

URBAN SYSTEMS.

high level



## DOWNTOWN REVITALIZATION STRATEGY

JULY 2011  
FINAL REPORT





## URBANSYSTEMS.

Urban Systems Ltd.  
#200, 10345-105 Street NW  
Edmonton, AB T5J 1E8

P: 780.430.4041  
W: [www.urban-systems.com](http://www.urban-systems.com)

July 2011

# Table of Contents

---

<b>1.0 Introduction .....</b>	<b>1</b>
1.1 History .....	2
1.2 Scope .....	4
1.3 Process.....	5
<b>2.0 Vision &amp; Guiding Principles .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>3.0 Urban Design Plan .....</b>	<b>8</b>
3.1 Town Plaza .....	10
3.2 Centennial Park.....	11
3.3 100 Avenue .....	14
3.4 100 Street .....	16
3.5 Other Elements.....	18
<b>4.0 Servicing.....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>5.0 Financing .....</b>	<b>24</b>
5.1 Municipal Government Act .....	24
5.2 Grant Programs.....	25
5.3 Other.....	25
<b>6.0 Implementation .....</b>	<b>26</b>



# 1.0 Introduction

Due to various economic, social and regulatory circumstances, the High Level Downtown has reached a critical point, in particular:

- There is considerable vacant land and some vacant buildings while new commercial development is occurring in other parts of Town
- The mobile home park is on the verge of redeveloping
- The farmers market, library, bowling alley and video store have left
- Many residents have negative perceptions and experiences of the area
- High Level's 50th anniversary is in 2015 and many structures were not built with this timeframe in mind

To address these issues (and others), the Town has decided to take deliberate steps to re-establish the downtown as the vibrant heart of the community that could include mixed use infill and redevelopment, public realm investments, and increased leisure, entertainment, cultural, community events and opportunities.

As discussed in further detail in Section 1.2 Scope, this Strategy is the first step in this important process and consists of the following:

- Vision and Guiding Principles established with the Steering Committee and confirmed at Public Open Houses
- Urban Design Plan, which analyzes nine public and private downtown elements including a discussion of existing conditions and potential for enhancement which should be considered at the implementation stage
- A brief discussion of servicing based on the Town's Integrated Infrastructure Management Plan
- A description of financing approaches and programs to fund the improvements identified here and in the future
- A detailed list of implementation action items to achieve Downtown Revitalization

## 1.1 History

The name High Level originated from the height of the land that separates the Peace River and the Hay River. In 1786, the first fur traders arrived in this area, though it was not until 1947 that High Level was settled. High Level's first power plant was established in 1957, and a year later the first post office was built. The oil fields were discovered in the 1960s, and a railway was run to the area in 1963. In 1965 High Level was established as a New Town under the New Town's Act and was indirectly governed by the Province through a locally elected Board of Administrators. During the latter parts of the 1960s major oil fields were discovered in the region and established High Level as a service centre. In the same period a saw mill was constructed. Both oil and forestry industries allowed for business opportunities that resulted in large population growth. In 1965, High Level's population was 356 and grew to roughly 2,600 in 1968.

The Town grew slowly through the seventies and eighties and in 1983, High Level became an official Town with its first elected Mayor and Council. In the 1990s, land development was a Town responsibility, but later in that decade, development became a private venture. The 1990s brought a series of changes to High Level as the population grew and industry increased. With the new millennium, the Town faced even more growth and development. The first three years saw record highs for housing starts, construction value, population increases and employment opportunities. In the latter part of the 2000s, High Level's economy and growth rates slowed as the global recession made its impact on two major economic sectors: forestry, and oil and gas.

### History of Downtown

The Town of High Level initially developed in three main areas: the downtown, the nearby residential area and the industrial area. In 1964, the downtown included the High Level Hotel block (98th to 97th Streets and 100th to 98 Avenues) and a few buildings northwest along 100th Avenue. Just two years later, the downtown had grown to cover the land from 99th to 97th Streets from 105th Avenue to 98th Avenue along with a few buildings north of 99th Street on the south side of 100th Avenue. The entire downtown was built out as was much of the Town just past 105th Avenue and 107th Street by the early 1980s.

The downtown has always served as a retail and institutional service centre for the community including historical businesses such as the Blue Top Lodge and Café, Marshall Wells, Roy's Men's Wear and Zero Supermarket along with government services such as the RCMP, Post Office and Canada Manpower. Other business have been a part of the community for decades including the Bank of Montreal, CIBC, ESSO, Macleod's and Reid's Super A Foods.



*Marshall Wells Paints, July 1965*

*Source: High Level Alberta, The little town that couldn't - but did! - Gordon Reid*

## Downtown Today

As defined by the Town's Municipal Development Plan, downtown High Level covers 27 ha. This area includes numerous retail and institutional uses including the Royal Canadian Legion, Provincial Building and Court House, Fire Hall, three small shopping centres, and two apartment buildings. Bushe Creek and the contaminated sites on either side of 100th Avenue are just outside the boundary, but have a significant influence on the downtown as does Centennial Park. Murals are another important part of the downtown.

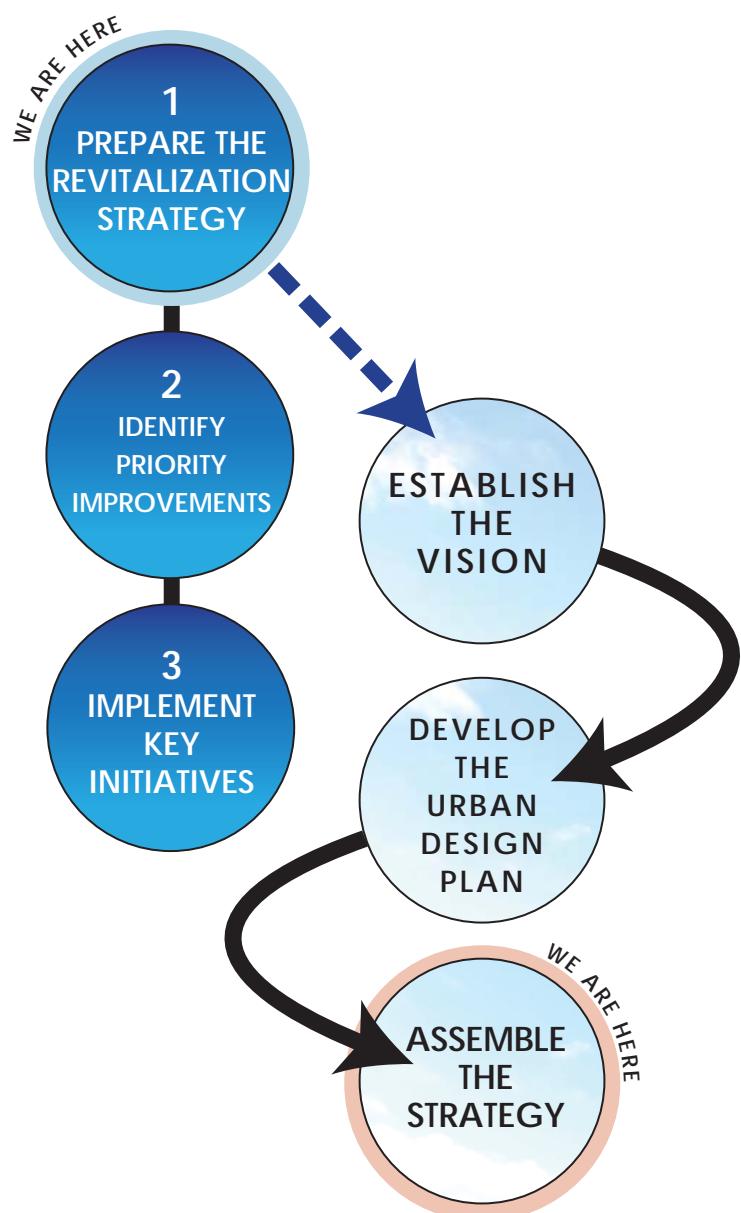
At present, High Level's downtown is in transition. Alberta Transportation will realign Highway 58 and establish a direct connection from the highway to 100th Avenue (the town's main street). Two contaminated sites will frame the entrance to downtown. The RCMP will relocate within downtown after more than 30 years in the same location. Trailers continue to be removed from the mobile home park as it moves toward redevelopment. Community facilities and businesses have left the downtown including the farmers market, library, bowling alley, video store etc. 10005 House recently opened to provide emergency shelter for the homeless. These changes have led the Town to focus on understanding what is happening downtown and do what is possible to make it an attractive, vibrant and accessible place for people to work, socialize, and recreate throughout the year.



