

**Subject: Downtown Revitalization Framework**

**File Number: ACS2026-SI-ED-0005**

**Report to Finance and Corporate Services Committee on 7 April 2026**

**and Council 22 April 2026**

**Submitted on March 25, 2026 by Debbie Stewart, General Manager, Strategic Initiatives Department**

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**Ward: Somerset (14)**

**Objet : Le Cadre de revitalisation du centre-ville**

**Dossier : ACS2026-SI-ED-0005**

**Rapport au Comité des finances et du développement économique**

**le 7 avril 2026**

**et au Conseil le 22 avril 2026**

**Soumis le 25 mars 2026 par Debbie Stewart, Directrice générale, Direction générale des initiatives stratégiques**

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**Quartier : Somerset (14)**

## **REPORT RECOMMENDATION(S)**

**That Finance and Corporate Services Committee recommend Council:**

- 1. Approve the Downtown Revitalization Framework and Action Plan, as described in this report.**
- 2. Approve the Downtown Revitalization Toolkit, as described in this report.**
- 3. Direct staff to return to the relevant standing Committee with additional recommendations to inform medium- and long-term actions by Q4 2027.**

## **RECOMMANDATIONS DU RAPPORT**

**Que le Comité des finances et des services organisationnels recommande au Conseil municipal :**

- 1. d'approuver le Cadre de revitalisation du centre-ville et le Plan d'action connexe, selon les modalités exposées dans le présent rapport;**
- 2. d'approuver la Trousse d'outils pour la revitalisation du centre-ville, selon les modalités exposées dans le présent rapport;**
- 3. de demander au personnel de la Ville de déposer devant le comité pertinent, d'ici au quatrième trimestre de 2027, d'autres recommandations visant à étayer les mesures à moyen et à long terme.**

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report responds to the need for a cohesive, whole-of-city approach to addressing the economic, social, health and structural challenges facing Ottawa's downtown. Downtown's performance affects every ward and every resident, not only those who live or work in the core. It is the economic, cultural, and symbolic heart of the city, generating a significant share of municipal assessment, employment, tourism activity, and small business concentration.

A strong downtown supports the City's tax base and helps fund services across Ottawa. It attracts investment and talent, anchors major institutions and cultural assets, drives tourism and entrepreneurship, and reinforces Ottawa's national and international reputation. Conversely, prolonged weakness in the core places pressure on municipal finances, constrains economic opportunity, and affects confidence city-wide. Its

recovery is therefore essential to Ottawa's overall competitiveness, fiscal stability, and long-term prosperity.

This report builds upon the March 2026 report to Council on revitalization of the ByWard Market and brings forward a coordinated Downtown Revitalization Framework and Action Plan that aligns City and partner actions, clarifies priorities, and advances implementation in an integrated manner. Consistent with the City's Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan and the Ottawa Board of Trade's Downtown Ottawa Action Agenda, the Framework recognizes that downtown revitalization is foundational to investment attraction, talent attraction and retention, entrepreneurship, and inclusive economic growth.

It also provides an update on downtown revitalization progress during the current term of Council and presents an updated assessment of the health of the downtown economy. Since 2022, coordinated efforts and investment by federal, provincial, municipal, and civic partners have advanced projects, strengthened partnerships, and established governance mechanisms. At the same time, conditions have changed significantly, including post-pandemic work patterns, federal office rationalization, housing pressures, and social challenges. These shifts require a careful review and updating of assumptions, which has been built into the Framework. Conducting this review at the conclusion of the current Term of Council will ensure that the City and its partners are positioned to maintain momentum and implement a clear, evidence-based approach in the next term.

While the Downtown Ottawa Action Agenda provides the guiding blueprint for downtown revitalization, the City's role is to enable, align, and accelerate initiatives within municipal authorities, ensuring that City tools and investments effectively support shared priorities.

The Downtown Revitalization Framework organizes coordinated actions around four key areas of focus:

1. Rebalance Uses
2. Diversify and Strengthen Ottawa's Economy
3. Improve Community Safety and Well-Being
4. Transform Places and Spaces

This report seeks Council's approval of a coordinated Downtown Revitalization Framework. Specifically, Council is being asked to:

- Approve the Downtown Revitalization Framework and Action Plan as described in this report
- Approve the Downtown Revitalization Toolkit, including the evaluation of actions requiring report back to Committee and Council
- Direct staff to undertake supporting foundational analyses and engagement, as described in this report, and report back to Finance and Corporate Services Committee with further recommendations on medium- and long-term actions aligned to revitalization objectives, by Q4 2027.

The Framework responds to Council direction to develop a comprehensive downtown revitalization toolkit (Motion No. FCSC-PHC2025-03-08), by embedding it within an integrated and coordinated Action Plan. By aligning investments, policy tools, and partnerships, the Framework positions downtown Ottawa for sustained recovery, increased resilience, and renewed confidence as the city's primary destination for business, culture, tourism, and community life.

For the purposes of this report, 'Downtown Ottawa' refers to the [Downtown Core Transect](#) as defined in the Official Plan, broadly bounded by O-Train Line 2 to the west, the Rideau River to the east, the Ottawa River to the north, and Highway 417 to the south. These boundaries are approximate, reflecting the transitional nature of the downtown where social, health, economic, and structural issues often extend beyond formal limits. The analysis and recommendations in this report are applied in a flexible, targeted manner, ensuring that initiatives reach the areas of greatest need, even when this extends beyond the defined core.

## **Rationale**

The Downtown Revitalization Framework establishes a clear, outcome-focused approach grounded in current downtown conditions and emerging trends. It sets out a shared vision for a vibrant and resilient downtown that attracts investment, supports a diversity of residents, and invites people to shop, gather, and explore. The Framework's four areas of focus provide an organizing structure for aligning actions across City initiatives and partners, while the accompanying Action Plan translates this vision into prioritized initiatives, clarifies sequencing and responsibilities, and directs City resources toward actions with the greatest potential impact.

The Framework is intentionally iterative and evidence-based, recognizing that targets will evolve as market conditions change. In the near term, progress will be tracked through key measures aligned with the four focus areas. Concurrently, the City will undertake strategic assessments and engagement to establish future-state targets and guide the longer-term transformation of downtown streets, public spaces, and civic assets.

This work builds on revitalization initiatives already underway, including those advanced as part of the Economic Development Strategy and in the ByWard Market over the current term of Council. It consolidates progress to date, aligns existing initiatives, and introduces a coordinated implementation approach in the context of significant economic and social change. Shifts in office demand, housing pressures, federal workforce adjustments, and broader global trends have altered the environment in which downtown recovery must occur. In this context, a refreshed whole-of-city framework is required to ensure alignment, clarity of direction, and disciplined prioritization.

The Framework complements the Ottawa Board of Trade's Downtown Ottawa Action Agenda by clarifying the City's role within the broader revitalization effort. It applies a whole-of-municipality lens to coordinating actions across departments, clarifying municipal roles and responsibilities, identifying gaps, and prioritizing and sequencing initiatives to ensure municipal investments and policy tools are aligned for maximum impact.

The Downtown Revitalization Framework and Action Plan builds on Council-approved priorities, including but not limited to, the City's Strategic Plan 2023–2026, the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan, the ByWard Market Revitalization Framework and Action Plan, the Housing Acceleration Plan, and the Community Safety and Well-Being Plan. It responds to Council direction to address persistent downtown challenges through a coordinated, place-based approach while accelerating work already underway across City departments and partners.

Without a coordinated framework, initiatives risk advancing in isolation, limiting their collective impact, and slowing downtown recovery. Prolonged vacancy, uneven activity, and declining perceptions of safety and vibrancy could undermine municipal investments and constrain the City's ability to maintain momentum. The Framework mitigates these risks by providing clear direction, prioritizing high-impact actions, and establishing governance and measurement tools to support visible and sustained progress.

## **Next Steps**

Following Council approval, staff will advance the prioritized short-term actions identified in the Action Plan while undertaking complimentary strategic analyses outlined in this report to inform medium- and long-term decision-making. A subsequent report to Council will present the results of these analyses, confirm future-state targets, and refine the sequencing and resourcing of actions. Beginning in 2027, Council will receive annual updates through a downtown revitalization reporting framework that tracks conditions, measures progress, and identifies emerging risks and opportunities, ensuring transparency, accountability, and ongoing alignment with Council's strategic objectives.

## **SYNTHÈSE ADMINISTRATIVE**

Ce rapport répond à la nécessité d'adopter une approche cohérente pour l'ensemble de la Ville, afin de résoudre les difficultés économiques, sociales, sanitaires et structurelles auxquelles est confronté le centre-ville d'Ottawa. La vitalité du centre-ville rejaille sur chacun des quartiers et des résidents, et non seulement sur ceux qui habitent ou travaillent dans le cœur du centre-ville. Il s'agit du cœur économique, culturel et symbolique de la Ville, qui génère une part importante des taxes foncières municipales, de l'emploi, de l'activité touristique et une forte concentration de petites entreprises.

La vitalité du centre-ville, socle de l'assiette fiscale de la Ville, permet de financer les services offerts sur tout le territoire d'Ottawa. Le centre-ville attire les investissements et les talents, arrime les grandes institutions et les actifs culturels, porte le tourisme et l'entrepreneuriat et conforte la notoriété nationale et internationale d'Ottawa. Par contre, la léthargie prolongée du cœur du centre-ville exerce des pressions sur les finances municipales, entrave les perspectives économiques et mine la confiance dans toute la Ville. Il est donc essentiel que le centre-ville reprenne du mieux pour l'ensemble de la compétitivité, de la stabilité financière et de la prospérité à long terme d'Ottawa.

Le présent rapport s'inspire du rapport de mars 2026 du Conseil municipal sur la revitalisation du marché By et met de l'avant un Cadre de revitalisation du centre-ville et un Plan d'action pour la revitalisation du centre-ville concerté, qui font concorder, en les intégrant, les interventions de la Ville et les partenaires, en plus de préciser les priorités et de favoriser la mise en œuvre. Conformément à la Stratégie de développement économique et au Plan d'action pour le développement économique de la Ville, ainsi qu'au Programme d'action pour le centre-ville de la Chambre de commerce d'Ottawa, le Cadre reconnaît que la revitalisation du centre-ville est essentielle pour attirer les

investissements, pour attirer et fidéliser les talents, de même que pour promouvoir l'entrepreneuriat et la croissance économique inclusive.

