

The Fort Collins

Downtown Plan

Issues + Priorities July 2015



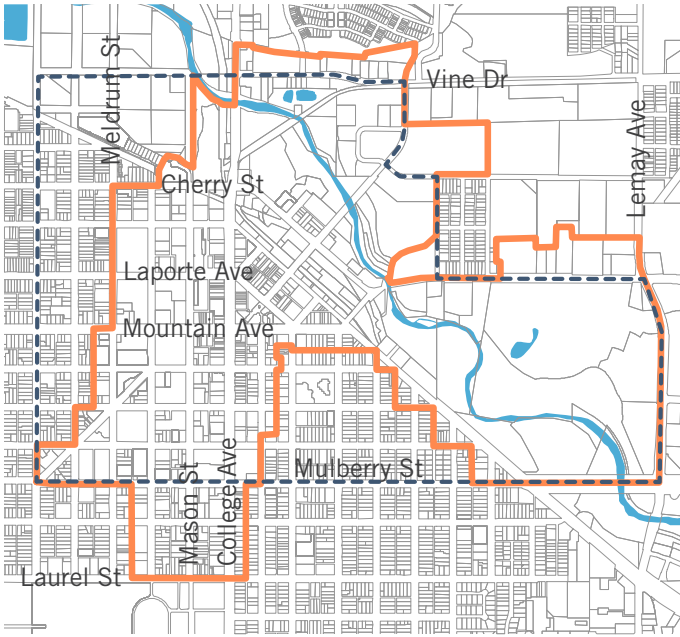
The Downtown Plan

The Fort Collins Downtown Plan serves as a guide and inspiration for budgets, projects, programs, investments, regulations and other efforts focused in the downtown area. Adopted by City Council in 1989, the previous plan helped shaped the downtown as it exists today. The new Downtown Plan will update the vision, policy direction, and action items for the next 10-20 years. In addition, the new Downtown Plan will incorporate recently completed planning efforts and studies (e.g., the Poudre River Downtown Master Plan, the citywide Pedestrian Plan, and the Bicycle Master Plan) into a comprehensive plan for Downtown Fort Collins. When adopted, the Downtown Plan will serve as the overarching policy document guiding private development and public investment in the downtown area.

Topic Areas

The content of the Downtown Plan is organized into six topic areas. Each topic area can be examined individually and can also influence and overlap with other topic areas. The topic areas are:

-  Arts + Culture
-  Downtown Management
-  Energy + Environment
-  Market + Economy
-  Transportation + Parking
-  Urban Design



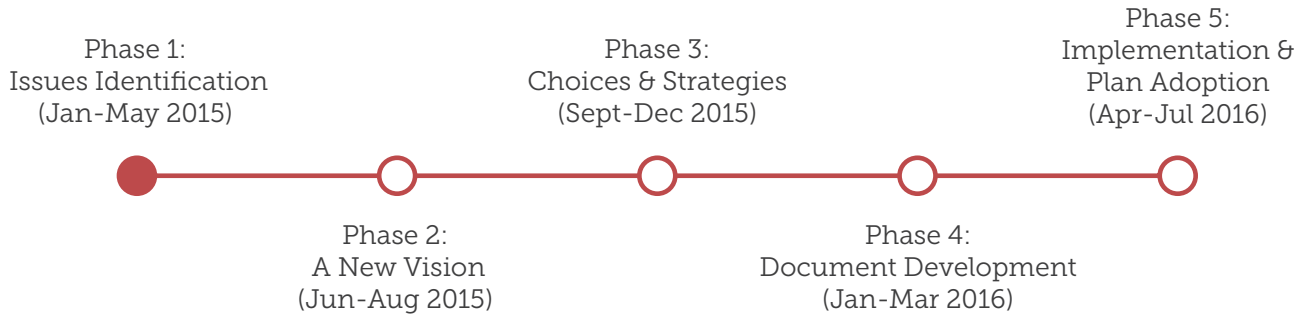
Downtown Plan Area 1989 and 2015

The Downtown Plan boundary has been updated to incorporate additional commercial areas in the city's core while reducing overlap with other subarea plans.