## 1.2 Scope

Downtown Revitalization includes many levels of planning and implementation. As a result, the Town has decided to take a three phase approach, rather than prepare an Area Redevelopment Plan at this time. This Strategy concludes the first phase where the issues and opportunities are understood and the vision and priorities are established. The intent of this Strategy is not to solve the issues that have been identified, but rather recognize their significance and develop a framework from which to consider how best to move forward. As shown in the graphic, the second phase is to complete the highest priority actions and the third phase is to create and implement the long term strategy and supporting initiatives for downtown High Level.

Phases to achieve Downtown Revitalization



## 1.3 Process

In October 2010, the Town formally engaged Urban Systems to prepare a Downtown Revitalization Strategy. A project start-up meeting was held on October 22 and was attended by the Mayor, CAO and the Director of Development and Corporate Services along with the Urban Systems project team. Arrangements were made for the Project Week to be held in High Level in from November 15 to 18 including the formation of a Steering Committee, which consists of Troy Connolly, Margaret Carroll, Rico Nahas, Fran Forest, Carrie Demkiw, Mary Aboumoustafa from the community, Crystal McAteer from Council, and Dean Krause and Simone Wiley from Administration.

In preparation for the project week, Urban Systems reviewed the following background documents:

1. Municipal Development Plan
2. Community Sustainability Plan
3. Integrated Infrastructure Management Plan
4. Park Task Force Report to Town Council (September 22, 2008)
5. Highway 35 and Highway 58 North Junction Functional Planning Study Recommended Plan
6. Business Vitality Initiative – Phase Two Focus and Action Report
7. High Level Alberta – The little town that couldn't – but did! (Gordon Reid, 1983)

### Municipal Development Plan - Land Use Plan



Urban Systems arrived on November 15 and completed a walking tour and photo inventory of downtown followed by an evening meeting with the project Steering Committee. This meeting was a chance for the Committee to share stories and information about:

- Community character including work focus, resource driven, and First Nations
- Downtown character including a lack of identity and activities and concerns about building appearance and vagrancy
- Preferences based on images from downtowns in other communities
- Wants including streetscape, public realm and pedestrian improvements, small business and programming

The next day, Urban Systems completed some initial analysis and hosted a public workshop. At this event, participants were asked to indicate special places and areas of concern in the downtown. Building appearance, the absence of attractions, safety and vagrancy were the main issues. Attendees also reviewed and ranked the draft guiding principles, which can be found in Section 2 of this Plan.

Urban Systems completed further analysis on the third day and toured the downtown with one of the Committee Members. A lunch meeting with the Steering Committee was held on November 18. At this gathering, Urban Systems reviewed their analysis to date and confirmed the project direction. This week concluded with a meeting with Community Futures and visit to the museum.

Urban Systems then held two internal design sessions and provided the Steering Committee with a preliminary strategy for their discussion on January 12. The Committee was supportive of the concepts. Urban Systems used the information gathered to date to prepare this document for review by the Steering Committee and discussion with the public at an open house on March 16, 2011. The open house was well attended with several downtown business owners in attendance. Feedback included focusing on the park and gateway to revitalize the downtown, rather than the town plaza. Participants also raised concerns about losing parking in front of existing businesses.

In April and May, Urban Systems prepared the Downtown Revitalization Strategy. This report was reviewed by the Steering Committee at the end of May with the final report endorsed by Council in June 2011.