Ce cadre fait aussi le point sur les progrès accomplis dans la revitalisation du centre-ville pendant le mandat actuel du Conseil municipal et comprend une évaluation actualisée de la vigueur de l'économie du centre-ville. Depuis 2022, les efforts et les investissements concertés du gouvernement fédéral, du gouvernement provincial, de l'administration municipale et des partenaires citoyens ont permis de faire avancer des projets, de fortifier les partenariats et d'instituer des mécanismes de gouvernance. Dans le même temps, la conjoncture a considérablement évolué, notamment dans les habitudes de travail postpandémiques, dans la rationalisation des bureaux du gouvernement fédéral, dans les pressions qui pèsent sur le logement et dans les difficultés sociales. Ces mutations réclament un examen attentif et obligent à actualiser les hypothèses, ce qui fait partie du Cadre. Le déroulement de cet examen à la fin du mandat actuel du Conseil permettra de s'assurer que la Ville et ses partenaires sont en mesure de garder le rythme et de mettre en œuvre une approche claire et fondée sur les statistiques probantes dans le prochain mandat.

Si le Programme d'action pour le centre-ville d'Ottawa constitue la feuille de route qui oriente la revitalisation du centre-ville, le rôle de la Ville consiste à favoriser, faire concorder et accélérer les initiatives en fonction des pouvoirs municipaux, en veillant à ce que les outils et les investissements de la Ville permettent de respecter efficacement les priorités communes.

Le Cadre de revitalisation du centre-ville organise les interventions concertées selon quatre grands secteurs prioritaires :

5. rééquilibrer les vocations;
6. diversifier et renforcer l'économie d'Ottawa;
7. améliorer la sécurité et le bien-être de la collectivité;
8. transformer les lieux et les espaces.

Dans ce rapport, nous demandons au Conseil municipal d'approuver le Cadre de revitalisation du centre-ville concerté. Nous demandons essentiellement au Conseil municipal :

- d'approuver le Cadre de revitalisation du centre-ville et le Plan d'action connexe, selon les modalités exposées dans le présent rapport;

- d'approuver la Trousse d'outils pour la revitalisation du centre-ville, notamment l'évaluation des mesures qui doivent faire l'objet d'un compte rendu au Comité et au Conseil;
- de demander au personnel de déposer devant le comité pertinent, d'ici le quatrième trimestre de 2027, d'autres recommandations visant à étayer les mesures à moyen et à long terme.

Le Cadre donne suite à la demande du Conseil municipal de mettre au point une Trousse d'outils complète pour la revitalisation du centre-ville (Motion n° FCSC-PHC2025-03-08), en l'enchâssant dans un plan d'action intégré et concerté. En harmonisant les investissements, les outils de politique et les partenariats, le Cadre positionne le centre-ville d'Ottawa pour une reprise soutenue, une meilleure résilience et un regain de confiance comme destination principale pour les affaires, la culture, le tourisme et la vie communautaire.

Pour les besoins du présent rapport, le terme « centre-ville d'Ottawa » s'entend du [transect du cœur du centre-ville](#) au sens défini dans le Plan officiel, essentiellement cerné par la Ligne 2 de l'O-Train à l'Ouest, par la rivière Rideau à l'Est, par la rivière des Outaouais au Nord et par l'autoroute 417 au Sud. Ce périmètre, qui est approximatif, rend compte de la nature transitoire du centre-ville, dans lequel les enjeux sociaux, sanitaires, économiques et structurels débordent souvent des limites formelles. L'analyse et les recommandations de ce rapport s'appliquent de manière souple et ciblée, en veillant à ce que les initiatives soient déployées dans les secteurs qui en ont le plus besoin, même lorsqu'elles s'étendent au-delà du cœur du centre-ville défini.

### **Justification**

Le Cadre de revitalisation du centre-ville institue une approche claire, axée sur les résultats et fondée de la conjoncture actuelle du centre-ville et des tendances émergentes. Il fait état d'une vision commune pour la vitalité et la résilience du centre-ville afin d'attirer les investissements, de promouvoir la diversité des résidents et de les inviter à explorer le centre-ville, à y faire leurs courses et à s'y rassembler. Les quatre secteurs prioritaires du Cadre constituent une structure organisatrice pour harmoniser les interventions dans l'ensemble des initiatives et parmi les partenaires de la Ville, alors que le Plan d'action qui l'accompagne transforme cette vision en initiatives prioritaires, précise le séquençage et les responsabilités et consacre les ressources de la Ville aux interventions qui pourraient produire l'impact le plus retentissant.

Le Cadre, qui se veut itératif, est établi d'après les statistiques probantes, en sachant que les cibles se transformeront selon l'évolution de la conjoncture du marché. Dans le court terme, nous ferons le suivi des progrès accomplis grâce aux principaux indicateurs qui correspondent à ces quatre secteurs prioritaires. Dans le même temps, la Ville mènera des évaluations stratégiques et des consultations afin d'établir les cibles de la situation projetée et d'orienter la transformation à plus long terme des rues, des espaces publics et des actifs citoyens du centre-ville.

Ces travaux s'inspirent des initiatives de revitalisation qui se déroulent déjà, dont celles qui sont préconisées dans la Stratégie de développement économique et dans la Structure-cadre de revitalisation et le Plan d'action du marché By dans le cadre du mandat actuel du Conseil municipal. Ils consolident les progrès accomplis jusqu'à maintenant, harmonisent les initiatives existantes et instituent une approche concertée pour la mise en œuvre dans le contexte d'une importante évolution économique et sociale. Les mutations dans la demande de bureaux, les pressions qui pèsent sur le logement, les réaménagements des effectifs fédéraux et l'ensemble des tendances mondiales ont transformé l'environnement dans lequel doit se dérouler la reprise du centre-ville. Dans ce contexte, il faut adopter une structure-cadre réactualisée pour l'ensemble de la Ville afin d'assurer la concordance, la clarté de l'orientation et la priorisation rigoureuse des interventions.

Le Cadre assure l'appoint du Programme d'action pour le centre-ville de la Chambre de commerce d'Ottawa en précisant le rôle de la Ville dans l'ensemble des efforts de revitalisation. Il fait appel au point de vue de toute la municipalité pour concerter les interventions parmi les directions générales de la Ville en précisant les fonctions et les attributions municipales, en cernant les lacunes, de même qu'en priorisant et en enchaînant les initiatives pour s'assurer que les investissements et les outils de politique de la municipalité sont concertés pour produire un maximum d'impact.

Le Cadre de revitalisation du centre-ville et le Plan d'action pour la revitalisation du centre-ville s'inspirent des priorités approuvées par le Conseil municipal, dont le Plan stratégique 2023-2026 de la Ville, la Stratégie de développement économique, le Plan d'action pour le développement économique, la Structure-cadre de revitalisation et le Plan d'action du marché By, le Plan d'accélération de la création de logements et le Plan de sécurité et de bien-être dans les collectivités. Il donne suite à la demande du Conseil municipal de se pencher sur les difficultés chroniques du centre-ville grâce à une approche localisée et concertée, en accélérant les travaux déjà lancés par les directions générales et les partenaires de la Ville.

Sans structure-cadre concertée, les initiatives risquent de se dérouler isolément, ce qui en limiterait l'impact collectif et ce qui ralentirait la reprise du centre-ville. L'inoccupation prolongée des locaux, l'activité disparate et la détérioration du sentiment de sécurité et de vitalité pourraient saper les investissements municipaux et entraver la capacité de la Ville à garder son élan. Le Cadre atténue ces risques en adoptant une orientation claire, en priorisant les interventions qui ont le plus d'impact et en établissant les outils de gouvernance et d'évaluation qui permettent de réaliser des progrès visibles et soutenus.

### **Prochaines étapes**

Lorsque le Conseil municipal aura donné son approbation, le personnel se consacrera aux interventions à court terme priorisées et définies dans le Plan d'action, tout en menant les analyses stratégiques complémentaires exposées dans ce rapport pour éclairer les décisions à prendre à moyen et à long termes. Dans un rapport ultérieur à soumettre au Conseil, nous présenterons les résultats de ces analyses, nous confirmerons les cibles fixées pour la situation projetée et nous mettrons au point l'enchaînement des interventions et les ressources à y consacrer. À partir de 2027, le Conseil municipal prendra connaissance des comptes rendus annuels dans les rapports de la structure-cadre sur la revitalisation du centre-ville, qui permettra de suivre la conjoncture, de mesurer les progrès accomplis et de recenser les risques émergents et les perspectives, en assurant la transparence, la redevabilité et la concordance continue avec les objectifs stratégiques du Conseil municipal.

### **BACKGROUND**

Downtown Ottawa entered the post-pandemic era facing a convergence of structural, economic, and social pressures. Sustained hybrid and remote work patterns altered office demand and reduced daytime population levels. The downtown's historic overreliance on federal office tenancy exposed vulnerabilities as federal real estate modernization and rationalization accelerated.

These structural changes are intersected with intensifying social, health, and housing pressures. Concentrated impacts from the opioid crisis, mental health challenges, homelessness, and housing affordability have shaped perceptions of safety, comfort, and vibrancy in the core. While not unique to Ottawa, their visibility and concentration have had a disproportionate influence on public confidence and investor sentiment.

At the same time, the downtown retained significant assets and opportunities: strong transit infrastructure, major civic and cultural institutions, catalytic projects such as Ādisōke Library and the Ottawa Senators Arena redevelopment, and policy tools

including office-to-residential conversion mechanisms. Maximizing these strengths required careful coordination, long-term planning, and a shared commitment among all interest holders to shape a vibrant, resilient, and inclusive downtown.

### **Ottawa Board of Trade Downtown Ottawa Action Agenda**

In response to mounting economic and social shifts, the Ottawa Board of Trade (OBOT) launched the Downtown Ottawa Action Agenda in 2024, a comprehensive, multi-sector blueprint designed to guide transformative action in the city core.

As Ottawa's leading business advocacy organization, OBOT represents enterprises of all sizes and maintains strong connections across sectors and levels of government. Recognizing the scale of change underway, OBOT engaged the Canadian Urban Institute to lead research, comparative urban analysis, and strategy development grounded in Ottawa's unique context and informed by best practices from other cities.

Developed in collaboration with partners including the City of Ottawa, Ottawa Tourism, Invest Ottawa, BOMA Ottawa, the National Capital Commission, and others, the Action Agenda articulates approximately 60 concrete actions aimed at fostering a more desirable, resilient, inclusive, and economically robust downtown through catalytic investment by 2034.