- 2015 Boundary ———
- 1989 Boundary - - -

Process and Timeline

The process of developing the Downtown Plan consists of five interrelated phases, each with its own purpose and objectives. The Downtown Plan will be closely coordinated with the Old Town Neighborhoods Plan, which covers the residential areas to the west and south of downtown.



Phase 1: Existing Conditions + Issues Identification

Phase 1 of the Fort Collins Downtown Plan began in January 2015 and concluded in May 2015. The purpose of this initial phase was to engage working groups, residents, visitors, business owners, downtown employees, and other stakeholders in the task of examining current conditions and identifying issues that need to be addressed in the new Downtown Plan. The issues that were identified in Phase 1 will inform and guide the development of a new vision for downtown in Phase 2 of the planning process.

Existing Conditions

City staff compiled existing conditions data specific to each topic area to help guide the conversation on issue identification. Previous planning efforts were also assessed and summarized in order to avoid unnecessary overlap or contradictions with past plans.



Working group members conducting a “SWOT” analysis at round-table event

Outreach

The Downtown Plan process to date has engaged hundreds of residents and stakeholders at public presentations and events, through more than 30 stakeholder interviews, at working group meetings, and in presentations to Boards and Commissions. Over 460 people also responded to the Downtown Plan online survey. This intensive public engagement effort will continue throughout the development of the Downtown Plan. Translation services for Spanish and other languages were available on an as-needed basis.

Working Groups

Six working groups were created at the outset of Phase 1 to guide each topic area through the development of the Downtown Plan. The working groups are comprised of technical specialists, City staff, and key stakeholders relevant to each topic area.



Public engagement throughout phase one



Stakeholder Engagement	Public Events	Online & Mobile Activities	Broadcast Outreach
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stakeholder interviews Working Group Meetings Presentations to City Boards & Commissions Presentations to DDA, DBA, and other community groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Issues Forum Open house event at the Opera Galleria Farmers' Market booth Booth at FoCo Future Forums First Friday event in Old Town Square Citywide Planning and Transportation Open House 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Website City Facebook and Twitter feeds Nextdoor postings Online survey (Survey Gizmo) Text message survey (Textizen) Keypad polling at events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project email list DDA, DBA and business email lists Posters, postcards, and business cards Press release Website announcements Giveaway items (stickers, tattoos, lip balm, bike lights)

Online Survey Results

An online survey for the Downtown Plan was conducted during April and May 2015 to gather community knowledge and opinions about downtown. The survey asked respondents to think about downtown’s current use and identity, and the possibilities for changes and improvements in the next 10-20 years. Over 460 people participated in the survey.

Downtown’s Assets

When asked, “What do you love most about downtown?” participants most frequently commented about restaurants/coffee shops, retail shops, and downtown’s atmosphere and character. Open-ended comments suggested that local business ownership, diversity, and independence were important qualities in restaurant, coffee shop and retail destinations. Arts and entertainment, often in the form of a well-advertised singular event or series, were also frequently mentioned in respondents’ comments. Design and the historic preservation of downtown buildings was an additional area of focus for many respondents. Comments often drew associations across categories, suggesting that the success of businesses, public spaces, events, and design are deeply interdependent.

Downtown’s Needs

Whereas restaurants and retail stores ranked highly among downtown’s assets, participants expressed a desire for additional types of spaces downtown. Some respondents called for a “public spaces where people can meet... without spending money” and for additional cultural institutions like galleries and event venues. Parking in particular was identified as a limiting factor in several comments; some participants expressed concern that any additions to downtown would be counterproductive unless parking services were also expanded to accommodate the additional growth and popularity of downtown.

Top responses to three of the online survey questions used to gauge people’s current view of downtown.

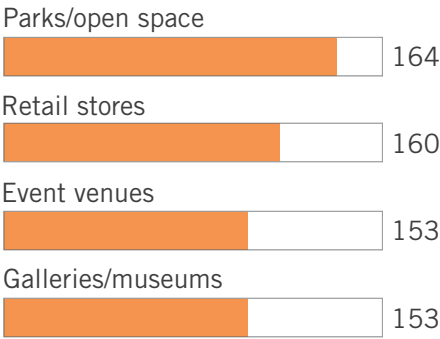
Downtown’s Challenges

Along with parking and congestion, participants identified rising rents for storefronts as a primary concern. Respondents expressed concerns about threats to local business and the possibility of more chain businesses downtown. Addressing the needs of the homeless in Fort Collins was also identified as one of the principal challenges facing the downtown area. Open-ended comments about downtown’s challenges mentioned that preserving downtown’s historic feel, incorporating the Cache la Poudre River, and enhancing arts and culture are areas of opportunity for the future

What do you love most about downtown?