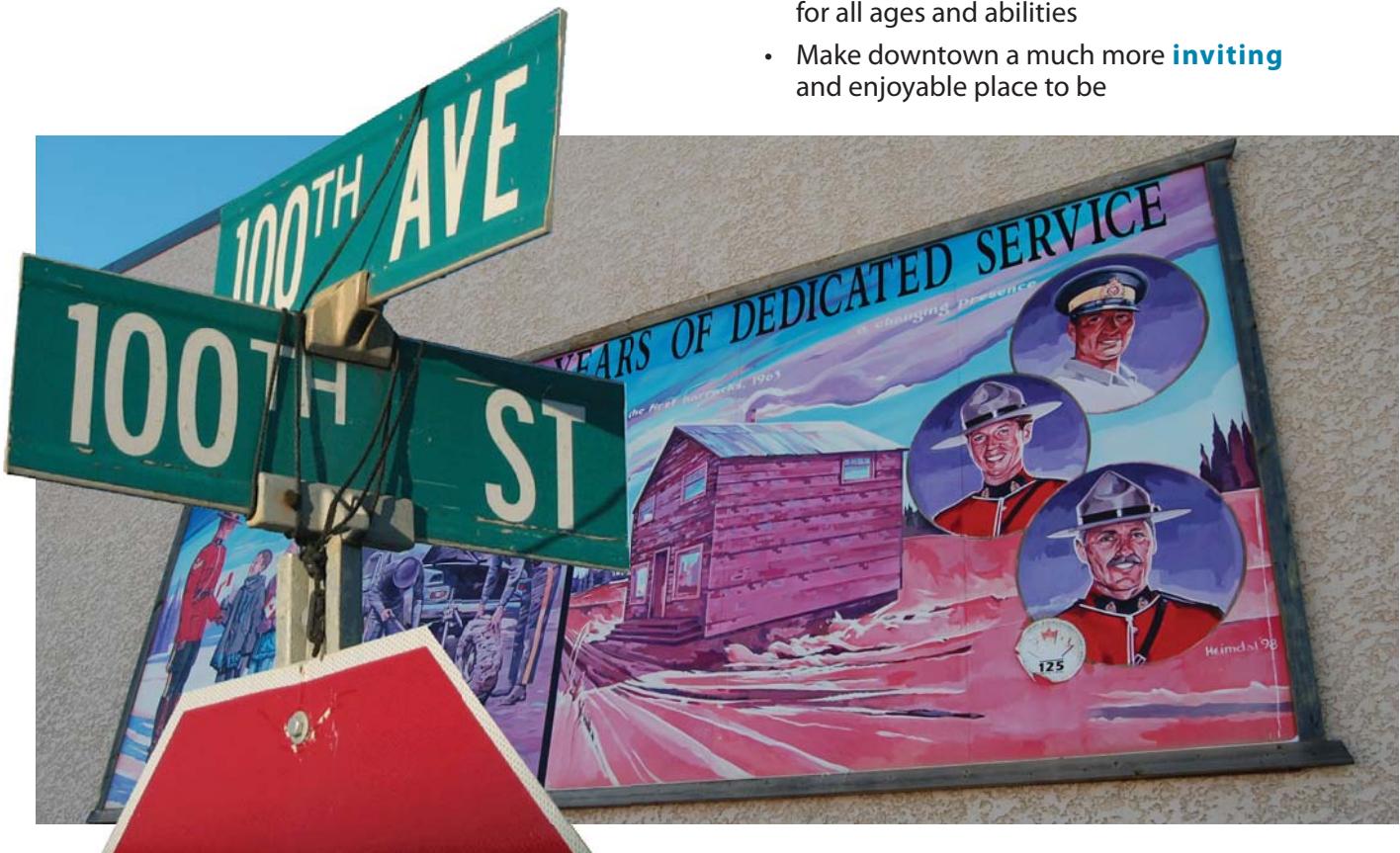
## 2.0 Vision & Guiding Principles

### Community Vision

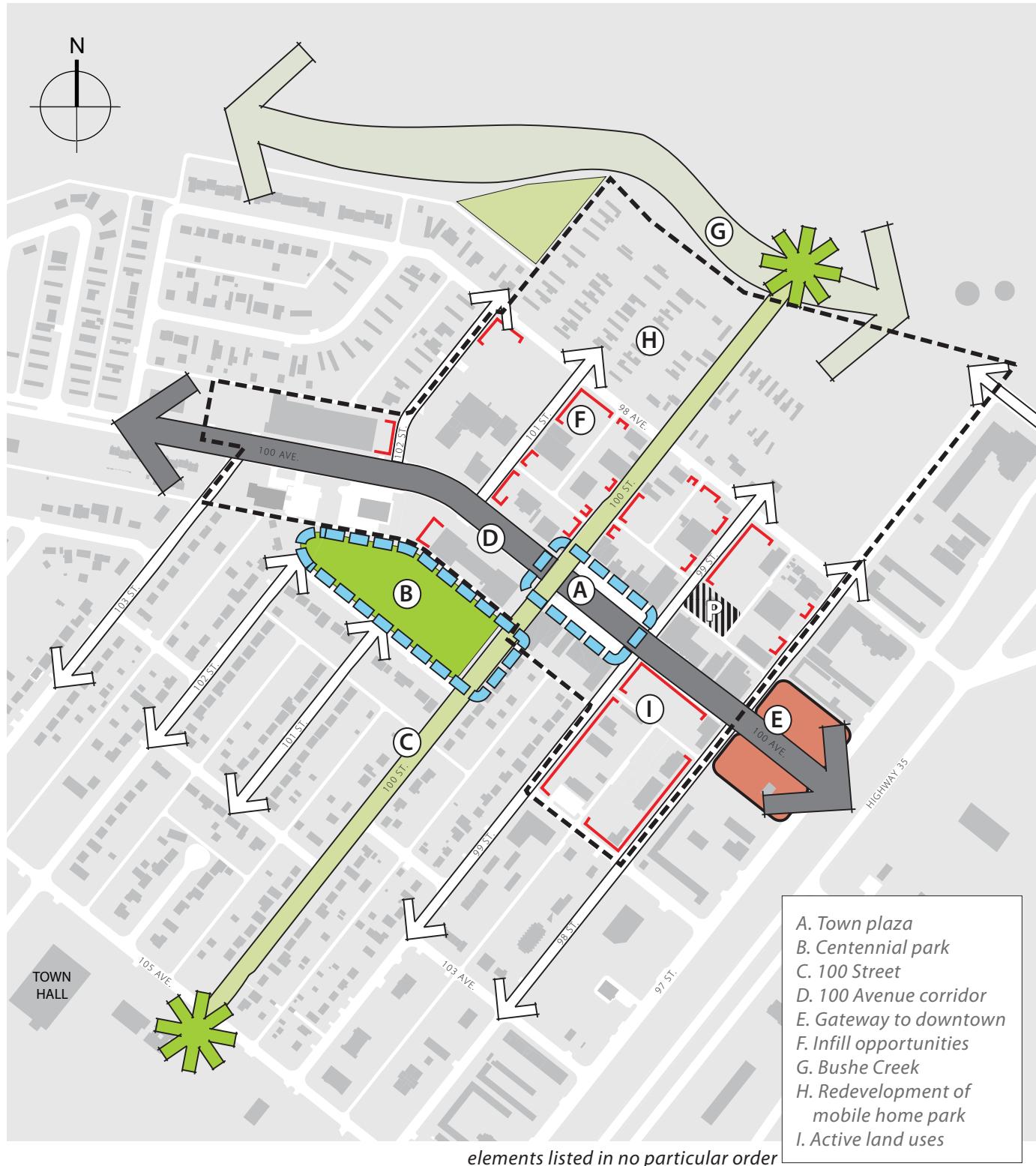
Our community is a picturesque town that appeals to all generations. Children play in the parks and walk down our safe, clean streets. We embrace and celebrate our diversity through community and cultural events. Our community spirit is showcased through performing arts events, public art, recreational activities and festivals such as Winterfest. As a community we have a wide variety of activities for entertainment and recreation including curling, hockey, dances, and movie theatres. Our youth and seniors take ownership for the community through activities that interest them. We are family-oriented, and inclusive. We are a dynamic community rooted in strong social connections, and a sense of belonging. (excerpt from *Town of High Level Municipal Development Plan vision*)

### Guiding Principles

- Bringing the **Town culture** back downtown
- Improve **connectivity** to, through and from the downtown
- Enhance the **appearance** of downtown
- Clarify and promote downtown's unique **identity**
- Encourage, plan and support community **programming** through amenities
- Develop an **active** and **vibrant** downtown for all seasons
- Concentrate commercial and institutional uses downtown through **infill and redevelopment**
- Foster a **safe** environment at all hours of the day
- Encourage and support **small business** as the foundation of the downtown
- Create formal and informal community **gathering** spaces
- Ensure universal **accessibility** for all ages and abilities
- Make downtown a much more **inviting** and enjoyable place to be



### 3.0 Urban Design Plan

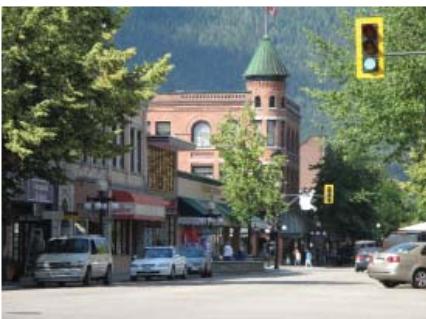


This Plan identifies key opportunities, development sites and approaches to reinforce and demonstrate the implementation of the Vision and Guiding Principles with an emphasis on Centennial Park, 100th Avenue and 100th Street Corridors. The analysis addressed the following topics:

- Unique site characteristics
- Gateway opportunities
- Public gathering places
- Building form, massing and height
- Relationship to the street
- Pedestrian realm

- Movement corridors
- Parking and circulation
- Winter city design elements
- Character
- Sustainability
- Land use and density
- Servicing

Each design element includes a discussion of existing conditions and potential that should be considered in the implementation of the Downtown Revitalization Strategy.