The Action Agenda is not a City-led plan. However, it has become the foundational civic blueprint for downtown revitalization efforts. Its development involved consultation across public, private, institutional, and community partners. OBOT further established Champions and Implementation Tables composed of senior cross-sector leaders to guide delivery and monitor progress.

The City of Ottawa has endorsed the objectives of the Action Agenda and has invested in its advancement both financially and through leadership participation. City staff contribute actively to Champions and Implementation stewardship tables, particularly in areas related to housing, economic development, public space improvements, safety, and communications. Through this collaboration, the City aligns municipal tools and investments with the shared priorities articulated in the Action Agenda.

The Downtown Ottawa Action Agenda therefore serves as the driving civic framework around which partner efforts are organized. The City's role is to support, align, and help accelerate its highest-impact priorities within municipal authorities and responsibilities.

## **Summary of Progress**

The [Downtown Action Agenda](#) proposes four “Big Moves” to transform downtown Ottawa including adding 40,000 new residents and 50,000 more jobs to downtown by 2034.

As of July 2025, approximately 93,050 residents were living downtown, a 2.8 per cent increase from the previous year. Achieving 40,000 new downtown residents by 2034 will require an average increase of 4 per cent per year. This can be achieved through a combination of new development and office conversions. The City is tracking progress on new residents downtown on the Economic Development Dashboard using semi-annual population estimates for the Downtown Core Transect provided by the Research and Forecasting team.

Based on preliminary data from the 2023 City of Ottawa Employment Survey (draft and subject to revision prior to public release), there were approximately 176,400 jobs located downtown, representing 26.8 per cent of jobs city-wide. Of that number, approximately 99,000 jobs were within the CBD. A portion of new job growth downtown would be driven by an increase in the number of businesses and services required to serve new residents, the attraction of new businesses looking to access talent living downtown, and from existing organizations, such as post-secondary institutions, businesses, and government, expanding their employment footprint downtown.

## **Momentum Since 2022**

Since 2022, downtown revitalization efforts have advanced through coordinated initiatives across governments and civic partners, supported in part by \$18.5 million in funding through the Ontario-Ottawa Agreement for Downtown Economic Recovery.

Federal officials convened a downtown revitalization task force to assess post-pandemic impacts in 2022. Municipal strategic priorities embedded downtown revitalization within the 2023–2026 Strategic Plan and the Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan. Investments and partnerships have progressed in parallel with the Downtown Action Agenda implementation.

These combined efforts have generated tangible progress; projects have advanced, partnerships have matured, and governance mechanisms are in place. However, while momentum is real, the scale of structural transformation required to reposition the downtown for long-term economic resilience and diversification has not yet been fully realized.

## **The Current Context**

The global economy has continued to evolve since early revitalization efforts began.

Global economic uncertainty, inflationary pressures, and tariffs have affected investment feasibility and timelines. Federal real estate rationalization and potential building divestitures are reshaping the Central Business District. Hybrid work patterns remain fluid. Housing affordability pressures, homelessness, and the opioid crisis have intensified.

The assumptions underpinning early revitalization efforts in 2022 have materially shifted. Market conditions, land use feasibility, employment concentrations, and investment risk profiles require recalibration. Continued progress demands updated analysis and renewed alignment.

## **Why Review Now**

The conclusion of the current Term of Council presents a deliberate and appropriate inflection point.

It provides an opportunity to:

- Assess progress across City and partner-led initiatives
- Reaffirm alignment with the Downtown Ottawa Action Agenda
- Identify persistent structural and implementation gaps
- Update assumptions based on current market realities
- Position downtown revitalization efforts for the next Term of Council

This review is not about restarting. It is about consolidating progress, strengthening coordination, and ensuring that momentum translates into measurable structural change.

## **Why a Framework Approach**

The City adopted a framework-based review, rather than creating a new standalone plan. Staff undertook a comprehensive scan of:

- Existing municipal strategies
- Investments and capital projects

- Action Agenda priorities and stewardship structures
- Partner-led initiatives underway

This approach ensures that the City's Downtown Revitalization Framework complements, rather than duplicates, the Downtown Ottawa Action Agenda. It clarifies where municipal authorities and investments can most effectively accelerate shared priorities and where additional attention is required.

The Framework serves two interrelated purposes:

1. **Advance targeted, near-term actions** within current authorities to accelerate revitalization priorities already identified through the Action Agenda and Council-approved strategies.
2. **Establish an analytical foundation** for deeper medium- and long-term structural decisions, including market analysis, land conversion potential, infrastructure capacity, financial tools, and policy levers necessary for transformative change.

Through this approach, the City strengthens collaboration, focuses shared attention and resources on the highest-impact initiatives, and moves toward a common vision for a revitalized downtown.

### **Positioning the Next Term**

Although presented near the end of the current Term of Council, this report does not mark the beginning of downtown revitalization. It consolidates several years of partner-driven momentum, reaffirming the Downtown Ottawa Action Agenda as the foundational civic blueprint while clarifying the City's enabling role.

By undertaking this structured review now, Council ensures that the next Term begins with:

- Clear alignment between municipal tools and partner-led priorities
- A shared understanding of updated economic and social conditions
- Strengthened stewardship coordination
- A focused pathway toward measurable transformation

- A set of the most visible and impactful actions identified and positioned for initiation in 2026

The Framework positions the City and its partners to move beyond incremental adaptation toward an evidence-based shared vision for a more resilient, economically diversified, and vibrant downtown core.

**The Case for Continued Change: Why the Downtown Matters Citywide**

The state of downtown has direct implications for municipal finances, transit network performance, housing delivery, tourism and city image, and community wellbeing across Ottawa. A strong, resilient core supports service delivery and quality of life in every ward; prolonged underperformance increases costs and constraints that are shared citywide. The Downtown Ottawa Action Agenda estimates that a revitalized core could generate more than \$1.2 billion in annual economic activity and over \$133 million per year in property tax revenue, illustrating the scale of both the opportunity and the financial stakes associated with downtown performance.

The following table outlines the principal ways in which downtown vitality contributes to fiscal sustainability, economic competitiveness, infrastructure efficiency, and community well-being across Ottawa, and demonstrates how the performance of the core directly affects residents and businesses citywide.

<b>Area of Impact</b>	<b>How Downtown Vitality Benefits the Entire City</b>	<b>Citywide Impact</b>
<b>Municipal Finances &amp; Tax Stability</b>	A strong commercial core stabilizes and grows the non-residential tax base, reducing volatility and pressure on residential taxpayers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More predictable funding for parks, libraries, recreation facilities, road renewal, and emergency services in every ward</li> <li>• Reduced likelihood of residential tax increases</li> <li>• Greater fiscal room for strategic investments</li> </ul>
<b>Capacity to Fund New Infrastructure</b>	Growth in downtown assessment and economic activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding new recreation and community amenities</li> <li>• Advancing major infrastructure renewal</li> </ul>

	generates new revenue capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investing in climate adaptation and resilience projects</li> </ul>
<b>Transit Network Health &amp; Affordability</b>	Downtown is the system's primary demand anchor, supporting ridership and fare revenue stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More frequent and reliable service across all wards</li> <li>Better return on LRT investment</li> <li>Reduced per-ride cost pressures systemwide</li> </ul>
<b>Managing Outward Growth Pressure</b>	Housing and employment growth in the core uses existing infrastructure efficiently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Less pressure to expand roads, pipes, and services outward</li> <li>Lower long-term infrastructure maintenance costs</li> <li>More sustainable land use patterns</li> </ul>
<b>Housing Supply &amp; Affordability Balance</b>	Adding residents downtown increases overall housing capacity without expanding the urban boundary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better citywide housing availability</li> <li>Supports climate and intensification targets</li> <li>Makes use of existing transit, utilities, and amenities</li> </ul>
<b>Economic Competitiveness &amp; Investment Attraction</b>	A vibrant core signals economic strength and confidence to businesses and investors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attracts businesses and industries considering Ottawa over other cities</li> <li>Supports job growth that benefits households citywide</li> <li>Reinforces Ottawa's reputation as a stable investment environment</li> </ul>
<b>Tourism &amp; Visitor Economy</b>	The downtown shapes first impressions and drives visitation and visitor spending	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher hotel occupancy across multiple wards</li> <li>Stronger performance for cultural institutions and event venues</li> <li>Increased local supplier activity tied to tourism</li> </ul>
<b>Community Well-Being &amp; Civic Confidence</b>	Visible improvements in safety, cleanliness, and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Greater use of public spaces across the city</li> <li>Stronger civic pride and engagement</li> </ul>

	activation build public trust and participation	• Reinforces confidence in municipal leadership and service delivery
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### Citywide Imperative

The downtown core is a citywide concern because its performance affects fiscal stability, transit viability, housing efficiency, tourism competitiveness, and community confidence. Continued attention to the downtown is therefore integral to Ottawa's long-term prosperity, sustainability, and quality of life in every ward. The scale of potential citywide gains is significant but so too are the documented losses under a do-nothing path ( $\geq$  \$62 million annually, as reported by the Ottawa Board of Trade), driven by reduced assessment growth, lower economic activity, and weaker investment attraction. Over time, these impacts would increase pressure on residential taxpayers, constrain service levels, weaken transit system performance, and diminish Ottawa's competitiveness. These challenges will continue to persist should revitalization efforts lose momentum, requiring even greater intervention in the future. Without sustained focus, pressures on fiscal stability, investment confidence, and service delivery would continue to compound across the city.

### Key Problems Facing Downtown Ottawa

While meaningful progress is underway, several structural and emerging challenges continue to shape downtown Ottawa's trajectory and slow its revitalization and renewal. These interconnected pressures require sustained, coordinated action:

- **Economic uncertainty**, driven by structural shifts in office demand, cautious private investment, evolving work patterns and broader geopolitical instability and trade barriers.
- **Overreliance on the federal government as the primary downtown employer** combined with uncertainty surrounding previously reported plans to dispose of up to 50 per cent of federal office buildings; this concentration risk contributes to elevated commercial vacancy rates, underutilized assets and weakened investor confidence.
- **Elevated office vacancy and reduced daytime foot traffic**, underscoring downtown's concentration in public sector employment, and limiting spin-off benefits for small businesses while diminishing overall street vitality.