What would you add downtown?



What is downtown’s biggest challenge?



Topic Areas

The following sections synthesize the feedback received from working groups, stakeholder interviews, public engagement events, and surveys to date by topic area. Each topic area includes three subsections: Emerging Priorities; Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats; and Survey Results.

Emerging Priorities

The Downtown Plan core team and working groups for each topic area reviewed data about existing conditions, existing policy guidance, preliminary survey results, and feedback from public engagement events to begin identifying possible priorities for the Downtown Plan.

Survey Results

Several surveys were administered in Phase 1 to gather information from stakeholders about key issues including downtown management, transportation and parking, business mix, and general impressions of downtown:

- Downtown Plan Online Survey (469 respondents)
- Transportation and Parking survey (70 respondents)
- Downtown Management survey (56 respondents)
- Working Group Keypad Polling (53 respondents)
- Community Issues Forum Keypad Polling (25 respondents)

Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities & Threats

A SWOT analysis was used to build an understanding of the characteristics and forces shaping downtown – currently and looking to the future. The following definitions were used for guidance:

Strengths
Characteristics of the downtown (and relevant organizations) that could help achieve the desired vision or goals for the area.

Weaknesses
Characteristics of the downtown (and relevant organizations) that could interfere with achieving the desired vision or goals for the area.

Opportunities
External factors or forces that could help achieve the desired vision or goals for the area.

Threats
External factors or forces that could interfere with achieving the desired vision or goals for the area.

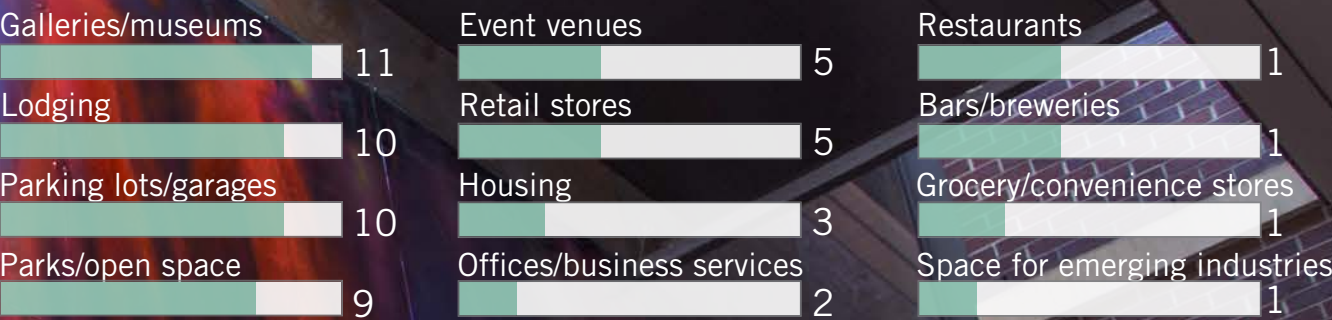


Arts and Culture

In 2012, Arts and Culture had an estimated \$19.2 million impact on the Fort Collins economy. Hundreds of thousands of people visit downtown each year for performances at the Lincoln Center, exploration at the Museum of Discovery, and live entertainment at Bohemian Nights and other Downtown Business Association events. In addition, downtown's galleries, public art, cultural institutions, breweries, and creative entrepreneurs create a thriving Arts and Culture scene downtown.



Survey Results - What you would add downtown?



Attendees at the Downtown Plan Open House (5/16/15) were asked to indicate what they would like to add to downtown. Galleries/museums were the most frequently selected option. Respondents to the Downtown Plan online survey also rated galleries/museums in the top five items they would add to downtown.

Emerging Priorities

Support artists and creative people and maintain vibrancy through an art ecosystem

A healthy ecosystem adapts as contributing forces change and evolve. How can we expand on what has been successful, while staying flexible and resilient?