## 3.1 Town Plaza



### Existing

- A public right-of-way that is more than 75 m (250 ft) wide
- Six rows of parking
- Vehicle oriented with relatively narrow sidewalks and no place for respite
- Sidewalks adjacent to the roadway reinforce passing through, rather than stopping
- Very little vegetation or landscaping
- No formal public gathering place to accommodate community events, i.e. Midnight Madness
- Temporary architecture and limited building permeability
- East-west orientation, but limited cross street connection



*View northwest along east side of 100 Ave*



*View west across 100 Ave*



## 3.2 Centennial Park



### Existing Conditions

- Large central amenity with poor connection to 100th Avenue
- Limited surveillance of northeast edge of park due to lack of permeability (i.e. windows) from adjacent commercial building
- Hub for a variety of activities including tennis and volleyball courts, play structures, toboggan hill and picnic tables
- Segmented uses with limited internal connections
- Existing tree stand at northwest corner, but very little other vegetation
- Flanked by 101st Avenue and 100th Street, both residential and commercial land uses
- Limited pedestrian access and on street parking along perimeter
- Community concerns about the presence of vagrancy

### 2008 Park Task Force Concept:

- Complete park enhancements by 2015 to celebrate 50th Town anniversary
- Ensure park becomes a major all season community focal point
- Include a fountain as a gathering point and central feature
- Construct a wooden amphitheatre with concrete seating
- Relocate play structures and add benches while reshaping the toboggan hill
- Retain tennis and volleyball courts
- Determine the appropriate design for washroom facilities
- Provide a cook house for family and community gatherings
- Consider accessory features including furniture, signage and landscaping to improve the aesthetics of the park



*Existing playground*



*View east from west end of park*

## Potential

As shown in the attached graphic, we have proposed some modifications to the Task Force Concept including:

- Perimeter walkways and boulevard plantings improve visual and physical connections to park from downtown and residential neighborhood
- Main entries defined with prominent features, such as art, statue, fountain and signage to draw attention and users to the park
- Secondary access points identified with aesthetic improvements, such as seating and park signage
- Tennis courts, play structures and volleyball courts consolidated into one active recreation zone accessible via internal path system
- Toboggan hill expanded and shaped towards park
- Lighting along paths or on boulevard trees to improve visibility at night and add to visual aesthetic in winter months
- Amphitheatre, cook house and washroom facility combined into one multifunctional building to decrease implementation costs and limit the amount of site disturbance
- Central grassed area flooded for skating during winter months
- Individual picnic/barbecue sites for day use during summer and winter activities
- Extend the park to 100th Street and 100th Avenue
- Work with the landowner to improve the interface between the Town Centre Mall and the park and to capitalize on the space between it and the Fire Hall
- Coordinate community programming to support the park's potential programming





#### B. Centennial Park

1. Open grassed area / skating rink
2. Cookhouse /amphitheatre / shelter
3. Sliding hill
4. Tennis courts (existing)
5. Volleyball courts
6. Playground
7. Picnic tables
8. Tree stand (existing)
9. Connection to plaza
10. Main entries
11. Secondary access points
12. Off-street parking

## 3.3 100 Avenue

### Existing Conditions

- High Level's Main Street and retail corridor
- A key part of the downtown
- Widely varying cross sections
- Highway alignment and RCMP relocation are imminent
- Parking available in many forms and locations
- Vehicle oriented with relatively narrow sidewalks, no respite and lengthy pedestrian crossings
- Very little vegetation or landscaping
- Temporary architecture and limited building permeability
- Wider corridor facilitates increased traffic speeds



*View east along 100 Ave from 102 St*



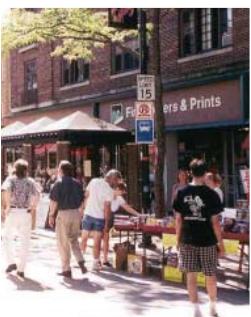
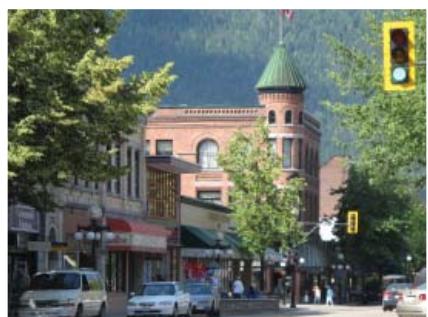
*View north of 100 Ave from 100 St*



*View southeast along 100 Ave from 99 St*

### Potential

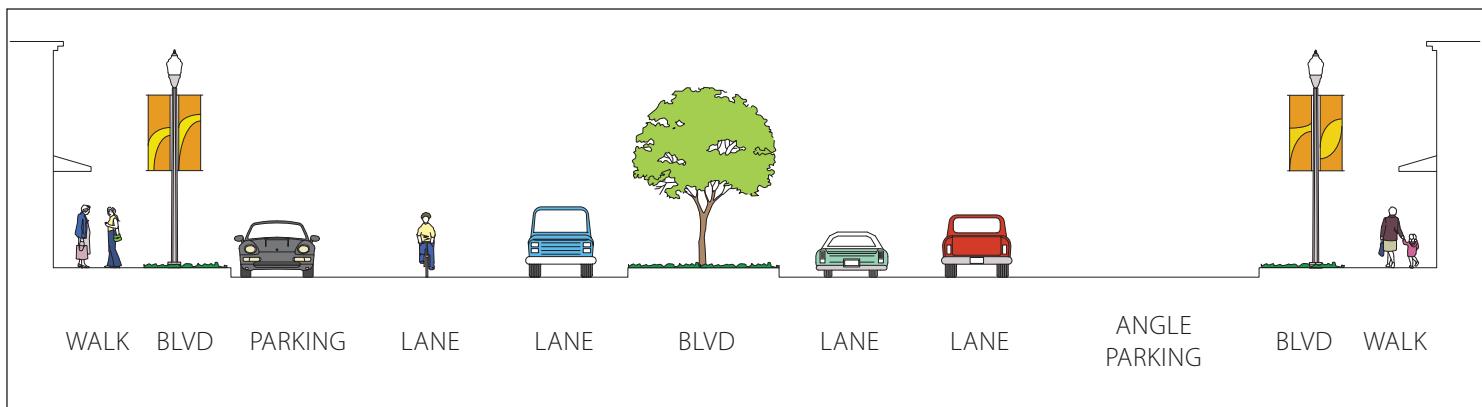
- Widen the sidewalks where possible and improve pedestrian comfort and accessibility (e.g. rest areas, awnings, sidewalks) to support downtown activity
- Accommodate all modes of transportation
- Clearly delineate crosswalks
- Consider reorganizing parking to increase vibrancy
- Enhance lighting program to create a downtown attraction
- Add vegetation and landscaping where possible
- Work with landowner to capitalize on space between Fire Hall and Town Centre Mall and its proximity to Centennial Park
- Implement the proposed cross sections as redevelopment occurs
- Encourage facade and building improvements and active land uses





