants and greenery
- More music – street bands, buskers
- More liquor licensed premises open in the evening
- More festivals and events: attract people downtown

Use backs of Main Street buildings (alleys) to have shops on both sides... Wharton Street looks like a back alley.

Give each block a theme. Eg. Cherry block, apple block, peach block – with colour, signage, banners, stencils on the road, etc

Arts Centre
Working studios

Public washrooms
Improve accessibility – wheelchair access to stores

If possible, have retailers, not professional services on Main Street

More people living in the downtown core: increases vibrancy
- storefronts with living quarters above

Encourage landlords and merchants to paint, clean facades, refresh, rebuild so more small stores and apartments on top
- create business incentives/guidelines

Signage

- directional signs at roundabouts: when you come into town, you don't know where to go to get to downtown.
- Signs have to be nice, and you have to be able to read them
- Welcome sign at Jubilee and Rosedale
- Archway or gateway to announce you are here

3. What actions, resources and capabilities are needed to realize this vision?

Task force has to come up with actions, processes, follow-up

Need for a downtown champion

Need for a downtown association or committee: group of like-minded people, not just businesses

- to identify what's possible
- examine resources
- look at previous downtown studies

Need for an event organizer

- corporate sponsors of arts, events
- new event: local special Olympics (Agur Lake tie-in)

Deadbeat landlords are a problem:

- need policy review to support business opportunities
- need to discourage long-term vacancies, papered up windows
- need to encourage upgrading facades
- need to ascertain landlords' difficulties

Widen the sidewalks!

Create a downtown for the current demographic

Improve flow into downtown from other areas of town

Improve signage – informational, directional, consistent

Pursue funding opportunities

- different types: healthy living, age friendly
- development charges for public art

Downtown tourism info/event kiosk with maps – contained within a local biz?

Bike rentals

Bus from downtown to beach and KVR

Periodic table in the park (a picnic table that shows the periodic table, as a nod to PARC)

Partner with Summerland Gardens to create planters that reflect “water wise” leadership

Contest to promote beautification?