- **Housing supply and affordability pressures**, limiting access to stable housing, constraining population growth and slowing the development of a more balanced, mixed-use downtown.
- **Visible social complexity and public realm concerns** affecting perceptions of safety, comfort, downtown livability, and visitor experience.
- **Land-use imbalance** with a primarily employment-focused core and insufficient residential, cultural, and experiential uses to support consistent activity throughout the day and evening and strengthen long-term economic resilience.
- **Gaps in amenities and services required to support a 24/7 downtown**, including retail, cultural programming, family-oriented spaces, entertainment, restaurants, and everyday services.

### **State of Downtown**

Effective downtown revitalization begins with a clear understanding of the current state of the downtown core. Current initiatives and plans have already delivered measurable progress, but to advance further and address remaining challenges, the City must assess downtown's current condition. Establishing this baseline by evaluating economic performance, employment trends, residential growth, social conditions, and public realm vitality will inform areas of success and ongoing pressures. Understanding the current state will ensure that efforts are directed where they are most needed, guiding coordinated actions that strengthen long-term resilience.

### **Economic Conditions and Vacancy Rates**

The Downtown Core (DTC) as defined by the Official Plan, is a significant economic engine for the city, with a high concentration of businesses, employment, and commercial activity. The area generated \$149.5 million in municipal commercial tax revenue in 2025 which is 27.6 per cent of city-wide commercial tax revenue and a 4.1 per cent increase over 2024. Standard indicators used to assess downtown vitality, including commercial vacancy, retail performance, labour market conditions, and overall economic output, show a downtown economy that is active but continuing to adjust to post-pandemic conditions and structural shifts in office demand.

Based on forecasting from Signal49 Research (formerly The Conference Board of Canada) and the DTC's concentration of employment, a gross domestic product (GDP) estimate for the area is \$22.2 billion for 2025 or approximately 27 per cent of total GDP for the Ottawa portion of the Ottawa-Gatineau Census Metropolitan Area (CMA). Lower

GDP growth is forecasted for Ottawa in 2026 (0.4 per cent), with modest recovery beginning in 2027 (1.4 per cent).

Downtown office market conditions continue to reflect the transition to mixed-use development. Within the Central Business District (CBD), which contains the highest concentration of office employment including federal-occupied buildings, office vacancy remained elevated at 13.3 per cent in Q4 2025, with significantly higher vacancy in Class C buildings (typically older, offering less amenities). Retail conditions are stronger, with improving occupancy of ground-floor space and declining retail vacancy in the CBD (6.2 per cent in December 2025, down from 9.1 per cent the previous year). Industry reporting has noted increased leasing of retail space within office towers, supporting incremental improvements in street-level vibrancy.

Despite commercial vacancy challenges, investment activity is occurring through adaptive reuse of existing properties and landmark city-building projects. From 2023 to mid-2025, 479 new housing units or hotel rooms were approved in Downtown Ottawa through office-to-residential and mixed-use conversions of surplus office inventory. Building permits for 471 units were issued during the same period (466 of these units were in the CBD). Major public and private projects, including the Ādisōke Library and the redevelopment of LeBreton Flats, continue to strengthen downtown's long-term value proposition and stimulate private sector interest and investment.

### **Population Growth and Activity**

As Ottawa's population is projected to grow by approximately half a million residents in the coming years based on Ontario Ministry of Finance projections, Downtown Ottawa continues to experience moderate growth in the number of residents living downtown. As of July 2025, approximately 93,050 residents were living within the DTC, a 2.8 per cent increase from the previous year. Future growth projections indicate that the city's population will increase by approximately 19,600 residents annually (roughly 1.5 per cent). By comparison, recent downtown population growth of 2.8 per cent per year is roughly double the citywide rate, an encouraging signal that growth is already concentrating in the core.

New residential units continue to be approved or completed, contributing to the availability of housing to accommodate additional residents. Based on building permit data between 2023 and mid-2025, 4,771 units are currently under construction or expected to begin construction. The City's planning approval pipeline from the same

period shows just over 12,000 additional units with the potential to move forward to construction should market conditions be favorable.

Daytime population data provided by Environics Analytics shows that more than 100,000 people travel into the DTC daily for work, education, or commercial purposes. In 2025, the daytime population reached approximately 194,100, a 0.4 per cent increase from 2024.

Total visits to the CBD increased 3.4 per cent from 2023 to 2024 (40.9 million to 42.3 million) and subsequently decreased five per cent from 2024 to 2025 (42.3 million to 40.2 million). Seventy-four per cent of visits occurred on weekdays with sixty-nine per cent occurring between 6 a.m. and 6 p.m.

Visits to the CBD during the evening between 6 p.m. and 9 p.m. increased 8.8 per cent from 2023 to 2024 (5.0 million to 5.4 million) and a further 5.1 per cent to 5.7 million in 2025. Increased tourism visitation, new public space activations and programming such as Metcalfe Plaza, and new restaurants and attractions are driving this increase in pedestrian activity outside of regular working hours.

### **Businesses and Employment**

According to Statistics Canada, there were 4,013 business locations with employees in the DTC in July 2025, representing 12.9 per cent of business locations city-wide. Over 90 per cent of downtown business locations had fewer than 50 employees, and 40 per cent had fewer than five employees, indicating a large number of microbusinesses.

The number of downtown business locations decreased 0.8 per cent from July 2024, compared to a 0.5 per cent increase in business locations city-wide. The ByWard Market/Lowertown (-2.2 per cent) and Golden Triangle/Centretown (-3.9 per cent) areas were responsible for the decline while the Lebreton/Centretown West, Downtown Core (Central Business District), and Sandy Hill/Ottawa U districts posted increases in the number of business locations of 1.8 per cent, 1.6 per cent, and 1.0 per cent respectively.

There was a 1.9 per cent decrease in downtown retail business locations in July 2025 compared to a year prior (0.3 per cent decrease city-wide), and a 7.3 per cent decrease in accommodation and food service business locations (2.0 per cent increase city-wide). Interestingly, the number of arts, entertainment and recreation business locations increased 11.7 per cent (1.7 per cent increase city-wide).

Based on preliminary data from the 2023 City of Ottawa Employment Survey, there were approximately 176,400 jobs located within the DTC, representing 26.8 per cent of jobs citywide. Of that number, approximately 99,000 jobs were within the CBD. This data is considered draft and subject to review and revision prior to public release of the final survey report.

As a central hub for employment, commercial activity, tourism visitation, and investment, a thriving downtown Ottawa is critical to the city's continued economic growth and prosperity. A growing downtown residential population and shifts in both private and public sector return to office mandates is creating opportunities for new shops, restaurants, services, and other amenities. Improved transit access to the CBD with Stage 2 LRT expansion will help attract new commercial office tenants, as companies seek a central location to attract talent from across the city. As the impacts of reductions to the federal public service become more apparent, a mix of new public and private sector tenants will create a more diversified and resilient downtown economy.

### **Federal Public Service Job Reductions and Property Disposals**

Federal public service employment, a central driver of downtown Ottawa's labour market and office demand, is expected to undergo a reduction over the coming years as part of the federal government's Comprehensive Expenditure Review and Budget 2025 commitments. According to budget 2025, the federal government intends to reduce the size of the public service by about 40,000 positions nationally, roughly 10 per cent of its workforce, by the end of the 2028–29 fiscal year, decreasing total federal employment from a 2023-24 peak of nearly 368,000 to approximately 330,000.

At the same time, the federal government has announced a phased return to on-site work, requiring most public servants to be on-site at least four or five days per week as of July 2026. This shift could moderate some downward demand for downtown office space and support higher weekday commuter volumes, while also influencing patterns of local consumer spending in businesses that serve federal employees.

In parallel, the Government of Canada is optimizing its federal office footprint through a phased, long-term plan to consolidate space and dispose of surplus properties over the next decade, with the portfolio projected to decline by roughly 33 per cent by fiscal year 2033-34. This reduction is being advanced through a structured and monitored process that includes public reporting, cross-government coordination, stakeholder engagement, and due diligence prior to disposal. Surplus properties are being prioritized for outcomes

that support broader public objectives, including housing supply and other community-oriented uses, with the intent of aligning portfolio reduction with market conditions and urban needs. However, the federal return-to-office mandate may affect future accommodation requirements and could influence the pace or extent of federal real estate consolidation. In the National Capital Region, this approach is designed to manage the transition responsibly, maintaining functional space for federal operations while enabling redevelopment opportunities that contribute to downtown revitalization and long-term economic resilience.

### **Safety, Social Conditions, and Service Capacity**

Measures of homelessness and social service demand draw on citywide counts that include downtown. The 2024 Point-in-Time Count enumerated 2,952 people experiencing homelessness in Ottawa, up from 2,612 in 2021, reflecting increases in both unsheltered individuals and those accessing shelters and transitional housing. While these figures relate to the entire city, outreach and support services are concentrated downtown and adjacent wards, making them relevant to understanding core social service demand. Annual shelter system data similarly shows growing occupancy and demand for emergency and transitional supports, particularly among vulnerable populations, even as capacity has expanded. Renters across the city continue to face low vacancy rates and extended wait lists for deeply affordable housing, contributing to sustained demand on social supports and services concentrated in the downtown area. These pressures are further compounded by the opioid and mental health crises. Together, these contribute to elevated demand in the downtown core.

Safety-related indicators point to ongoing public concerns about crime and community wellbeing that intersect with economic and social pressures in the urban core. Citywide police data indicate that overall reported Criminal Code offences increased by approximately 5 per cent in 2024 compared with the prior year, with property related offences such as theft and fraud continuing to rise, even as some categories (including shootings) declined. This upward trend continued into 2025. The Crime Severity Index also increased modestly in 2024, while clearance rates for reported offences showed a slight decline, shaping public perceptions of safety and comfort in shared urban spaces.

Localized data for the downtown core indicates ongoing concentrations of reported property offences along key commercial corridors and in specific high-activity areas. In 2025, police reported more than 9,900 Criminal Code offences in the downtown core, a slight increase from 2024 (8,700 incidents). Property related incidents, such as theft

under \$5,000 continue to represent the highest volume of offences (6,231 cases), followed by break and enter (964), and mischief (785) which together account for a significant share of reported activity. Police calls for service in the downtown area also remain elevated, reflecting ongoing requests for police responses to disturbances, well-being checks, and drug-related incidents associated with the broader opioid and mental health crises. These patterns highlight the concentration of certain offences in the downtown core and reinforce the importance of coordinated safety, outreach, and prevention measures as part of broader revitalization efforts.