Explore opportunities to incorporate more local art into downtown properties and businesses

Are there opportunities to include art as part of development requirements? Examples include sculptures, murals, and artwork displays.

Make it easier to do business

Artists are sometimes hesitant about government or organizational involvement due to concerns about 'red tape' suppressing creativity. How can Fort Collins create a workable structure, help creative people think professionally, and still ensure creative freedom? What resources might be necessary? Examples include an Arts Council or Arts Liaison, independent from the City of Fort Collins.

Improve affordability for artists and creative people

Artists can work here, but many can't afford to live and create here. How can we find creative ways to fund and support artist live/work spaces, arts venues, and studio spaces?

Explore ways to support Arts and Culture with facilities, infrastructure, events, and funding

Arts and Culture are integral to the diversity and vibrancy of downtown. Are there City-owned spaces that could be dedicated to creative uses? How can the City collaborate with outside organizations to strengthen Arts and Culture in Fort Collins? Should the implementation of a Creative District be considered as a way to provide sustainable funding?

"There is a lot going on amidst the museums, theaters, restaurants, and shops, and these together create a unique and creative culture to the town."
– survey respondent

SWOT Summary (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)

- S**
 - Large population of talented artists, musicians, and creative people
 - Downtown is a vibrant hub for art in public places (pianos, alleys, transformer boxes) and live music
 - Many downtown events (FoCoMX, NewWestFest, First Friday) that celebrate Arts and Culture
 - Lincoln Center, museums, other art and music venues
- W**
 - Lack of organizational support for Arts and Culture (i.e. an Arts Council)
 - Tension between events, bars/breweries, and other downtown businesses
 - Underemployment of artists
 - Community reluctant to pay for arts/culture events
 - Lack of cultural diversity
- O**
 - More public art downtown – interactive, unique, playful, edgy
 - Create new venues and gathering spaces, large and small, for arts and culture. Could be performing arts center, museums, music venues, community marketplace/market building, and public spaces
 - Focus more on arts and culture, less on alcohol-focused events
 - Establish a Creative District or find other funding
- T**
 - Competition from elsewhere in the region (Loveland, Denver)
 - Rising rents
 - Suppressing "edgy" arts/culture and counter-culture to stay "family friendly"
 - Lack of affordability (e.g. housing, studio/performance space)



Downtown Management

The ongoing management of downtown is a shared responsibility among many city departments, the Downtown Development Association (DDA), the Downtown Business Association (DBA), partner organizations, and business groups. Ensuring that downtown offers a safe, clean, inviting environment for residents and visitors is a critical component of the Downtown Plan.

Survey Results - How is downtown doing?

A four-question Downtown Management survey was administered to a total of 56 participants at three public engagement events. Overall, participants expressed very positive opinions about the management of downtown. There was an opportunity for participants to write open-ended comments. Several comments expressed negative opinions of the safety and family-friendliness of downtown, and noted panhandling/loitering and late-night behavior in particular.

How CLEAN is downtown?



How ATTRACTIVE is downtown?



How FAMILY-FRIENDLY is downtown?



How SAFE is downtown?



Emerging Priorities

Continue to emphasize beautification and cleanliness

Residents, business owners, and visitors often consider the flowers, winter holiday lights, landscaping, and general cleanliness of downtown to be some of its greatest strengths. Are there challenges or barriers to continuing these programs? Can this focus on the physical environment be expanded to other parts of the Downtown Plan area?

Work to address the needs of the homeless population

There are several groups and organizations in and around downtown who work to provide services and resources to Fort Collins' homeless population. Are there needs of the homeless population that are not currently being addressed? How can services, resources, and shelters be more coordinated?

Investigate ways to reduce or mitigate negative behaviors

Though downtown has many strengths, there are also concerns that excessive drinking, panhandling, smoking, and other negative behaviors may lead to decreased visitation to downtown. How can downtown remain inclusive and welcoming of all visitors while discouraging negative behaviors?

Balance the number and scale of downtown events; avoid "event fatigue" while encouraging opportunities for the community to gather

Having events downtown brings people into the central business and activity core of Fort Collins, encourages economic activity, and creates a vibrant downtown atmosphere. However, street closures and large crowds can also cause frustration and deter people from visiting downtown. What is the most effective way to balance the frequency and scale of events with the needs of downtown residents and business owners?