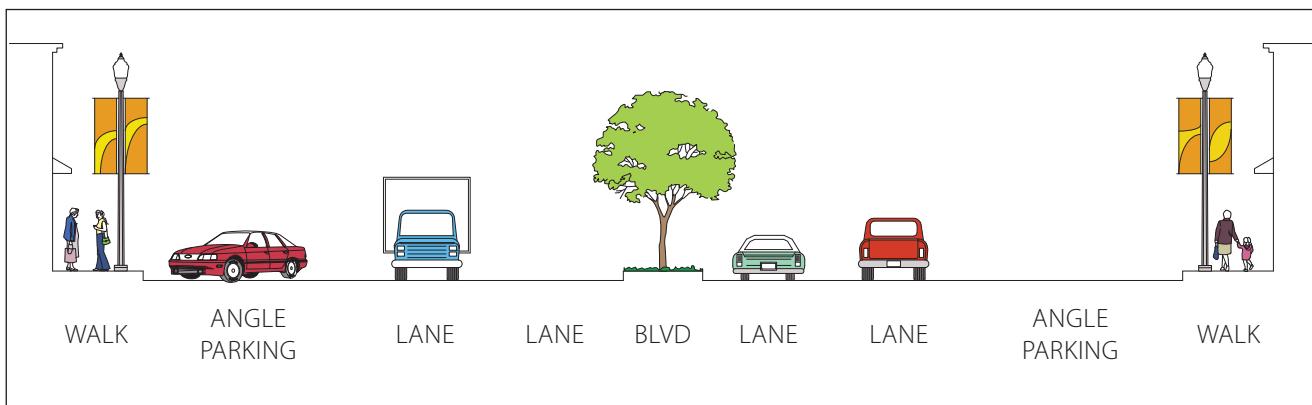
### Section - 100 Avenue from 100 Street to 103 Street

The following shows how the Town can enhance the 100th Avenue corridor, primarily by adding sidewalks on the south side.



### Section - 100 Avenue from 98 Street to 99 Street

The following block includes many positive attributes including two storey buildings, less parking and a narrower cross section. This should be extended south when the brownfield sites redevelop.



## 3.4 100 Street

### Existing Conditions

- An important multi-modal connection from the Town Hall, schools and recreation facilities to Centennial Park and downtown
- Residential portion has sidewalk and grassed boulevard on both sides with good road condition
- Part of the 5 km Spring Sprint route
- Discontinuous sidewalk
- Undefined parking areas



*View northeast along 100 St east of 100 Ave*



*View northeast along 100 St from 105 Ave*

### Potential

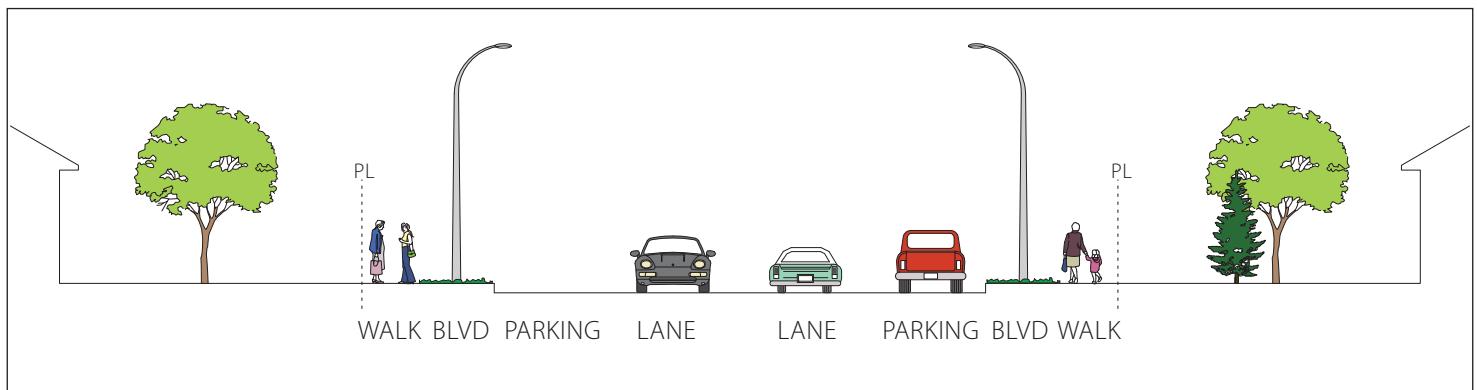
- As downtown and the mobile home park redevelop, extend 100th Street as a public and 'complete street' through to Bushe Creek
- Use as part of active community events such as parades and races
- Add sidewalk to the corridor as redevelopment occurs
- Facilitate expanded active transportation circuit and route options



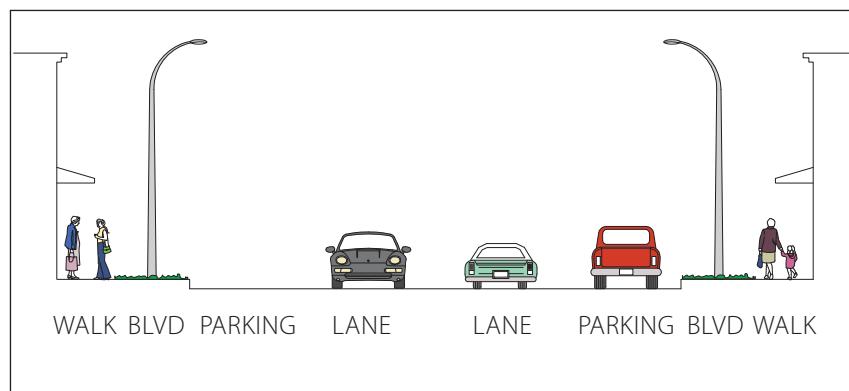


The following illustrates how High Level can build on the strengths of the residential part of 100th Street by extending sidewalks north through downtown.

Existing residential section - 100 Street from 105 Avenue to 100 Avenue



Proposed commercial section - 100 Street north of 100 Avenue



## 3.5 Other Elements

The remaining elements of the draft Urban Design Plan are equally important in revitalizing the downtown, but are likely to be addressed over a longer timeframe.



### GATEWAY TO DOWNTOWN

These former service station sites are brownfields that will require considerable effort to remediate and redevelop. However, a long term plan should be developed. With the right type of development, these sites have the potential to reinforce 100th Avenue as the primary entrance to downtown and extend it to Highway 35. These properties could create a dramatic and intuitive first impression of downtown High Level.