The City has made measurable progress in revitalizing downtown Ottawa through coordinated work with internal and external partners. Fiscal contributions remain strong, residential growth is accelerating, and adaptive land use redevelopment is gaining momentum. At the same time, elevated office vacancy, federal restructuring, housing affordability challenges, and concentrated demand for social services continue to shape the downtown's trajectory. Current data demonstrates that actions to date have positively influenced economic activity, housing growth, and social and safety conditions. However, revitalization has not yet achieved the long-term transformational impact required to fully reposition the downtown core and strengthen its city-wide impact. Given the structural change facing downtown, achieving sustained impact will depend on addressing identified gaps through a cohesive, collaborative, and coordinated approach that repositions downtown Ottawa for long-term resilience and inclusive growth.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Purpose of Downtown Revitalization Framework**

The Downtown Revitalization Framework supports the 2023–2026 Term of Council Priority, “A city with a diversified and prosperous economy,” while advancing Ottawa’s economic growth, diversification, prosperity, and resilience for this term of Council and beyond. Economic challenges and events such as the COVID-19 pandemic have significantly impacted Ottawa’s downtown, particularly key sectors including tourism, creative industries, small businesses, public administration, and housing. In response, the framework adopts a holistic approach to coordinate City efforts to create a more resilient and vibrant downtown core that attracts residents, workers, and visitors.

The Downtown Revitalization Framework has been developed to align, prioritize, and accelerate the implementation of downtown-related actions through a collaborative approach. It ensures that actions identified in existing Council-approved plans are

coordinated and delivered as intended to achieve visible and demonstrable outcomes. The Framework also provides an opportunity to identify and address gaps that are not fully resolved through existing plans and to focus efforts where they can generate the greatest impact. Through this coordinated approach, the Framework supports transformational change in the downtown core and strengthens the City's ability to deliver meaningful revitalization over the short, medium, and long term.

As a key component of Ottawa's downtown core, the ByWard Market is supported by its own Council-approved Revitalization Framework and Action Plan. This targeted, place-based strategy complements and aligns with the broader Downtown Revitalization Framework, while advancing actions specific to the Market through its dedicated implementation approach. While the two frameworks are mutually reinforcing, actions are coordinated to be complementary rather than duplicative, ensuring clarity of focus and effective delivery across both initiatives.

### **Framework Development Process**

The Downtown Revitalization Framework was developed through an interdepartmental steering committee and informed by a review of Council-approved strategies and external plans affecting the downtown core. These plans were shaped through prior engagement with key interest holders, ensuring that the Framework builds on established priorities and feedback.

Through this review, the City assessed progress to date, identified actions that can be accelerated, and highlighted gaps requiring additional initiatives. While multiple departments are advancing downtown-related work, implementation has occurred across different timelines and without a single organizing structure. The Framework addresses this by clarifying priorities, sequencing high-impact actions, and strengthening coordination.

The Framework supports delivery of the Economic Development Strategy and integrates related housing, safety, and public realm objectives within a single revitalization lens. Data and key indicators further informed the identification of four focus areas that guide prioritization, performance measurement, and decision-making. By establishing shared priorities and sequencing actions, the Framework also supports more strategic allocation of City resources, ensuring that capital, operating, and partnership investments are directed toward initiatives with the greatest potential impact.

## **Downtown Revitalization Framework**

The Downtown Revitalization Framework and Action Plan were developed through an iterative process to align existing initiatives, identify gaps, and establish shared priorities. At its core is a unifying objective: attracting people downtown for a diverse mix of uses in a safe, economically sustainable, and resilient environment.

The Framework is organized around four interrelated areas of focus:

1. **Rebalance Uses** – Modernize the mix of residential, commercial, institutional, tourist attractions, and other amenities to create a vibrant, energized downtown from day to night.
2. **Diversify and Strengthen Ottawa’s Downtown Economy** – A more diverse and resilient downtown economy, powered by job and sector growth in defense, innovation and life and health sciences.
3. **Improve Community Safety and Well-Being** – A safer, more welcoming downtown supported by strengthened policing, improved streetscapes, coordinated street outreach and social service responses.
4. **Transform Places and Spaces** – Elevate the downtown experience through enhancements to public spaces, gateways, and key destinations to create a more attractive environment.

These focus areas are mutually reinforcing and must advance in concert to achieve sustained revitalization and renewal. Rebalancing uses creates the conditions for continuous activity, which supports economic resilience and enhanced safety. Investments in safety, outreach, and the public realm strengthen perceptions of inclusivity and belonging. Improvements across these areas have compounding effects on economic activity, social engagement, and visitor experience.

The Framework does not replace existing guiding documents. Rather, it provides an organizing structure that integrates them, clarifies how they collectively contribute to revitalization objectives, and supports coordinated implementation and informed investment decisions across the City and its partners.

## **Downtown Revitalization Toolkit**

A Colliers Project Leaders study assessed downtown Ottawa’s redevelopment potential, key demand drivers, and barriers limiting new private sector investment. The analysis

identified a suite of financial and process-based tools that could help address feasibility challenges and accelerate redevelopment, supporting a more resilient and mixed-use downtown environment. The summarized findings presented in Document 3 indicate that targeted and predictable incentives paired with streamlined regulatory processes, improvements to the public realm, and strengthened investor confidence can play a central role in increasing redevelopment activity and repositioning downtown Ottawa as a vibrant, high-activity urban centre. The study also identified property taxes as an effective mechanism to support long-term project viability; however, they do not address the significant upfront capital burden associated with downtown development. Two primary enablers of redevelopment were identified: targeted financial incentives and streamlined approvals, along with the reduction of regulatory and process barriers that delay projects or increase development costs. A Downtown Renewal Incentive Program built on these tools would help address feasibility gaps by lowering upfront costs, reducing equity requirements, and accelerating project delivery. Increased private sector investment would reduce vacancy, attract new residents and employers, strengthen local market conditions, broaden the municipal tax base, and generate new revenues that support public spaces, services, and programs enhancing the downtown experience.

Following engagement with developers, and consistent with recommendations from a consultant-led analysis of redevelopment potential and property conditions, the waiving of development charges emerged as the most impactful near-term incentive to stimulate and accelerate infill and high-density development.

While development charges are designed to ensure that growth contributes to the cost of infrastructure such as roads, transit, water systems, and community facilities, targeted waivers can play a strategic role in circumstances where market conditions prevent development from proceeding. In many downtown environments, redevelopment projects face higher costs and risks, including land assembly, demolition, structured parking, and complex construction requirements, while also contending with weaker market returns. In these cases, development charges represent a significant upfront cost that can determine whether a project proceeds or is deferred.

Offering a time-limited and geographically targeted development charge incentive can help bridge this structural feasibility gap, enabling projects that align with municipal objectives such as residential intensification, mixed-use development, and office-to-alternative conversions.

By unlocking development that would otherwise not proceed, the incentive can generate significant long-term benefits, including increased property tax assessment, new housing supply, construction employment, and strengthened economic activity that supports local businesses, transit ridership, and cultural destinations. Over time, redevelopment of underutilized sites can produce sustained municipal revenues and economic activity that significantly exceed the value of the foregone development charges, while making more efficient use of existing downtown infrastructure.

A summary of Colliers Project Leaders' *Ottawa Downtown Renewal Incentives Plan* report, including its analysis of redevelopment potential and property conditions, is provided in Document 3. Embedded within the Framework, the Downtown Revitalization Toolkit provides a suite of practical tools designed to support a vibrant downtown economy. Aligned with the Framework's areas of focus, the toolkit includes initiatives and supports to incentivize redevelopment and conversion projects, strengthen the small business sector, and enhance the business environment through improved community safety.

The Toolkit comprises the following actions and supports. Actions requiring evaluation or assessment will be reported back to the relevant Standing Committee with recommendations by Q4 2027.

#### **1. Incentives to stimulate development and investment:**

- Evaluate additional discretionary development charge incentives, beyond those statutorily in place, within select Hubs, Mainstreet Corridors, and Special Districts in the Downtown Core Transect of the Official Plan where there is significant redevelopment potential, as part of the Development Charge Comprehensive Review planned for 2027, including the identification of potential incentive structures, analysis of associated financial impacts, and options to mitigate or offset any resulting revenue loss
- Assessing the value of a Community Improvement Plan to incentivize downtown renewal
- Redevelopment and conversion incentive programs
- Expedited approval process for office-to-residential and other conversion projects

- Evaluate the alignment of the Official Plan and Secondary Plans to the objectives of the Downtown Revitalization Framework and Action Plan

## **2. Small business sector supports:**

- Storefront activation program to animate vacant retail spaces
- Small Business Navigator to streamline access to supports and services
- Business Improvement Area (BIA) capacity building support
- Commercial Heritage Façade Improvement Program
- Evaluate waiving city-wide Right-of-Way patio fees for April 2027

## **3. Enhanced Community Safety and Well-being:**

- Coordinated outreach and support services (ex: ANCHOR, UHOM, OPS CORE)

Details of toolkit actions and supports are further outlined in Document 1.

## **Framework Areas of Focus**

### **1. Rebalance Uses**

Downtown Ottawa is undergoing significant economic and demographic change, that is reshaping how the core functions and who it serves. Shifts in work patterns, rising office vacancy, and evolving expectations around housing, amenities and services have created a disconnect between existing land uses and the needs of residents, workers, and visitors. This imbalance, combined with a longstanding overreliance on the federal public service as the primary driver of daytime activity, limits consistent day-to-night vibrancy and constrains economic resilience. Focusing on rebalancing the mix of uses is therefore central to revitalization: it supports a more diverse and stable economic base, reduces dependency on a single employment sector, strengthens vibrancy, and encourages continuous activity throughout the day and evening. This approach prioritizes higher-density development in the core and along major corridors and transit hubs, while supporting gentle intensification across the broader downtown. This includes introducing more housing options, converting underutilized office space to alternative uses, and redeveloping underused municipal and federal lands to better support-mixed use development. These efforts will bring more people living, working, and spending time downtown, while expanding amenities that support daily life. By

modernizing the amenity mix and repositioning underused assets to respond to changing conditions, this focus area advances a more adaptable, mixed-use downtown that is better aligned with evolving demand and positioned for long-term vitality and sustained economic recovery.

The *Rebalance Uses* area of focus is grounded in the following objectives:

**a) Identify Coordinated Partnership Opportunities to Advance Strategic Redevelopment:**

Create a structured collaboration between federal and municipal partners to identify and advance redevelopment opportunities for underutilized public properties, with a focus on mixed-use outcomes that support housing, economic activity, and broader downtown objectives.