Maintain a sense of safety and family friendliness at all times of day

Downtown Fort Collins should provide a safe, comfortable environment for residents, visitors, employees, business owners, and others at all times. What adjustments could be made to improve safety and family friendliness, particularly in the late evening and early morning hours?

"It's a clean town with beautiful flowers, pianos for playing or watching artists paint, just things that in general make people happy and willing to help others"

– survey respondent

SWOT Summary (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)

- S**
 - Walkable, high foot traffic and inexpensive parking
 - Atmosphere: family-friendly, vibrant, charming, and feels like the "heartbeat of the city"
 - The flowers, landscaping, alley improvements, holiday lights, and other beautification efforts create a sense of place and a pleasant experience
 - Full of destinations and attractions, including the food and brewery scene, kid-friendly spaces, Old Town, entertainment venues, and downtown events
 - Overall level of cleanliness and safety is high
- W**
 - Behavior at events and late at night (after 9pm) – too much drinking, smoking, vandalism
 - Availability of parking is limited, low turnover and high use of parking by downtown employees
 - High number of festivals and large events downtown
 - Negative perceptions of homeless population
 - Prevalence of panhandling, loitering and an increasing population of homeless people downtown (particularly near the Library and Jefferson Park)
- O**
 - Add more public restrooms that are regularly maintained, clean, and accessible
 - Improve wayfinding and promote downtown using banners, signs, etc.
 - Continue focus on beautification – more green space, plants, alley projects
 - Encourage public education about homelessness and related topics
 - Improve coordination among homeless support institutions, City agencies, and partner organizations
- T**
 - Potential lack of funding for added enhancements and maintenance; increasing demands to maintain more public space
 - Growing impact of homeless population on business and community; decreased visitation to downtown
 - Local retail pushed out by alcohol-related business and chains
 - Potential for event fatigue - already considered an issue by some



Energy and Environment

Fort Collins has adopted some of the most aggressive climate action goals of any city in the United States. By 2020, the city aims to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 30% below 2005 levels. By 2030, that reduction increases to 80% below 2005 levels, with the ultimate goal of becoming a carbon neutral city by 2050. The Downtown Plan will emphasize Energy and Environment to align with these goals and others as outlined in the Climate Action Plan, the Poudre River Downtown Master Plan, Nature in the City, City Plan, and other guiding documents.

Survey Results - What are the top opportunities for downtown?



When asked where they accessed nature, attendees at the Downtown Plan Open House (5/16/15) most often accessed nature at Lee Martinez Park. Over 60% of respondents indicated that they access nature within a half mile of the Poudre River.

Emerging Priorities

Harness and preserve the Poudre River Corridor and other unique natural resources

As Fort Collins grows, downtown should protect the assets that make it so desirable, including a healthy river corridor, access to parks and natural areas within the urban setting, scenic views, and the “funkiness,” buildings, and experiences that bring people downtown. How can connections to natural spaces (especially the Poudre River) be preserved and enhanced?

Pursue and support innovative energy and environmental projects

As a center of activity and density, downtown is uniquely positioned to “pilot” innovative projects. What opportunities exist to explore alternative energy production, storage, and distribution? Can waste to energy conversion help downtown achieve waste reduction goals? How can urban agriculture be incorporated within the downtown area?

Incorporate nature and opportunities to escape the urban environment into new development

People visit, live, and play downtown in part because of its welcoming social environment and accessible public spaces. How can downtown continue to provide public spaces that feel special, are safe, and accommodate a wide range of uses? Where are the opportunities to increase green space and access to nature?

Enhance downtown’s capacity to manage stormwater and flooding

New development and redevelopment will have impacts on downtown’s ability to manage stormwater runoff; in addition, much of the downtown area is within an identified floodway or floodplain. How can we best mitigate drainage and stormwater runoff for new and existing developments? How can we position the downtown to respond to severe weather events?