*View northwest along 100 Ave from 98 St*



*View north from 100 Ave and 98 St*

### Potential

- Explore potential partnership opportunities with existing land owners to encourage redevelopment
- Use built form, public art and signage to mark the intersection of 100th Avenue and the Highway as the primary entrance into Downtown High Level
- Reinforce a pedestrian scale of development by extending the existing cross-section and streetscape between 98th and 99th Street through to the Highway



## ACTIVE LAND USES

This is an example of another common component of successful downtowns in other communities. Through carefully crafted regulation, the Town can encourage active land uses that provide multiple reasons for residents and visitors to experience downtown, including coffee shops, post office, theatre, library and offices. Permeability is also important. In other words, large windows and patios in the summer so that pedestrians can see what is happening inside and people inside out. As discussed in further detail in the infill opportunities section, incentives and support for a mixture of commercial and residential land uses will positively enhance downtown High Level.



## Town Centre Mall



## *Joseph Lis Building*



## *Fahlman Building*

## Potential

- Create a vibrant downtown by encouraging a wide range of active land uses that animate the street and attract people to the downtown such as a bakery, library, farmers market, restaurant, pub, fitness studio, etc.
- Create a strong street edge with development fronting directly onto the street to create visual interest, support window shopping and to encourage active living.
- Discourage stand-alone isolated development surrounded by surface parking. This form of development weakens the street and discourages pedestrian activity and safety.
- Encourage restaurants, coffee shops, bakeries, etc. to create outdoor seating areas that take advantage of long, warm summers and facilitate social interaction and community building.





## INFILL OPPORTUNITIES

As shown, there are numerous locations (many north of 100th Avenue) that are undeveloped. The gradual development of these sites can improve the vibrancy, walkability and overall appearance of downtown. This will maximize the return on infrastructure investments and, in some cases, replace or avoid the need for expansive development in other parts of High Level. It is also important that Town values such as pedestrian orientation and enhanced building appearance are reflected in the development proposals approved by the Town.

Many other communities have greatly enhanced their downtown by promoting medium and high density residential development within it. This reduces the dependence of downtown business on visitors from other parts of Town and beyond. Commercial uses are also important, but not necessarily required as part of every new development. Thoughtful and effective incentives can speed up development. In addition, a Community Revitalization Levy could be implemented to direct tax income towards downtown improvements.

## Potential

- Encourage intensification of development in downtown High Level by:
  - developing existing vacant parcels
  - adding floors to existing single storey buildings;
  - permitting increased lot coverage on existing parcels
  - reducing onsite parking requirements or exploring shared parking arrangements with adjacent properties
  - exploring financial incentives for redevelopment
- Develop design guidelines to facilitate the appropriate form and character of development within downtown High Level
- Encourage live-work and other forms of mixed-use commercial-residential development with residential uses on upper floors to support downtown business and to improve safety by adding "eyes on the street".



South side of 100 Ave between 99 St & 100 St



98 Ave looking northwest near 101 St



## MOBILE HOME PARK

This privately owned property is a huge proportion of the downtown area, and as with the Town Plaza and 100th Avenue corridor, has significant implications for the future of downtown High Level. It represents a significant opportunity to provide additional commercial and residential space that complement the existing downtown. We also suggest extending the grid pattern into the park to ensure walkability and accessibility. The Town should collaborate with the landowner so that the public realm is extended into this part of downtown and that a strong connection to Bushe Creek is established. Furthermore, sustainability and servicing could be important parts of the redevelopment discussion.



*Mobile home park*



*View along east edge*

## Potential

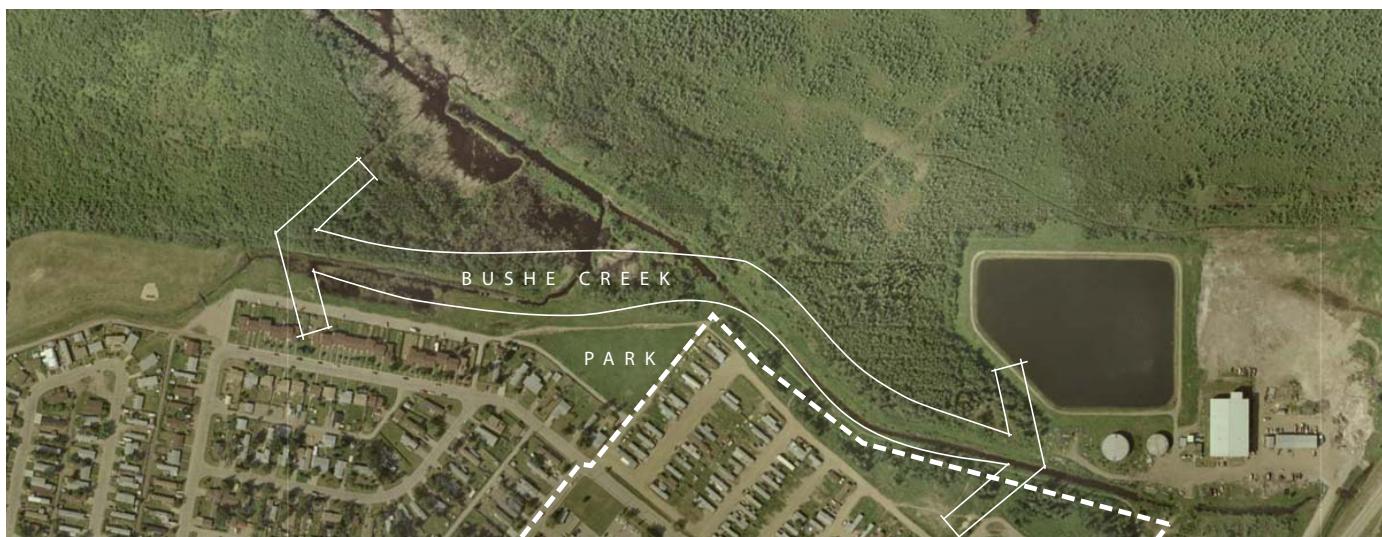
- Accommodate a wide range of commercial and residential forms of development consistent with land use direction contained in the Municipal Development Plan
- Extend the existing grid street pattern into the subject area to make navigation easy for residents and first time users, to facilitate route choice and traffic distribution
- Orient buildings to take advantage of available views to Bushe Creek and surrounding natural areas
- Require a strong street edge within the subject area by reducing or eliminating front yard setbacks, orienting building entrances and windows to the street, and encouraging development with a minimum of two storeys
- Support the extension of 100th Street as an important active transportation corridor within the community by fronting development to the street and directing surface parking to the rear of buildings





## BUSHE CREEK

This natural feature is not currently considered a safe or desirable part of the community. As the mobile home park develops, it is important that this key natural feature be re-established as a multi-use trail that connects to other amenities.