To deliver on this objective, the following actions will reposition assets and expand housing supply to support mixed-use redevelopment:

- Establish a Federal-City partnership table to coordinate redevelopment of federal assets
- Advance 1010 Somerset redevelopment implementation
- Propose a Bayview Yards redevelopment concept for consideration early in the next Term of Council
- Prioritize underutilized municipal lands for mixed-use and residential development

**b) Implement Targeted Incentives to Support Adaptive Reuse and Revitalization:**

Advance a cohesive incentive framework to encourage the conversion and redevelopment of underutilized properties, including tools to facilitate investment, accelerate approvals, and support housing and mixed-use revitalization.

To deliver on this objective, the following actions will support the development of targeted downtown incentive programs to ensure that downtown contains a balanced mix of residential, commercial, and experiential amenities that will strengthen economic resilience and support the city:

- Evaluate redevelopment incentive programs as a component of the *Downtown Revitalization Toolkit*

- Introduce Additional Residential Unit (ARU) and Missing Middle accelerator programs to facilitate gentle density and diverse typologies
- Implement an office-to-alternative conversion incentive program
- Continue to advance expedited conversion and approval processes to accelerate adaptive reuse

## 2. Diversify and Strengthen Ottawa's Downtown Economy

As the nation's capital, Ottawa's largest employers are in the public sector with government institutions anchoring a substantial share of downtown employment and real estate assets. While this concentration has historically provided economic stability, shifts in work patterns, federal portfolio consolidation and broader economic uncertainty have reduced daily activity and increased reliance on a narrower set of uses and sectors. Economic activity in the core therefore remains closely tied to decisions within a single employment base. A high concentration of employment in one sector limits long-term economic resilience. Declining office demand impacts city-wide services including reduced transit ridership, lower local spending that supports small businesses and diminished vibrancy supporting tourism and residential growth. In an increasingly competitive environment for talent, capital, and innovation, downtown Ottawa must evolve to attract a broader range of sectors, entrepreneurs, and workers. Strengthening supports for small businesses downtown will enhance local offerings, elevate destination appeal, attract more visitors, and strengthen the local economy. Diversifying the economy and rebalancing uses are therefore critical not only to downtown revitalization, but to the city's broader long-term resiliency and sustainable growth.

The *Diversify and Strengthen Ottawa's Downtown Economy* area of focus is grounded in the following objectives:

### a) **Strengthen and modernize small business support:**

Improve access to supports, resources, and tools that enable local entrepreneurs and businesses to start, grow, and sustain operations, recognizing that the character and vibrancy small businesses bring to the street level support economic diversification, and increase day-to-night activity in the downtown core.

To deliver on this objective, the following actions will enhance supports for small businesses and will help existing enterprises grow:

- Package and launch small business sector supports as a component of the *Downtown Revitalization Toolkit*

**b) Accelerate the diversification of industry sectors:**

Advance strategic partnerships and initiatives to attract a broader range of industries to establish in the downtown core, fostering high-value employment and expanding Ottawa's economic base, including through the development of innovation hubs in sectors such as defense and security.

To deliver on this objective, the City will work with economic development partners to expand sector diversity and attract industries aligned with Ottawa's talent base and economic strengths. Analysis of Ottawa's talent-based competencies and industry composition has identified high-potential sectors for growth, including aerospace and defense technologies, clean and green tech technologies and health and life sciences and med-tech, which will inform future attraction efforts. The following action will broaden Ottawa's economic base and reduce reliance on a single sector.

- Launch a downtown-focused investment attraction program to proactively target emerging industries

**3. Improve Community Safety & Wellbeing**

Community safety and well-being are foundational to a successful and revitalized downtown. In recent years, downtown Ottawa has experienced increased social complexity, visible disorder, and public safety concerns that have affected both lived experience and perceptions of safety in public spaces. These challenges can deter residents, workers and visitors, limit economic activity, and undermine confidence in the downtown as a place to gather and invest. Prioritizing safety advances revitalization by creating environments that are welcoming, inclusive, and supportive, while addressing the root causes of vulnerability through coordinated, place-based approaches. By integrating thoughtful urban design, responsive service delivery, and effective enforcement within a broader framework of social and health supports, this focus area strengthens both real and perceived safety, enhances comfort and accessibility, and reinforces downtown as a resilient, vibrant district where people feel secure, respected, and able to fully participate in daily life.

The *Improve Community Safety and Well-being* area of focus is grounded in the following objectives:

**a) Strengthen Coordinated Safety and Outreach Partnerships:**

Expand and align integrated safety, outreach, and alternative response models across downtown neighbourhoods to improve crisis response, support vulnerable populations, and reinforce coordinated, place-based approaches that address both immediate risks and root causes.

To deliver on this objective, the following actions will expand outreach capacity and ensure services respond effectively to evolving community needs:

- Coordinate outreach services as a component of the *Downtown Revitalization Toolkit*
- Implement Unsheltered Homelessness Outreach Model
- Expand ANCHOR to broaden service coverage for individuals experiencing mental health and substance use challenges across downtown
- Advance the Positive Alternatives to Drug Use Pilot to support prevention and harm reduction
- Implement the Readiness, Resiliency and Responsiveness framework to improve coordinated service delivery
- Enhance downtown-specific safety measures on public transit
- Expand OPS CORE services into new areas of downtown

**b) Advance Safety-by-Design Enhancements to Support Well-Being:**

Invest in targeted improvements and essential service infrastructure, including lighting, streetscape upgrades, and access to basic amenities, alongside proactive programming, and prevention initiatives to enhance comfort, visibility, and inclusive use of downtown public spaces.

To deliver on this objective, the following actions will create a safer, more welcoming, and resilient downtown environment:

- Implement the Chinatown streetlighting project
- Deliver Laurier Street public realm enhancements, including lighting, trees, pavers, and planters

#### 4. Places & Spaces that Transform

The quality and character of public spaces play a critical role in shaping how people experience and use downtown. Aging infrastructure, underwhelming streetscapes, and disconnected destinations have limited downtown Ottawa's ability to compete as a vibrant and attractive place. Transforming places and spaces addresses these challenges by reimagining streets, public spaces, and key destinations as active, inviting environments that support social life, economic activity, and cultural expression. Successful pilot initiatives, such as the Street Seats Program, have demonstrated how temporarily repurposing sections of local streets into pedestrian-first spaces can enhance main streets as safe, welcoming, and vibrant destinations. The transformation of Metcalfe Plaza, delivered through a strong partnership model that activated a vacant lot into a bold, animated public space, further illustrates how underutilized sites can be reimagined to generate energy and draw people downtown.

By investing in distinctive, well-designed places, the downtown core can attract more people, stimulate economic activity, and contribute to safer, more vibrant public spaces.

The *Places and Spaces that Transform* area of focus is grounded in the following objectives:

##### **a) Expand and implement activation initiatives:**

Advance and scale programming, partnerships, and place-based activities that increase foot traffic, support local businesses, and reinforce downtown as a vibrant, year-round destination.

To deliver on this objective, the following actions will support and strengthen destination appeal of the downtown core:

- Expand the Street Seats Program to Chinatown to enhance vibrancy and pedestrian experience
- Launch the ACE District including the Ottawa Art Gallery led Arts Corridor initiative OAG (Art to establish a connected arts and culture corridor)
- Advance the 200+: Portraits, Places, and People gallery experience

##### **b) Advance targeted public realm enhancements:**

Deliver targeted improvements to streetscapes and public spaces to enhance safety, accessibility, and overall user experience in the downtown core.

To deliver on this objective, the following actions will transform key spaces, corridors, and support broader downtown renewal initiatives:

- Implement the Canadiana Block project as an installation to activate and animate the area
- Advance the redesign concept for Sparks Street and seek partner government funding for implementation

### **Action Plan: Priorities, Sequencing, and Capacity**

The Action Plan translates the Downtown Revitalization Framework into a coordinated and outcome-focused program of work. It establishes a new approach to delivering revitalization by integrating initiatives across City services, aligning efforts with partners, and sequencing actions over time based on impact, readiness, and capacity. This approach explicitly recognizes the importance of early, enabling actions as foundational steps that both address immediate needs and set the stage for longer-term transformation. By sequencing actions in this way, the plan ensures that short-term efforts deliver visible improvements while laying the groundwork for sustained, long-term outcomes.

The action plan prioritizes immediate short-term actions to improve the downtown experience, including exploratory and pilot initiatives such as temporary storefront activations, early coordination on federal property redevelopment, and preliminary steps toward integrated community services. These early investments across each focus area help establish momentum, build partner relationships, and create the enabling conditions needed to implement more complex medium- and long-term actions that support revitalization objectives. By treating these early actions as foundational first steps, the plan links visible near-term improvements to strategic, long-term outcomes across a rebalancing of uses, economic diversification, community well-being, and cultural activation.

This phased approach is intentionally iterative and supports both short-term confidence and long-term transformation. Actions and evaluations are sequenced across the short-term, to support medium- and long-term priorities, intentionally advancing multiple focus areas concurrently.

Document 1 – *Downtown Revitalization Framework and Action Plan* outlines the full suite of actions, required to achieve the vision of a vibrant, resilient downtown that attracts investment, supports a diverse residential population, and invites people to live, work, and explore the area. Actions are organized by the Framework’s focus areas and prioritized across short-, medium-, and long-term timeframes.

As part of a deliberate approach to guiding long-term revitalization and advancing a holistic vision for Ottawa’s downtown core, supporting foundational analyses and engagement activities will be undertaken to inform future actions and decision-making. These assessments will provide a detailed understanding of the downtown’s current conditions, including land use patterns, amenity distribution, property availability, and potential governance approaches. The insights generated through these analyses will directly guide the development, sequencing, and prioritization of medium- and long-term actions, ensuring that future initiatives are targeted, evidence-based, and responsive to the needs and opportunities identified across the downtown core. By establishing a robust, data-driven foundation, the City can advance revitalization efforts with clarity and confidence, aligning investments, policy, and program decisions with the broader vision for a vibrant, resilient, and inclusive downtown.

### **Supporting Analyses and Engagement Actions:**

- **Assessment of existing mix and optimal balance of uses**

This assessment is being undertaken to develop a clear understanding of downtown Ottawa’s optimal future-state to enable a vibrant, energized downtown from day to night. The assessment examines the current mix of uses in Ottawa’s downtown core to understand how well they align to the optimal blend. It identifies gaps, over-concentrations, and emerging opportunities by analyzing land use patterns, market trends, and evolving demand. As the primary outcome, the work will establish what an optimal balance looks like for the downtown core. The proposed mix supports daily life for residents, attracts workers and visitors, and strengthens economic resilience, providing a foundation to guide future planning, policy, and investment decisions.