Develop a concentrated district to showcase environmental innovation and stewardship

Downtown is distinct from all other areas of the city. The presence of the Poudre River, the number of forward-thinking businesses, and its proximity to CSU offer unique opportunities to pilot innovative energy and environmentally-focused projects. For example, buildings can be constructed or remodeled to incorporate renewable energy, improve energy efficiency, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. There are opportunities to explore new ways to connect with nature in an urban setting, and new transportation options (e.g., circulator shuttles, electric vehicles, pedicabs) can reduce the need for car travel in the downtown area.

SWOT Summary (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)

- S**
 - The Poudre River is an enormous asset and should be protected
 - The way nature is incorporated into public spaces
 - Downtown is in close proximity to lots of recreational opportunities; easy to experience nature
 - Population with a high awareness of environmental issues; interest in environmental stewardship
 - Expertise and leadership of CSU – research, energy institute
- W**
 - Limited access to the Poudre River in some parts of downtown
 - Stormwater management challenges
 - Aging infrastructure, specifically water and sewer
 - Too few examples of urban agriculture as demonstration
- O**
 - Need better integration of energy policy with historic preservation guidelines (i.e. solar on historic buildings)
 - Improve connections between downtown and the Poudre River; enhance access to river for recreation and escape from the urban environment
 - Encourage more food production – edible landscapes, local “farm to table” restaurants
 - Pilot greenhouse gas reduction strategies downtown
 - Increase the use of solar, electric vehicles and other renewable energy technologies
- T**
 - Overuse of Poudre River and surrounding corridor
 - Impact of development on existing natural ecosystems and corridors of biodiversity
 - Adding too much concrete close to the River
 - Downtown’s existing infrastructure may not be able to support future growth
 - Much of downtown is in a floodplain – natural disaster response/capacity
 - Potential constraints to renewable energy production and use



Market and Economy

Downtown Fort Collins enjoys a thriving economy. Residential and commercial vacancies are at all-time lows (1% and 2.5% respectively), and major projects like the Woodward campus and the Downtown Hotel continue to develop downtown’s reputation as a shopping, tourism, and employment destination. Maintaining an appropriate mix of employment opportunities and continuing to invest in infill and redevelopment will keep downtown vibrant for decades to come.

Survey Results

At the Downtown Plan Open House (5/16/15), participants were given \$100 in \$10 increments and asked how they would spend \$100 in Downtown Fort Collins. Restaurants, retail shopping, and entertainment were the top categories.



Emerging Priorities

Incentivize public-private partnerships

Expanding the scope of funding tools beyond the Downtown Development Authority (DDA) and the City of Fort Collins could improve the feasibility of large projects and prioritize spending downtown. Projects like public parking structures and housing could benefit from more diverse funding sources. How can public-private partnerships be incentivized to leverage public investment?

Develop strategies to ensure available, accessible, and adequate parking

Parking is a key amenity for businesses that want to locate and thrive in downtown Fort Collins. Where and how can parking be added downtown? How else can parking demand be managed at peak use times? How can the impacts of large events and spillover parking into neighborhoods be most effectively managed?

Encourage affordability of housing and commercial space; both rent and purchase

Affordability can be improved with higher density, site-specific solutions, and thoughtful design. As downtown rates for housing and commercial space continue to rise, how can the cost of development and rents in existing buildings be managed so that downtown is more affordable for a wide range of residents and businesses?

Help independent, local, and small retail businesses survive downtown

One of the strengths of downtown Fort Collins is its eclectic, unique mix of independent retail businesses. Over the next 10-20 years, how can Fort Collins help independent retailers start, grow, and succeed in downtown? How can we identify and encourage an appropriate mix of businesses downtown (retail, office, restaurant, bar, services)? What is the role of regional and/or national chains?

Maintain emphasis on high-quality development while making process easier

There are many overlapping regulatory policies and processes that can sometimes impede private development downtown (e.g., floodplain encumbrances, design guidelines). How can private investment be encouraged, and how can barriers to development be reduced while ensuring that new development and redevelopment projects are still of high quality?

“The number of small, locally owned businesses is very important to the overall character. Downtown has a vibrancy unlike many communities in the US. I believe the small, local shops contribute to this greatly.”