## Potential

- Engage the community in developing a long-term plan for the restoration of Bushe Creek that could include a multi-purpose trail system, rest areas and historical, cultural interpretation opportunities
- Ensure adjacent redevelopment is oriented to support, capitalize on and visually secure the Bushe Creek corridor
- Create a physical and visual gateway to the park at the northerly extension of 100th Street that serves to tie the downtown to Bushe Creek



# 4.0 Servicing

Using the Town of High Level Integrated Infrastructure Management Plan as a guide, the following downtown servicing considerations have been identified:

- Surface and underground improvements should be coordinated to maximize investment, particularly the 100 Avenue corridor (and 101 Street from 98 and 100 Avenues)
- Infrastructure including public roads should be extended into the mobile home park as it redevelops. 98 Street should be rehabilitated at that time as well.

- Sidewalk installation and improvement identified in the 2005 Pedestrian Plan should continue to be addressed, particularly in the 100 and 98 Avenue rights-of-way
- The impact of redevelopment proposals on Town's infrastructure should be understood prior to approval.
- 100 Avenue sewer capacity (and any other capacity issues) should be clarified to avoid delaying development inquiries and proposals.

## 20 Year Capital Plan



Highlighted sections may require one of, or a combination of, the road and sidewalks, water servicing, sanitary servicing, and/or stormwater servicing to be replaced with the projected number of years.

<span style="color: red;">—</span>	0-5 Years (26-29)
<span style="color: purple;">—</span>	6-10 Years (23-25)
<span style="color: green;">—</span>	11-15 Years (18-22)
<span style="color: yellow;">—</span>	16-20 Years (15-17)
<span style="color: blue;">—</span>	20+ Years (1-14)
<span style="color: black;">—</span>	Plan Boundary

Source: *Integrated Infrastructure Management Plan - Figure 6.3*

# 5.0 Financing

Downtown revitalization requires dedicated funding to be successful. The Town is expected to lead the search and will likely fund many of the initiatives. However, the Town cannot do this alone and other financial solutions are available and described later in this section.

To start, it is beneficial for the Town to create a funding plan for downtown revitalization, in other words, determine the amount of funding it can commit in the short and medium term. Then through ongoing discussions with stakeholders, particularly land and business owners, it is important to understand their ability and desire to contribute financially. While already supporting the Town through property taxes, these owners could increase their investment by helping to pay for public improvements (e.g. streetlights, street furniture, plantings, pavers etc) or be encouraged to make improvements to their land and buildings. In either case, a successful downtown revitalization will increase their revenue and property value as more people spend time and money downtown as well as increase municipal tax revenues.

Some communities have created grant programs, e.g. a facade improvement program, to address the downtown streetscape. In this case, you would begin by preparing design guidelines to provide clarity about desired appearance. The Town would then provide matching funding (up to a defined maximum) for exterior renovations that enhance the building's visual appeal. Typical funding amounts range for \$10,000 to \$50,000 per building.

In addition to Town and land/business owner involvement, downtown revitalization can be funded by specific tools enabled by the Municipal Government Act (MGA), grants from senior levels of government or donations.

## 5.1 Municipal Government Act

The Municipal Government Act outlines various levy opportunities for a municipality to recover costs for revitalization activities. In most cases, they require the municipality to up-front the costs, and then recover them from property owners in the area.

### **Business Revitalization Zone (BRZ)**

Business Revitalization Zones are guided by the MGA, and allow for the municipality to collect taxes from BRZ members in order to fund specific improvements, through the Business Revitalization Zone Regulation. There is a significant process to undertaking a BRZ, and it must be initiated by business owners that would be impacted by it. There are a number of successful BRZs in the province, and a BRZ may be a good option to fund ongoing operations and maintenance associated with revitalization. In order to be successful, it must be supported by property and business owners in the Downtown.

### **Redevelopment Levy**

This levy can be used to fund the acquisition of space for parks as needed in the Downtown. It can only be used in an area to which an Area Redevelopment Plan has been created and adopted by Council.

### **Servicing Upgrade Levies**

If expansion to water, sanitary, storm, and road facilities are identified, off-site levies can be explored as a way to fund these upgrades.

### **Oversizing Infrastructure**

If oversizing is required to accommodate projected future development, agreements should be put in place to compensate the developer for any excess capacity.

### **Local Improvement Taxes**

Local improvement taxes are based on a specific local improvement, and can be proposed by Council or by local property owners. The levy is based on a Local Improvement Plan, which must meet certain requirements based on Part 10, Division 7 of the MGA. There is a significant process related to this levy, and property owners may petition against it if they are not supportive. The outcome is a special levy that applies to a specific area for a specific improvement(s).

## Community Revitalization Levy

The MGA has recently been amended to allow for municipalities to segregate tax revenues from a defined area for a maximum 20 year period and direct them towards paying for required infrastructure in the area. In general, amounts that would otherwise be charged as the municipal and provincial portions of property taxes will now be labelled a Community Revitalization Levy (CRL). The CRL is then used to cover the costs associated with the infrastructure upgrading and redevelopment work in the specified area. The increased value of properties because of the revitalization will be recognized in higher future property taxes. A formal application to Alberta Municipal Affairs is required to initiate the program, and it may not be applicable for all municipalities.

### Money in place

Money in place (cash in lieu) of Municipal Reserve requirements can help to provide for public space in the area.

## 5.2 Grant Programs

Grants are another opportunity to augment municipal and property owner funds to implement the Downtown Revitalization Plan.

### The Municipal Sustainability Initiative

Some of the capital works and operational costs associated with the Downtown Revitalization may qualify for funding from Alberta's Municipal Sustainability Initiative. The funding allocations are determined on an annual basis, and can be applied towards both capital and operating expenditures. The Town will need to determine what specific initiatives/projects would be considered under this program.

## Alberta Main Street Program

If Town is interested in preserving parts of downtown, the Alberta Main Street Program may be a source of funds. This funding is available through the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation for work which safeguards the character-defining elements of a designated historic place in order to retain its heritage value and extend its physical life. This may involve the preservation, restoration or rehabilitation or a combination of these actions. Funding through the Foundation is also provided for architectural engineering services, studies, historic structure reports, or concept plans associated with the conservation of the historic resource.

### Alberta Lottery Fund (ALF)

There may be opportunities through the Alberta Lottery Fund to purchase some of the decorative elements for the Downtown area. Previous approved projects through the ALF have included park benches, signage programs, walking trails, and other items that could potentially be included in the revitalization.

## 5.3 Other

### Donations/Partnership Program

Many communities and Business Revitalization Zones have established a Partnership Program to help off-set the total costs of the streetscape improvements. These programs target donations from residents or corporations to fund a portion of the projects. The programs establish a contribution amount for various elements such as benches, trees, pavers, public art, signs, and, even in some cases, entire curb flares. Donations are then solicited on this basis, and there may be some public recognition of the donation (nameplate, signs, etc.).

In Section 6.0 Implementation, each Urban Design Plan element has a list of the relevant financing tools that are described above.

# 6.0 Implementation

The revitalization of downtown High Level very much depends on implementation. The Town, land and business owners and the community need to be persistent and work together to complete the action items listed below. The first table prioritizes each of the Urban Design Plan

elements based on feedback from the Strategy preparation process. Responsibility and relevant financing tools are also identified. It is important for the Town to continue to take the lead on downtown revitalization. However, it needs the support of others to be successful.