- **Amenities heat map and residential alignment analysis**

Supported by Bloomberg Associates, the City will work to understand the distribution of amenities within smaller areas of the downtown core. The assessment involves the development of a neighbourhood-specific spatial heat map illustrating the location and

availability of amenities, including office, retail, food and beverage, cultural, public services, tourism, and vacancy in relation to the residential population. This includes consideration of comfort amenities such as washrooms, to inform opportunities to enhance accessibility and the overall user experience in public spaces. The analysis will identify areas where amenity provision is limited or uneven relative to population density. The findings will support evidence-based prioritization of actions and investments to improve access to amenities, attract visitors, and support residential and retail growth in neighbourhoods within the downtown core.

- **Vacant property visioning in the central business district**

In response to changing market conditions and office demand, this assessment examines vacant and underutilized properties within the central business district to explore potential future uses. It considers redevelopment and adaptive reuse opportunities that could contribute to a more balanced mix of uses and increased activity in the downtown core. The assessment will identify strategic opportunities and constraints to inform planning, partnerships, and investment approaches aimed at addressing long-term vacancy.

- **Feasibility assessment of a municipal service corporation for downtown**

This assessment explores the feasibility of establishing a municipal service corporation to support coordination, delivery, and management of services and initiatives in the downtown core. It will examine potential roles, governance models, funding mechanisms, and legal considerations, as well as alignment with existing City responsibilities and interest holder mandates. The assessment will evaluate whether such a municipal service corporation model could enhance efficiency, accountability, and outcomes related to downtown revitalization and ongoing operations.

- **Meaningful Indigenous engagement and partnership development**

Recognizing that Ottawa is located on the traditional and unceded territory of the Anishinabe Algonquin Nation, this action will establish a structured approach to meaningful Indigenous engagement as a foundational component of downtown renewal. Through early and ongoing dialogue with Anishinabe Algonquin communities and urban Indigenous organizations, the City will seek to understand Indigenous priorities, perspectives, and aspirations related to the future of the downtown core, including cultural visibility and placemaking, economic participation, public realm design, storytelling, Indigenous peoples' safety and wellbeing, and programming. This engagement will explore how downtown revitalization initiatives, including land use

planning, vacant property redevelopment, governance models, and public space investments, can advance reconciliation, uphold Indigenous rights, reflect Indigenous identity, and create inclusive economic opportunities. The outcome will be a clear set of engagement principles, aligned with the City's Indigenous engagement principles, partnership pathways, and actionable recommendations to inform policy, planning, and investment decisions across the Framework. These will help ensure that revitalization efforts are inclusive, respectful, and aligned with the City's commitments to reconciliation with all Indigenous peoples, while supporting a city that reflects Indigenous belonging, representation, and rights through advancing Indigenous-led priorities.

- **Local community engagement**

Recognizing that a vibrant downtown must reflect the needs of those who live and work there, this action will establish a structured approach to engagement with local residents, business owners, and community organizations. Through targeted dialogue, the City will identify community priorities related to housing availability and affordability, safety and well-being, access to amenities and services, and the quality of the public realm. This engagement will help clarify the amenities and conditions needed to support a thriving downtown, such as grocery stores, childcare, parks, and welcoming public spaces, and will inform policy, planning, and investment decisions across the Framework to support a safe, complete, and vibrant community.

### **The next phase: Looking forward to 2027**

Following implementation of short-term actions and undertaking the foundational analyses and engagement with partners and community members, staff will report back to Council in 2027 with a comprehensive update on the Downtown Ottawa Revitalization Framework. This report will present the results of detailed economic and land use analysis and stakeholder engagement undertaken across the downtown core, identifying key trends, opportunities, and additional priority gaps. Building on these findings, it will set out a coordinated long-term action plan with clear objectives, sequencing, and performance measures, aligned with Council's strategic priorities. The report will also outline a phased implementation and resourcing strategy, including governance, partnership roles, funding requirements, and potential financing tools, to ensure actions are achievable, accountable, and positioned to deliver measurable impact over the medium to long term.

## Performance Measurement Framework and Evidence of Change

A structured performance measurement framework is in development to monitor downtown conditions and assess the effectiveness of revitalization actions over time. The framework enables consistent, transparent, and comparable reporting, supports evidence-based decision-making, and provides Council with a clear picture of whether investments are translating into meaningful improvements.

### How the Framework Works

The framework links vision → areas of focus → objectives → actions → measurable indicators → outcomes. Each area of focus has defined objectives, advanced through coordinated actions, and measured using both quantitative and qualitative indicators.

### Data Sources

The framework leverages existing, reliable datasets from multiple City departments, boards, partners, and other sources including:

- **Ottawa Tourism** – Annual visitation and spending downtown, hotel occupancy
- **Ottawa Police Service** – calls for service, incident types, patrol activity
- **City Departments** – Public Works (cleanliness and maintenance), Community and Social Services (service coordination), Ottawa Public Health (harm reduction), OC Transpo (ridership and accessibility trends), Planning Development and Building Services (residential construction)
- **Other sources** - including Statistics Canada, Environics, Signal49 Research (formerly Conference Board of Canada), Colliers (office vacancy), Cushman & Wakefield (retail vacancy)

### Iterative and Evidence-Based Decision Making

The framework is intentionally iterative and evidence-based, recognizing that targets will continue to shift as market conditions evolve. In the near term, the framework will track and report on key measures related to the four areas of focus. Concurrently, the City will undertake strategic analyses to establish clear future-state targets and enable the longer-term transformation of downtown streets, public spaces, and assets.

The framework is designed not only to report progress but also to inform targeted interventions. For example:

- **Placemaking and programming** adjustments may be guided by patterns in activity levels, participation, and spatial distribution across the district
- **Safety-related improvements** may be informed by changes in incident data, service requests, and perception-based measures of safety and comfort

This approach ensures that measurement is actionable and directly tied to operational and capital decisions.

### **Accountability and Reporting**

Beginning in year two (2027), Council will receive annual reports summarizing key performance results, trend analysis, and recommended refinements to ensure the Framework remains evidence-based, fiscally prudent, and responsive to evolving market conditions. Clear roles for data stewardship and reporting will be assigned across City departments and partners to ensure reliability, consistency, and accountability.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The report includes proposed incentives to stimulate development and investment, such as additional discretionary development charge incentives, the Downtown Community Improvement Plan (CIP), the waiving of city-wide right-of-way patio fees for April 2027, as well as targeted incentives to support adaptive reuse and revitalization. There are no direct financial implications at this time. The incentives will be evaluated and reported back to Council for consideration in 2027.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal impediments to approving the recommendations in this report.

### **COMMENTS BY THE WARD COUNCILLOR(S)**

**Councillor Ariel Troster:** “I am excited to see this plan finally coming forward to Council.

Downtown revitalization has been a topic of discussion since I became a Councillor in 2022, and my residents have been waiting to see the significant investment that would bring about a real change to atmosphere, services, and development in the core. The inclusion of social service delivery hubs and a streamlining of outreach services in the core is of significant importance for residents in Somerset Ward.

While there is still a lot of work to do, I am happy to support the proposed downtown revitalization framework.”

**Councillor Stéphanie Plante:**

“The Downtown Revitalization Framework and Action Plan represents a thoughtful and necessary step toward a more coordinated, whole-of-city approach to addressing the economic, social, and structural challenges facing Ottawa’s downtown core. The report appropriately recognizes that downtown is not only the geographic centre of the city, but also its economic, cultural, and symbolic heart, generating a significant share of municipal assessment, employment, and tourism activity.

The alignment between this framework and the recently approved ByWard Market Revitalization Framework is particularly important. Both documents acknowledge that revitalization cannot be achieved through isolated interventions and must instead address interconnected issues such as land use, economic development, public realm quality, housing, and community well-being. This integrated approach reflects the realities experienced by residents and businesses in the downtown core and is essential to achieving long-term success.

At the same time, while the framework is strong in its articulation of priorities and alignment with existing strategies, it would benefit from greater clarity regarding implementation timelines, interim decision points, and measurable near-term outcomes. The Action Plan includes a number of short-, medium-, and long-term initiatives, as well as additional analysis and reporting back to Council in 2027. While these elements are important, there remains a risk that the framework continues a cycle of planning without delivering visible improvements on the ground in the near term. Residents and businesses downtown are seeking tangible change, particularly in areas related to safety, cleanliness, accessibility, and day-to-day livability.

The report also clearly identifies the concentration of social services and outreach needs within the downtown core, and the impact this has on both lived experience and public perception. While the expansion of coordinated outreach and alternative response programs such as ANCHOR is a positive and necessary step, the framework does not fully address the broader issue of distribution.

A more balanced, citywide approach to the distribution of low-barrier social services should be considered as part of ongoing implementation. Downtown neighbourhoods,

including those in Ward 12, are currently absorbing a disproportionate share of these services and their associated impacts. It is important to recognize that many residents in these areas are themselves low-income and may have limited capacity to engage in consultation or advocacy processes. Ensuring a more equitable distribution of services across the city would better support both the individuals accessing services and the communities in which they are located, while contributing to improved outcomes in safety, livability, and public confidence.

In addition to rebalancing services, the framework should place greater emphasis on increasing the number of people living downtown, particularly in the near term. While the report identifies the importance of rebalancing uses and increasing residential population, many of the tools proposed are medium- to long-term in nature. Consideration should be given to more immediate and targeted strategies to encourage residency in the core.

In this regard, other cities have implemented policies that directly incentivize municipal employees, first responders, and key workers to live in the communities they serve. For example, Baltimore's Vacants to Value program includes financial incentives and forgivable loans tied to residency for city employees, with the goal of stabilizing neighbourhoods and increasing occupancy. Similarly, cities such as Des Moines have explored housing grants and rental supports for municipal workers who choose to live within city limits, recognizing the value of aligning workforce presence with community needs. Detroit gives job applicants who live in the city 15 additional points for determining their eligibility for a position. These programs are designed not only to support housing access, but also to strengthen neighbourhood vitality, improve perceptions of safety, and increase local economic activity.