– survey respondent

SWOT Summary (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)

- S**
 - Small, local, unique shops; locally owned and operated businesses
 - Variety - mix of uses and stores, mix of activities, mix of people
 - Strong and collaborative local business community
 - Great buildings, streets, and amenities
 - Major employment bases (Woodward, Otter Box, breweries, City/County government)
- W**
 - Access to downtown – parking, transit, pedestrian safety
 - Events and street closures hurt local businesses
 - Late night atmosphere/too much drinking
 - Retail being replaced by bars and restaurants
 - Downtown becoming more high-end, not as affordable
- O**
 - Investigate ways to keep rents affordable and help local businesses stay downtown
 - Funding: Tax Increment Financing, Business Improvement Districts, Public Improvement Fees
 - Add new market opportunities to existing mix (clothing, hotel/conference, public market, grocery)
 - Encourage more retail, especially non-chain stores
 - Increase residential development downtown
- T**
 - Competition from nearby malls; “corporatization” of downtown
 - Gentrification and rising rents pushing people and businesses out of downtown
 - Dilution of “local” and “small town” feel
 - Downtown becoming dominated by bars/breweries
 - Safety concerns (late night behavior, panhandling)
 - Lack of affordability and affordable housing



Transportation and Parking

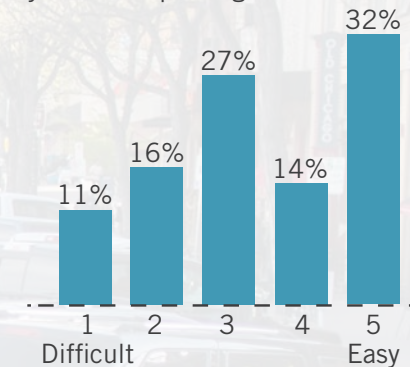
A truly accessible downtown provides many easy ways to get around for all modes of travel. Whether residents and visitors drive, walk, cycle, use mobility devices, or take public transit, connections to destinations and other types of transportation should be readily available. Continuing to improve transportation infrastructure for all travel modes will help downtown remain connected and accessible as the city's population grows.

Survey Results

People access Downtown Fort Collins in many ways, but 63% of the 460 respondents to the Downtown Plan online survey indicated that they drive when they visit downtown. 30% of respondents said that they generally bike and/or walk. Public transit (MAX and bus) represented 4% of responses.

Nearly 60% of respondents who drove utilized on-street parking. On average, participants who drove rated their ease of finding parking at 3.4 on a scale of 1-5, where one was "difficult" and five was "easy."

If you drove, how easy was it for you to find parking?



Emerging Priorities

Develop strategies to ensure adequate parking downtown

The economic vitality of downtown depends in part on the availability of adequate parking for visitors, employees, and residents. As Fort Collins grows over the next 10-20 years, what are the most effective ways to ensure adequate parking availability for cars and bikes? Where and in what types of structures should additional parking be built? Should on-street parking remain a free amenity, or should drivers pay to park downtown? How can parking be better managed for special events?

Examine opportunities to improve the convenience of MAX, buses, and other transit service

An efficient, convenient public transit system can encourage more people to leave their cars behind when traveling to Downtown Fort Collins. Can the frequency of bus service be increased? How can the connectivity of the existing public transit system be improved? Are there new forms of transit, such as a downtown circulator, that could be introduced?

Continue to improve conditions for walking and biking

Even people who drive or use transit to get downtown become pedestrians when they arrive downtown. Many people in Fort Collins walk or bike as one of their main

modes of transportation as well. How can the needs of cyclists and pedestrians be better served downtown? Where can additional bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure be added?

Create better connections throughout the downtown area

There are several barriers to access in the downtown area, in particular the train tracks and busy highways/arterial roads. How can people get into and around downtown more easily and comfortably?

Investigate innovative ways to reduce parking demand and traffic

In addition to creating more parking, better pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, and increased transit availability, downtown should also pilot innovative strategies for reducing parking demand and traffic. Where can strategies like ride share (e.g., Uber/Lyft), car share (e.g., ZipCar), bike share, shuttle systems, and carpooling be integrated into the existing transportation system?