**Table 1 – Urban Design Plan Implementation**

Element	Description	Priority	Responsibility	Relevant Financing Tool
<b>Town Plaza</b>	<i>Pedestrian oriented improvements to 100th to 99th Street block of 100th Avenue to create a community focal point</i>	<b>Low</b>	<i>Town with support from business owners and community</i>	<i>Alberta Lottery Fund, Business Revitalization Zone, Community Revit Levy, Donations/Partnerships, Local Improvement Tax</i>
<b>Centennial Park</b>	<i>Upgrades for 2015 Town anniversary to create an all season green space that will attract residents downtown</i>	<b>High</b>	<i>Town with community</i>	<i>Alberta Lottery Fund, Donations/Partnerships</i>
<b>100th Street</b>	<i>Improvements to main street/retail corridor including sidewalks, lighting, landscaping and facades</i>	<b>High</b>	<i>Town with land/ business owner and community</i>	<i>See Town Plaza tools</i>
<b>100th Avenue</b>	<i>Upgrades to important corridor linking parks including sidewalks and extension into mobile home park</i>	<b>High</b>	<i>Town with community</i>	<i>See Town Plaza tools</i>
<b>Gateway to Downtown</b>	<i>Redevelopment of the downtown primary entrance point</i>	<b>Medium</b>	<i>Landowners with Town</i>	<i>Site must be remediated first. Green Municipal Fund if under Town ownership.</i>
<b>Infill Opportunities</b>	<i>Redevelopment of vacant land and under-utilized sites</i>	<b>Low</b>	<i>Landowners with Town</i>	<i>Town Grant Program</i>
<b>Bushe Creek</b>	<i>Develop a long-term plan for the restoration of Bushe Creek to support recreation and facilitate connectivity</i>	<b>Low</b>	<i>Town with adjacent owner and community</i>	<i>Donations/Partnerships</i>
<b>Mobile Home Park</b>	<i>Well integrated redevelopment of large portion of downtown with commercial and residential land uses</i>	<b>Medium</b>	<i>Landowner with Town approval</i>	<i>Privately funded</i>
<b>Active Land Uses</b>	<i>Strongly encourage business to have a street presence including patios and large windows to animate the street</i>	<b>Low</b>	<i>Landowners with Town</i>	<i>Town Grant Program</i>

In addition to the Urban Design Plan, there are several downtown wide action items or catalysts that are equally important for revitalization. These have been organized into four categories: social, land use/built environment, economic development and programming. Recommendations are listed by sub-category and include impact/cost (high, medium or low), responsibility and whether they are a quick win (high impact or low cost, or both).

**Table 2 – Social Catalyst Implementation**

Social Catalyst	Recommendation	Impact/Cost	Responsibility	Quick Win
<b>Vagrancy</b>	<i>This issue must be addressed to realize the benefit of other downtown action items.</i>	High Impact Medium Cost	Town and senior governments	
<b>Dialogue</b>	<i>Continue Steering Committee dialogue in partnership with Council and downtown merchants including implementation</i>	<b>High Impact Low Cost</b>	Town Council and Administration	
<b>Assessment</b>	<i>Assess whether existing social services meet area needs and develop a strategy to resolve issues identified in the assessment</i>	Medium Impact Medium Cost	Town and senior governments	
<b>Safety</b>	<i>Address safety concerns with a combination of approaches, such as aesthetic lighting, downtown neighbourhood watch, community events etc</i>	<b>High Impact Medium Cost</b>	Town with community and business owner involvement	
<b>Pride</b>	<i>Initiate downtown pride and beautification activities, e.g. a downtown cleanup</i>	<b>Medium Impact Low Cost</b>	Town with community and business owner involvement	
<b>Engagement</b>	<i>Involve youth, seniors and the Aboriginal community in revitalization discussion and initiatives</i>	<b>High Impact Low Cost</b>	Town	

Table 3 – Land Use/Built Environment Catalyst Implementation

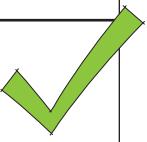
Land Use and Built Environment Catalyst	Recommendation	Impact/Cost	Responsibility	Quick Win
<b>Concept Refinement</b>	<i>Refine the downtown physical improvements prior to detailed design of high priority elements</i>	<i>High Impact Medium Cost</i>	<i>Town</i>	
<b>Landowner Engagement</b>	<i>Confirm key development opportunities and approach landowners to integrate their vision into the broader revitalization strategy</i>	<b>High Impact Low Cost</b>	<i>Town and landowners</i>	
<b>Regulation and Process Review</b>	<i>Analyze existing regulations and processes to identify modifications that support the achievement of downtown objectives</i>	<i>Low Impact Medium Cost</i>	<i>Town with land and business owner and community involvement</i>	
<b>New Regulations</b>	<i>Create new regulations where appropriate, e.g. design guidelines</i>	<i>Low Impact Medium Cost</i>	<i>Town with land and business owner and community involvement</i>	
<b>Facade Improvement</b>	<i>Establish a facade improvement program</i>	<i>Medium Impact High Cost</i>	<i>Town with land and business owner and community involvement</i>	
<b>Wayfinding and Signage</b>	<i>Improve wayfinding and signage by implementing a downtown specific program that is compatible with the broader community program</i>	<i>Medium Impact Medium Cost</i>	<i>Town with land and business owner and community involvement</i>	

Table 4 – Economic Development Catalyst Implementation

Economic Development Catalyst	Recommendation	Impact/Cost	Responsibility	Quick Win
<b>Location Criteria</b>	<i>Develop an understanding of business location criteria and obstacles to operating in High Level and downtown</i>	<i>Low Impact Medium Cost</i>	<i>Town</i>	
<b>Financing</b>	<i>Create incentive programs that meet public and private objectives</i>	<i>Medium Impact Medium Cost</i>	<i>Town with land and business owner and community involvement</i>	

**Table 5 – Programming Catalyst Implementation**

Programming Catalyst	Recommendation	Impact/Cost	Responsibility	Quick Win
<b>Assessment</b>	<i>Complete a facilities and needs assessment</i>	<i>Medium Impact Medium Cost</i>	<i>Town</i>	
<b>Consultation</b>	<i>Consult with the community about their interest and potential involvement in more downtown events, including celebrating northern lights, summer solstice and High Level as Alberta's northernmost highway Town</i>	<i>Medium Impact Medium Cost</i>	<i>Town</i>	
<b>Farmer's Market</b>	<i>Work with the farmer's market and Alberta Health Services to address the health and safety requirements of relocating the market downtown</i>	<i>Medium Impact Medium Cost</i>	<i>Town</i>	
<b>Arts and Culture</b>	<i>Actively support local arts and culture in the downtown beyond the existing murals</i>	<i>Medium Impact Medium Cost</i>	<i>Town and community</i>	

This Strategy recommends a balanced approach that focuses on the high priority initiatives in Table 1 and the quick wins identified above. Once these have been achieved, the Downtown Strategy should be revisited. Alternatively, when ready, the Town could move on to the other priorities and action items described above.



**URBAN**SYSTEMS.

CALGARY | EDMONTON | FORT ST JOHN  
KAMLOOPS | KELOWNA | VANCOUVER