Exploring similar approaches in Ottawa would align with the objectives of this framework. Encouraging more City staff and first responders to live downtown would increase day-to-day presence, support local businesses, and contribute to a stronger sense of community. It would also help address a longstanding disconnect between decision-making and lived experience, ensuring that more of those shaping policy are directly connected to the outcomes of those decisions.

Further, if the City is serious about creating a truly mixed, vibrant, and inclusive downtown, it must also address the lack of family-sized housing in the core. While much of the current development pipeline is focused on smaller units, there is a clear and

growing demand for larger units suitable for families. People want to live downtown — including families with children — but cannot reasonably be expected to do so in one-bedroom or studio units.

Incentivizing the development of three-bedroom and larger condominium units should therefore be a priority. This may include targeted tools such as development charge reductions, fee waivers, or other financial incentives that improve the feasibility of building larger units. I have begun exploring options such as reducing development-related costs for these unit types – in addition to changes I introduced to the new zoning bylaw to require three-bedroom units, in smaller multi-unit building than originally proposed - and look forward to staff bringing forward recommendations in this area. Supporting family-sized housing is essential not only to increasing population, but to creating a complete community with long-term residents, schools, services, and stability.

Finally, as implementation of the Downtown Revitalization Framework moves forward, consideration should be given to improving transparency and communication with residents and businesses. Given the scale and complexity of the initiatives outlined, a centralized, publicly accessible platform that tracks timelines, construction impacts, and key decisions would improve accessibility of information and build confidence in the City's efforts. This would also support better coordination across departments and enable more effective communication with local communities.

In summary, the Downtown Revitalization Framework establishes a strong foundation and reflects a clear understanding of the challenges facing Ottawa's core. To maximize its impact, greater emphasis should be placed on near-term implementation, equitable distribution of services, increasing downtown residency through targeted incentives, and supporting the development of family-sized housing. These additions would help ensure that the framework delivers not only alignment, but meaningful and visible change for the residents, businesses, and communities that rely on a vibrant and well-functioning downtown."

## **References**

Baltimore Vacants to Value Program: <https://dhcd.baltimorecity.gov/vacants-value>

Des Moines Residency Incentives: <https://www.axios.com/local/des-moines/2021/05/24/des-moines-city-council-to-consider-residency-incentives-for-city-employees>

Domicile (Residency) Credit Definition and Requirements for City of Detroit Employment Applicants

<https://detroitmi.gov/sites/detroitmi.localhost/files/2020-03/Residency%20Credit%20Form.pdf>

Edmonton Downtown Incentives:

[https://www.edmonton.ca/programs\\_services/housing/downtown-housing-incentives](https://www.edmonton.ca/programs_services/housing/downtown-housing-incentives)

### **ADVISORY COMMITTEE(S) COMMENTS**

Specific advisory committees were not consulted as a part of the development of this report. However, as projects are implemented, specific committees will be engaged as needed.

### **CONSULTATION**

The Downtown Revitalization Framework was informed by consultations undertaken through the development of several Council-approved strategies and plans that impact Ottawa's downtown core. These include the Economic Development Strategy, Housing Acceleration Plan, Community Safety and Well-Being Plan, and public realm initiatives such as the Sparks Street Public Realm Plan. These consultation processes included engagement with residents, businesses, community partners, institutions, and public-sector partners, ensuring that a broad range of perspectives helped shape the understanding of current conditions and future opportunities in Ottawa's downtown core.

Results of these consultations provided insight into the key challenges and opportunities facing the downtown core, including issues related to economic diversification, housing supply, outreach services, safety and perceptions of safety, and the quality and activation of public spaces. Further, consultations that aligned to Ottawa's downtown core supported the identification of priorities related to rebalancing uses, economic development, safety, and well-being, and placemaking, while providing practical guidance on and areas requiring coordinated action. This input has helped inform the development and prioritization of actions within the Downtown Revitalization Framework.

### **ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS**

All actions arising from the Downtown Revitalization Framework and Action Plan will comply with applicable accessibility legislation and City policies. This includes the *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation (IASR) 191/11* of the *Accessibility for*

*Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA)*, as well as the City of Ottawa's Accessibility Policy, the Accessibility Design Standards (ADS), and other relevant accessibility-related procedures, guidelines, and best practices. In accordance with its Accessibility Policy, the City of Ottawa is committed to providing people with disabilities with equitable access to City services, programs, and goods in a manner that respects their dignity and independence.

As actions within the Framework are implemented, staff will continue to work with the City's Accessibility Office to apply an accessibility lens to redevelopment, infrastructure, and public realm initiatives. The Accessibility Office will provide expertise and guidance through participation in project-specific technical advisory committees where appropriate. Staff will also continue to engage with the Accessibility Advisory Committee and relevant community organizations, groups, and individuals, as recommended by the Accessibility Office, to seek advice and feedback throughout implementation. This includes initiatives related to public realm improvements, safety and social service programs, and actions intended to diversify and strengthen the downtown economy.

Since the Framework builds on existing Council-approved strategies and plans, many of which were developed with accessibility considerations and consultation with people with disabilities, the City will continue to ensure that accessibility remains a key consideration during implementation. Ongoing engagement with people with disabilities will help identify and address barriers from a cross-disability perspective and support the creation of inclusive, people-centred, and accessible public spaces throughout downtown Ottawa.

## **ASSET MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are no asset management implications for this report.

## **CLIMATE IMPLICATIONS**

Implementing the Downtown Revitalization Framework and Action Plan supports the City's climate change mitigation and adaptation objectives by advancing compact growth, adaptive reuse, climate ready infrastructure investment, and public realm improvements, consistent with the City's Climate Change Master Plan (CCMP) and Climate Ready Ottawa.

Actions under the Rebalance Uses focus area—including residential intensification, mixed use redevelopment, and office to residential conversion—support the CCMP's mitigation objectives by making efficient use of existing infrastructure, reducing pressure

for outward growth, and enabling more walkable, transit-oriented development patterns. Adaptive reuse of existing buildings also supports emissions reduction objectives by avoiding the embodied carbon associated with demolition and new greenfield development.

Actions under the Transform Places and Spaces focus area may support Climate Ready Ottawa by expanding opportunities to incorporate shade, green infrastructure, and cooling elements within streetscapes and other public spaces. Adapting the public realm for changing climate conditions through tree canopy expansion, shade structures, water features, and green infrastructure can help mitigate urban heat island effects, better manage rainfall, and improve comfort during periods of extreme heat. These improvements can also support community safety and well-being by creating more comfortable and accessible spaces for residents and visitors during hot summer months.

Redevelopment, conversion, and infrastructure renewal initiatives advanced through the Framework present opportunities to incorporate climate resilient design, improved energy performance, and nature-based solutions that strengthen resilience to climate related hazards such as extreme heat and severe weather events, consistent with Council approved climate and natural systems strategies.

Through implementation of the Framework, staff will continue to consider alignment with the CCMP, Climate Ready Ottawa, and related natural systems objectives when advancing downtown revitalization initiatives, supporting a resilient, sustainable, and climate ready downtown.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are risk implications associated with the implementation of the Downtown Revitalization Framework and Action Plan. The framework responds to evolving economic, social, and market conditions that influence redevelopment activity, investment decisions, and the pace of downtown revitalization. Key risks include the potential for changing market conditions, limited private-sector uptake of redevelopment incentives, and the complexity of coordinating actions across multiple municipal departments and external partners. External factors such as broader economic trends, construction costs, and shifts in workplace patterns may also affect the timing and scale of redevelopment activity.

To mitigate these risks, the Framework includes a phased implementation approach supported by performance monitoring and ongoing analysis of key indicators.

Foundational studies and engagement activities will further inform future actions and allow the City to adapt initiatives as conditions evolve. Implementation will also involve coordination across departments and with external partners to ensure that actions align with Council priorities and respond to emerging opportunities and challenges. These risks have been identified and are being managed by the appropriate staff through ongoing monitoring, performance measurement, and periodic reporting to Council.

## **RURAL IMPLICATIONS**

The recommendations in this report will positively impact rural areas city-wide by strengthening Ottawa's overall economic resilience and creating opportunities that extend beyond the urban core. Revitalizing downtown will stimulate economic activity by increasing visitor demand, expanding service needs, and attracting new investment into the city. A strong, vibrant downtown reinforces investor confidence, supports small businesses, and maximizes the value of major public infrastructure projects that benefit residents across all wards, including rural communities.

A well-functioning downtown also supports a diversified regional economy that helps sustain rural employment and business growth. Increased tourism will enhance demand for rural destinations, experiences, and recreational opportunities. Downtown revitalization will further protect and enhance quality of life city-wide by reducing pressure on rural lands for commercial development, supporting sustainable land-use planning, and maintaining green space through a balanced distribution of economic activity. A stronger urban core, particularly one with a strong central business district, helps preserve agricultural areas, safeguard water quality by limiting urban sprawl, and support wildlife and forest management by maintaining clear boundaries between rural and urban land uses.

Revitalizing downtown will also strengthen Ottawa's reputation as a desirable place to live, work, visit, and invest. These improvements will help support population stability in rural communities and attract the skilled workforce that will benefit rural enterprises and businesses. Finally, downtown serves as a shared civic gathering place for residents from every ward. Its revitalization will strengthen social cohesion, cultural expression, and community life, benefits that rural residents experience through improved services, expanded programming, and a stronger regional economy.

## **TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

Revitalizing downtown is a strategic priority for this [2023–2026 Term of Council Priorities](#). Specifically, the redevelopment scenario projects fall under:

- *Strategic Priority: “A city with a diversified and prosperous economy.”*
  - Strategic Objective #23 which is “Reimagine the downtown and ByWard Market” in the City’s [2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#).

Through this, Council aims to achieve increased economic activity, enhanced safety, and greater tourism in the Downtown Core Transect by 2026. The Downtown Revitalization Framework and Action Plan will support local businesses through implementation of the Downtown Revitalization Toolkit. In parallel, rebalancing land uses and diversifying industry sectors will contribute to a more resilient and diversified downtown economy.

### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Separate supporting documentation to the report:

- Document 1: Downtown Revitalization Framework and Action Plan
- Document 2: Downtown Revitalization Measurement Framework
- Document 3: Downtown Incentive Program Consultant Report Summary

### **DISPOSITION**

Subject to Council approval, staff will implement the recommendations, and implementation plans for the Downtown Revitalization Framework and Toolkit as outlined in the report. The General Manager of Strategic Initiatives Department will ensure that updates are provided to Members of Council, as outlined in this report.