SWOT Summary (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)

- S**
 - MAX is great for transit accessibility and circulation throughout downtown
 - Bicycle-friendly – visible bike culture, good infrastructure for cyclists, bike parking
 - Free on-street parking
 - Downtown is great for walking. Accessible, pedestrian-friendly, fun street-level interactions
 - There are lots of different ways to access downtown (highway, walk, bike, bus, MAX, trolley)
- W**
 - Large truck traffic, particularly on Jefferson, Riverside, and College
 - Train noise and traffic blockages
 - Perception that there is not enough parking downtown and finding parking is difficult
 - Signs and tables create blocked sidewalks and poor pedestrian access
 - Drivers are reluctant to park in garages
- O**
 - Investigate additional late night and weekend transit service, especially for the MAX. Improve public transit downtown in general (frequency, connectivity)
 - Increase the number and size of pedestrian-only areas; improve overall pedestrian experience
 - Develop more bike lanes, bike parking; improve bike-friendliness
 - Consider implementing on-street paid parking to increase turnover/parking availability
 - Provide more free parking
- T**
 - Too many cars and increased traffic congestion as downtown gets busier
 - Increased growth of downtown without support for transit, bicycling, and walking
 - Impact of growth on traffic of all kinds; unintended consequences for transportation network
 - Negative impacts on retail from lack of adequate on-street parking or implementation of paid parking



Urban Design

The varied architectural styles and well-preserved historic structures in downtown Fort Collins are distinctive features that attract tourism, generate economic activity, create a sense of identity and place, and facilitate community interaction. Thoughtfully integrating new development into downtown’s existing urban fabric will help preserve the “small-town feel” and character that makes Fort Collins so unique.

Emerging Priorities

Identify and preserve critical design elements that contribute to the character and authenticity of downtown

Many people visit downtown because they like the “feel” and “atmosphere.” Which elements of urban design contribute to the character of downtown (e.g., street character, street-level engagement)? As Fort Collins grows over the next 10-20 years, how can downtown continue to feel charming and authentic to residents and visitors alike?

Implement design guidelines and/or policies to provide a smooth transition from downtown “edges” into surrounding neighborhoods

In particular, how should the height impact of taller, denser buildings be mitigated?

Promote integration of diverse architectural styles while maintaining compatibility with existing context

The existing mix of architectural styles in downtown Fort Collins creates an interesting, eclectic urban fabric. How can diverse and innovative design approaches best integrate with the historic “feel” of downtown? How can energy retrofits be done in a way that is sensitive to historic character?

Enhance the gateways into downtown

There are many opportunities to better connect downtown to surrounding areas at key gateway points. How can the design of gateways develop connectivity, create a sense of place, and indicate arrival into downtown from all directions?

Investigate the potential for new or expanded facilities for outdoor markets, performances, and other community gathering spaces

Residents and visitors have expressed a desire for more community-focused spaces downtown, including outdoor markets, performance venues, and parks/outdoor event venues. Where could these kinds of facilities be located?

“A lot of the charm of the [downtown] area comes from the history evident in the buildings and surroundings. Preserving and highlighting these unique features (with focused lighting, small interpretive signs, etc) is a must.”
– survey respondent

SWOT Summary (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats)

- S**
 - Downtown’s character is vibrant, authentic, and unique
 - The variety of architecture, in particular the historic buildings in Old Town
 - Small-town feel, historic scale (lower heights)
 - Great spaces, including streets, alleys, sidewalks, plazas, and paths
 - Compact downtown that is walkable and bikeable
- W**
 - Impressions when entering downtown (gateways) are underwhelming, unattractive
 - Some new construction lacking “charm,” not of high quality, poor design
 - Too much red tape and regulation, high cost of development
 - Lack of affordable housing
 - Rising costs of commercial space and development
- O**
 - Connect gateways to downtown with wayfinding, signage, banner system
 - Preserve character of Old Town through design standards for new development
 - Provide more flexibility for good design – doesn’t necessarily have to be historic to be compatible
 - Encourage higher densities and mixed use downtown, but balance with “small-town feel”
 - Provide more community spaces
 - Green building, renewable energy production, and energy efficiency retrofits
- T**
 - Destruction of historic buildings and homes
 - Losing character and sense of place in Old Town
 - Architecture that is not integrated into the existing historic fabric of downtown
 - Availability and preservation of resources, including water, infrastructure, green space
 - Lack of innovative architecture leading to “monotonous campus feel” or recreating the past



fcgov.com/downtown